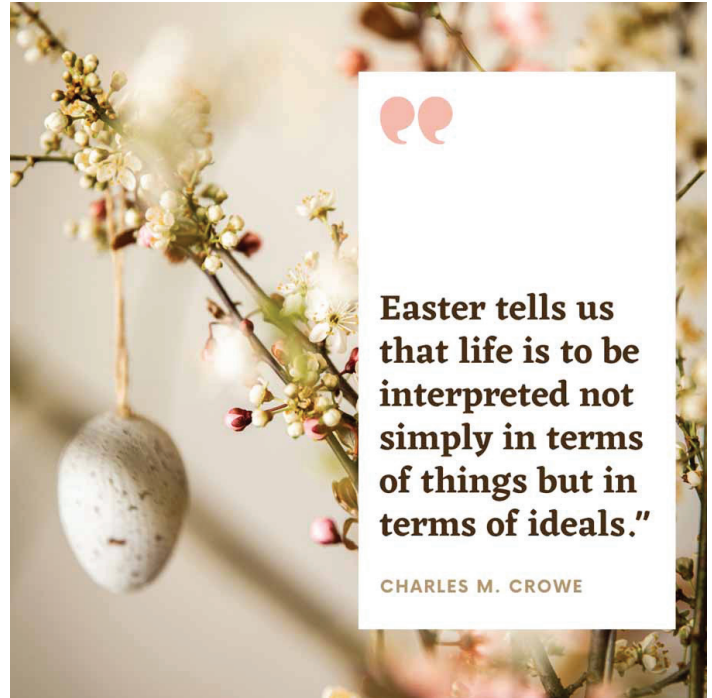


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## Groton Community Calendar

**Sunday, April 9**

HAPPY RESURRECTION DAY!

**Moved to Groton Dairy Queen:** 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 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.

**Tuesday, April 11**

Groton Career Development Event  
City Council Meeting, 7 p.m., City Hall  
Senior Menu: Pork cutlet, creamy noodles, mixed vegetables, blushing pears, whole wheat bread.  
School Breakfast: French toast.  
School Lunch: Lasagna hot dish, corn.  
Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.  
The Pantry, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.  
Emmanuel Lutheran: Council, 7 p.m.  
United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.  
**CANCELLED:** Groton Area Track Meet, 11 a.m.

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

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

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## Groton Lion & Leo volunteers at Easter Egg Hunt

L-R Dave Pigors, Mike Nehls, Deb Fredrickson, Easter Bunny (Shallyn Foertsch), Karyn Babcock, and Nancy Radke. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



Egg hunters poise with Easter Bunny. Harley Furman and Macee Benthin. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)

## Easter Egg Hunt moved indoors

Snow is still blanketing the area, including the city park, so the Easter Egg Hunt this year was moved to the elementary school.



Harrison Crous of Aberdeen.

(Photo by Bruce Babcock)



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**The elementary gym and hallways were decorated with eggs.**

(Photos by Bruce Babcock)





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**It didn't take long to find all the eggs!** (Photos by Bruce Babcock)





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## THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

*...The dove could find nowhere to perch because there was water over all the surface of the earth; so it returned to Noah in the ark... He waited seven more days and again sent out the dove from the ark. When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth.* GENESIS 8: 9-11

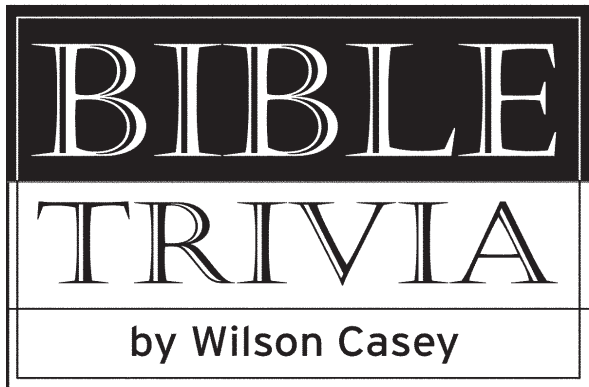


Manuscript. Regensburg, Germany (1360)

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1. Is the book of Job (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. In Luke 17, when Jesus healed 10 men of leprosy, how many returned to thank Him? *0, 1, 3, All*

3. What woman restored to life by Peter was known for helping the poor? *Dorcas, Leah, Abigail, Miriam*

4. Where are the names Abaddon and Apollyon used to denote Satan? *2 Peter, 3 John, Jude, Revelation*

5. Who contracted leprosy for lying to the prophet Elisha? *Deborah, Gideon, Gehazi, Matthew*

6. From 2 Samuel 20, who led David's armies? *Aaron, Dan, Abner, Joab*

ANSWERS: 1) Old, 2) 1, 3) Dorcas (also called Tabitha), 4) Revelation 9:11, 5) Gehazi, 6) Joab

*Comments? More Trivia? Gift ideas? Visit [www.TriviaGuy.com](http://www.TriviaGuy.com).*



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## FLASH GORDON

By JIM KEEFE

CONTINUING: THE WAY IT BEGAN...

**FLASH AND DALE ARE BROUGHT BEFORE MING THE MERCILESS!**

**FLASH IS SENTENCED TO TRIAL BY COMBAT.**

**DESIRING THE EARTHWOMAN FOR HIMSELF, MING ANNOUNCES THEY ARE TO BE WED!**

**TO MING'S ASTONISHMENT, FLASH SURVIVES...**

**... THEN ESCAPES!**

**EVENTUALLY FLASH IS REUNITED WITH DR. ZARKOV.**

**ZARKOV, HAVING REGAINED HIS SANITY, WASTES NO TIME IN HELPING FLASH FREE DALE FROM MING'S CLUTCHES.**

PURSUED BY MING, FLASH'S BRAVERY AND COURAGE RALLIES OTHERS...

**PRINCE BARIN RIGHTFUL RULER OF MONGO**

**VULTAN KING OF THE HAWKMEN**

**THE SORCERESS AZURA**

4-9 AND MANY OTHERS...

**ULTIMATELY, THE OPPRESSED PEOPLE OF MONGO RISE UP, UNITING UNDER FLASH'S LEADERSHIP...**

**...BREAKING MING'S REIGN OF TERROR!**

**NEXT A HERO'S HOMECOMING!**

## Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS

**G**OLF GETS EASIER THE MORE CLOSELY YOU CAN "PREVIEW" CORRECT IMPACT AT ADDRESS. YOU'LL FIND SETTING YOUR LEFT ARM AND CLUB SHAFT IN A STRAIGHT LINE FROM YOUR SHOULDER TO THE BALL A BIG AID IN THAT REGARD.

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WHEN YOU ALIGN YOUR LEFT ARM AND SHAFT IN THIS FASHION, YOU AUTOMATICALLY ESTABLISH AT ADDRESS THE IDEAL POSITION AT IMPACT — THAT IS, WITH YOUR HANDS SLIGHTLY AHEAD OF OR "LEADING" THE CLUBHEAD.





## Complex Jargon Prevents Patient From Understanding Diagnosis

**DEAR DR. ROACH:** After many bouts of pain in my left leg, I was referred for an MRI. They diagnosed me with left lumbar radiculitis, spondylolisthesis and lumbar spondylosis. There are many people in my independent living facility who have gotten similar diagnoses. As an RN with a master's in nursing education, I have a question: When the diagnoses are made, do doctors not explain the problem in layman's terms? I only found out what my list of diagnoses were from a physical therapist, to whom I was referred. — *N.F.P.*

**ANSWER:** Doctors certainly should explain their diagnoses in language appropriate for their patients. We can forget that the language we use is sometimes incomprehensible, but that's not an excuse. A patient should always feel comfortable in saying they don't understand a diagnosis, or any other word or phrase their doctor uses, and ask for more explanation. Many of the most effective communicators I have seen not only ask the patient whether they understood, but have made sure their patient can explain it back to them.

In your case, these specific diagnoses are generally not well-known by nonexperts, and I am disappointed that they did not give you an explanation. Lumbar radiculitis is essentially sciatica — it's an inflammation of the large bundle of nerve roots, which usually causes pain down the leg into particular locations, based on which nerves are being affected. It is not a specific diagnosis, as it doesn't say what is causing the damage to the nerves.

Spondylolisthesis is a condition where one vertebra overlaps another

to side). Very mild spondylolisthesis will not cause any symptoms, but more severe cases can cause damage to the nerve roots. Spondylosis of the lumbar vertebrae is a nonspecific term signifying degeneration of the spine, usually due to osteoarthritis and often including degeneration of the disks in between the vertebrae.

So, these diagnoses together suggest that you have osteoarthritis of the spine, along with a displacement of one vertebra over another, causing damage to the nerve roots of the spine. These conditions would be likely to cause the back and leg pain you have on your left side.

\*\*\*

**DEAR DR. ROACH:** What are the risks for long-term usage of metformin for prediabetes? — *T.G.*

**ANSWER:** Metformin is a commonly used treatment for Type 2 diabetes, but has also been proven to prevent, or at least delay, the onset of diabetes in people who are at risk. This includes those who already have abnormal blood sugar but don't yet meet the diagnostic criteria for diabetes — called "prediabetes" or "impaired glucose tolerance."

Metformin works mostly by preventing the liver from making sugar. This allows the insulin a person makes to work on dietary sugar instead and, in turn, lowers insulin levels, thus promoting weight loss.

Metformin is a very safe drug with few long-term side effects. The most common side effects are gastrointestinal — nausea and diarrhea are the most common. These usually go away after some time and can be minimized by using the long-acting form of the drug. Vitamin B12 deficiency happens in about 20% of people over a span of five years. The most severe side effect is called lactic acidosis, but this is extremely rare when metformin is only given to people with normal kidney function. Kidney function and blood sugar levels should be periodically checked when on metformin, whether for diabetes or prevention.

*Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to [ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu](mailto:ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu).*

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"The Last Thing He Told Me" (TV-MA) -- A new limited series premiering April 14 follows the story of a woman named Hannah, who is married to a man named Owen and has become stepmother to Owen's only daughter, Bailey. One day, Hannah suddenly receives a letter from Owen that instructs her to protect Bailey; then Owen subsequently goes missing. Bailey reveals to Hannah that she was also left a note and a bag full of thousands of dollars, presumably from Owen. From then on, the mother-and-daughter duo stop at nothing to find out the truth of his mysterious disappearance. Jennifer Garner, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau ("Game of Thrones") and Angourie Rice (the "Spider-Man" trilogy) star in this riveting series. New episodes release every Friday. (AppleTV+)



**From left, Abbey Lee and Edgar Ramirez star in "Florida Man."**

Courtesy of Netflix

"Florida Man" (TV-MA) -- Philly ex-cop Mike Valentine (Edgar Ramirez) has lost everything in his life to gambling. So, to pay off all his debt, Mike begins working for the gangster he owes all his money to ... which blurs more lines than one. When the gangster's girlfriend, Delly (who Mike is also fond of), escapes to Florida, Mike is forced to go retrieve her. But he has only one condition: All his debt is cleared once he brings Delly back. Reluctantly returning to his seedy home state, Mike attempts to find Delly, but he hits a few bumps in the road that turn his quick rescue into a chaotic, action-packed series of events. This seven-episode crime show produced by Jason Bateman premieres April 13. (Netflix)

"Tiny Beautiful Things" (TV-MA) -- In this new series based on the book of the same name by Cheryl Strayed, Kathryn Hahn ("Bad Moms") stars as Clare, a writer persuaded to start an advice column. But Clare wonders ... can someone really give good advice while their life is falling apart? Her marriage is in a rough place, and her bond with her teenage daughter seems to challenge her more and more every day. But, once Clare begins writing and speaking to her audience as if they were the 22-year-old version of herself, she finds powerful healing. The first episode of "Tiny Beautiful Things" is out now. (Hulu)

"Grease: Rise of the Pink Ladies" (NR) -- The original 1978 "Grease" film is one of the most iconic movies in history. "Grease 2" was released a few years later in 1982, but it did nowhere near as well as the first film. So, will a prequel spin-off series pick up steam? Taking place four years before the events of the first film, this musical series follows four Rydell High students as they band together to create the all-female clique known as the Pink Ladies. With tons of visually appealing musical numbers and teenage naivety, it does well to capture the charming essence of "Grease." The first episode is out now. (Paramount+)



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1. Who was Elmo Glick?
2. Name the deaf singer who released "Cry" and "Just Walkin' in the Rain."
3. Why was Paul Simon (of Simon & Garfunkel) sued for "El Condor Pasa"?
4. Who released "Could It Be I'm Falling in Love"?
5. Name the song that contains these lyrics: "Well, I might take a train, I might take a plane, but if I have to walk, I'm gonna get there just the same."

## Answers

1. That was the name used by songwriting duo Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller. They wrote over 70 hits, including "Jailhouse Rock" and "Stand By Me."
2. Johnnie Ray. He was left death after an accident at a Scout camp as a boy.
3. Simon & Garfunkel's "El Condor Pasa (If I Could)" is from a 1913 Peruvian instrumental. Simon, having been told by a band that it was an old folk song, was eventually sued for copyright infringement, not knowing the melody actually had been copyrighted in the U.S. since 1933.
4. The Spinners, in 1972.
5. "Kansas City," by Wilbert Harrison in 1959. The song was written by the Elmo Glick duo, mentioned above, two 19-year-old R&B fans who went on to have long writing careers.

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## GRIN *and* BEAR IT <sup>by Wagner</sup>



## Just Like Cats & Dogs

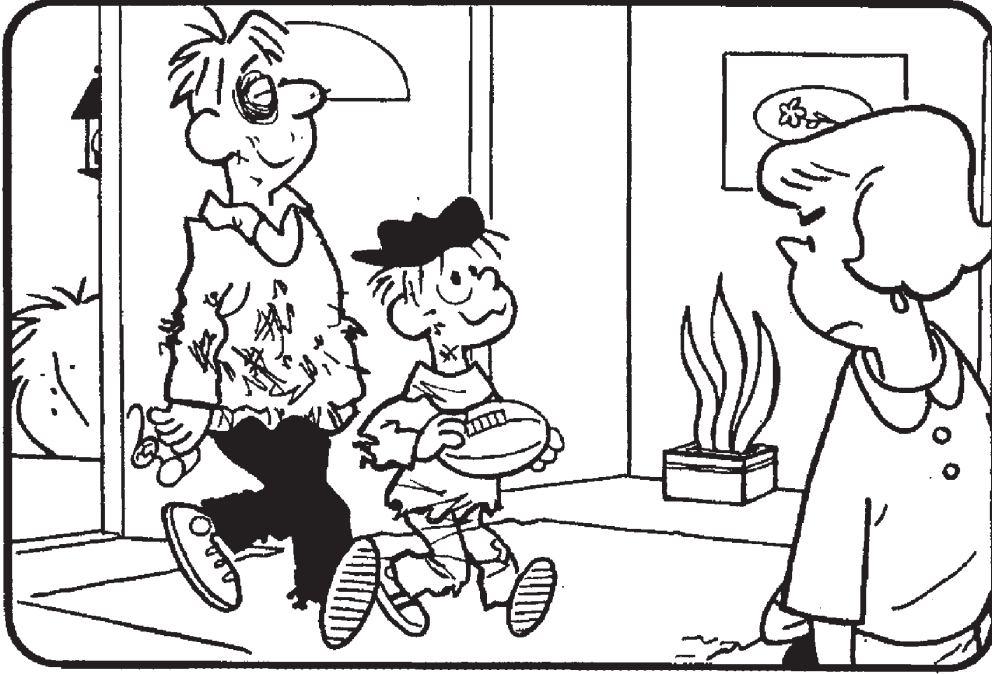
by Dave T. Phipps



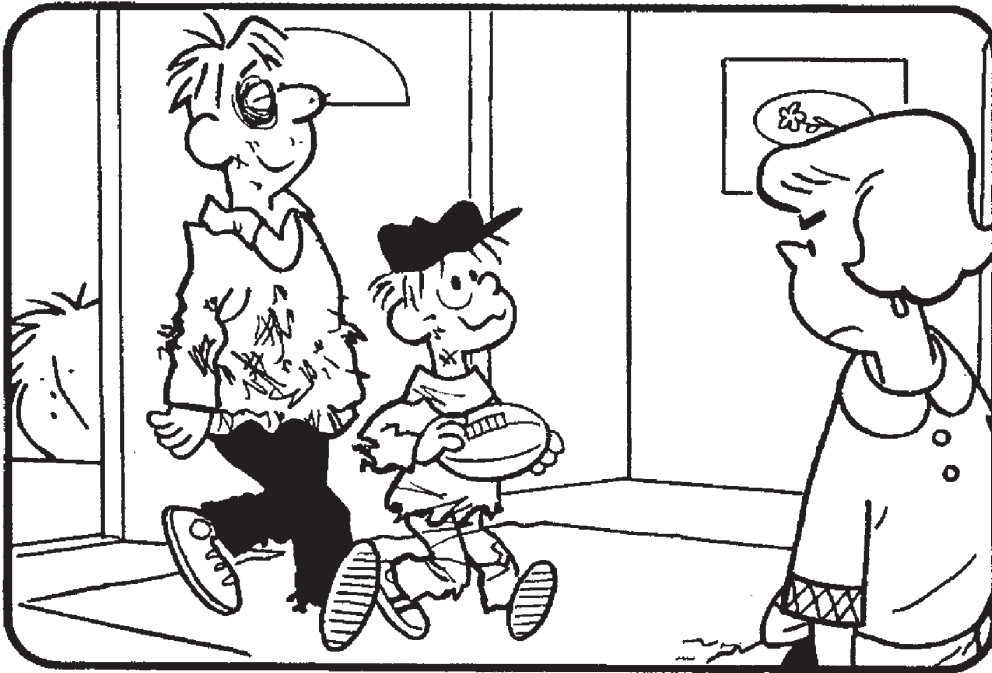
"You were talking in your hibernation again."

## HOCUS-FOCUS

BY  
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Light is missing. 2. Glasses are missing. 3. Cap is reversed. 4. Plant is missing. 5. Collar is different. 6. Cuff is added.





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## King Crossword

### ACROSS

- 1 Faux pas
- 5 Spider's creation
- 8 Smith of Fox News
- 12 Wood strip
- 13 Hollywood's Gardner
- 14 Model Banks
- 15 Twistable cookie
- 16 "Wonder Woman" star
- 18 Reproductive cell
- 20 Old Geo models
- 21 Conceal, in a way
- 23 Zodiac cat
- 24 When a sporting event starts
- 28 Pvt.'s superiors
- 31 Historic period
- 32 Open a toothpaste tube
- 34 Consume
- 35 Beige
- 37 Floral wreaths
- 39 Mao — -tung
- 41 Coaster
- 42 Three-note chords
- 45 Doohickey
- 49 Hood

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
15					16			17				
18				19			20					
			21			22		23				
24	25	26				27		28		29	30	
31				32				33		34		
35			36		37			38				
		39		40		41						
42	43				44		45			46	47	48
49						50			51			
52					53				54			
55					56				57			

- 51 Roof overhang
- 52 "Got it"
- 53 French article
- 54 Pitcher Nolan
- 55 Waller or Domino
- 56 Inlet
- 57 Transmit
- DOWN**
- 1 Trudge
- 2 News reporter Logan
- 3 Detail
- 4 "Friends" role
- 5 Betting parlor activity
- 6 Ms. Longoria
- 7 Lip soother
- 8 Iowa and Maine, e.g.
- 9 Lightest element
- 10 Slangy suffix
- 11 Bits of butter
- 17 Solidify
- 19 Ballet wear
- 22 Community gym sites
- 24 "Gosh!"
- 25 Lob's path
- 26 Strict taskmaster
- 27 Tea choice
- 29 Wee bit
- 30 Map lines (Abbr.)
- 33 Entreaty
- 36 Applications
- 38 Venomous snakes
- 40 Mag. staff
- 42 End-of-wk. cry
- 43 Tabula —
- 44 Ticket half
- 46 "Mercy Mercy Me" singer Marvin
- 47 Novelist Hunter
- 48 Look after
- 50 Disney deer



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## — King Crossword —

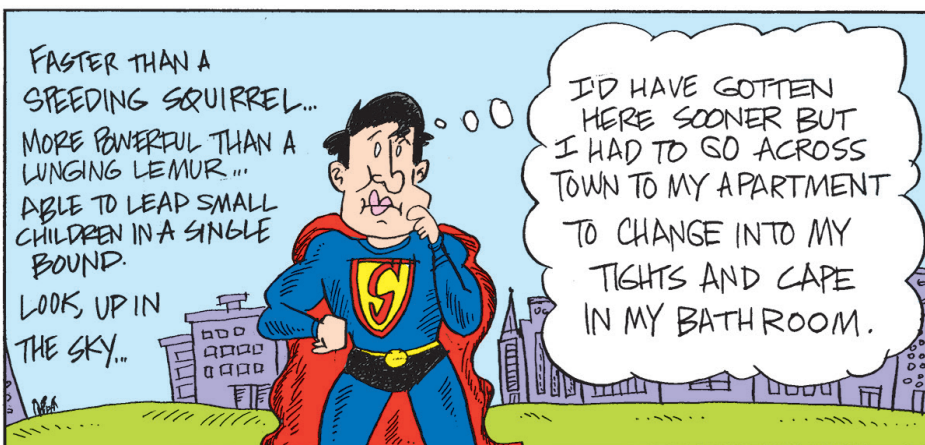
Answers

Solution time: 22 mins.

S	L	I	P		W	E	B		S	H	E	P
L	A	T	H		A	V	A		T	Y	R	A
O	R	E	O		G	A	L	G	A	D	O	T
G	A	M	E	T	E		M	E	T	R	O	S
			B	U	R	Y		L	E	O		
G	A	M	E	T	I	M	E		S	G	T	S
E	R	A		U	N	C	A	P		E	A	T
E	C	R	U		G	A	R	L	A	N	D	S
			T	S	E		S	L	E	D		
T	R	I	A	D	S		G	A	D	G	E	T
G	A	N	G	S	T	E	R		E	A	V	E
I	S	E	E		U	N	E		R	Y	A	N
F	A	T	S		B	A	Y		S	E	N	D

### Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



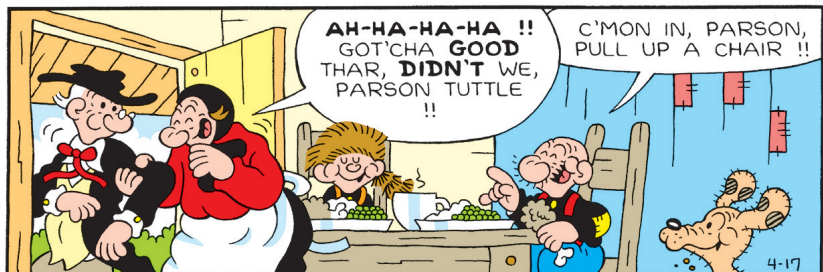
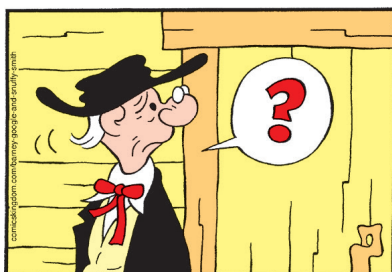
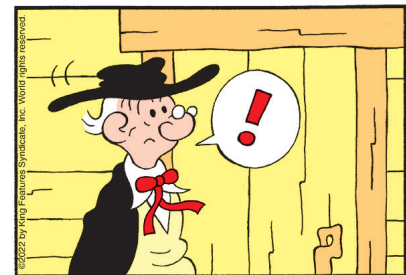
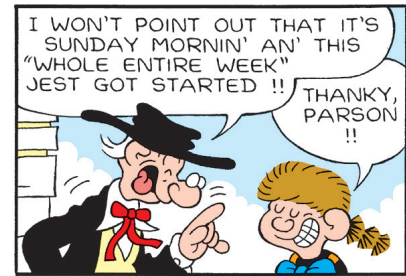
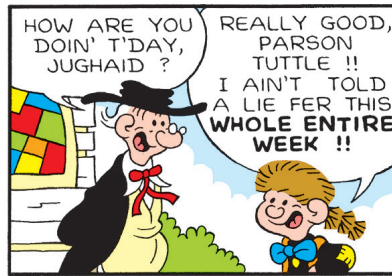
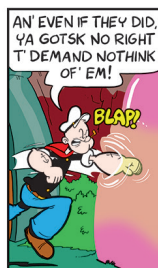
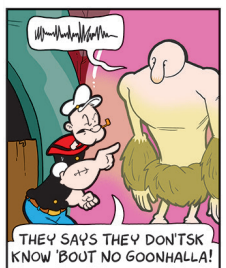
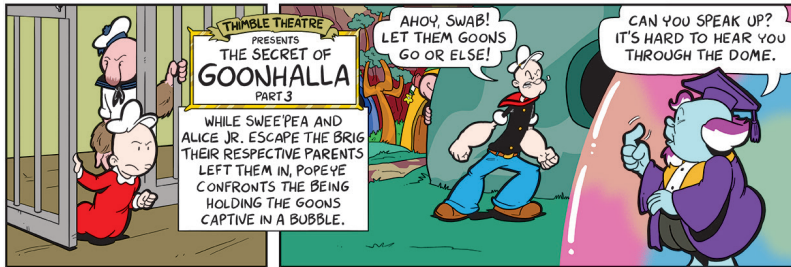
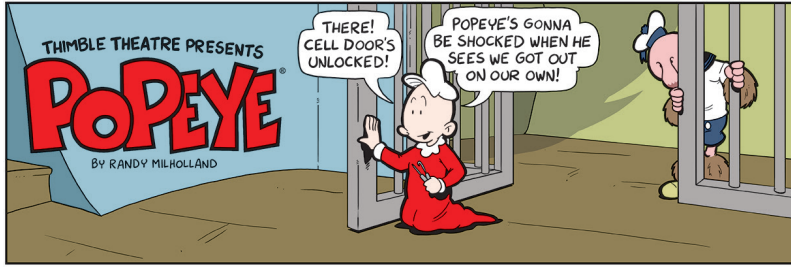
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LOW SELF-ESTEEM  
SUPERMAN

KOPERVAS

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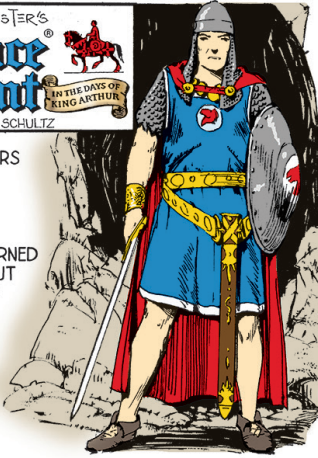


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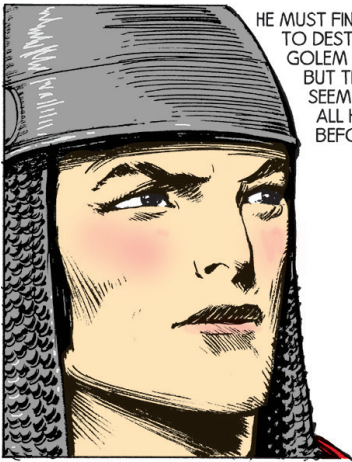
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Hal Foster's  
**Prince Valiant**  
BY THE DAYS OF KING ARTHUR  
BY GIANNI AND SCHULTZ

WHILE THE OTHERS SLEEP, VAL REMEMBERS A SIMILAR CAVE WHERE HE HAD LONG AGO LEARNED A LESSON ABOUT THE FUTILITY OF FIGHTING TIME.



HE MUST FIND A WAY TO DESTROY THE GOLEM OUTSIDE, BUT THIS PLACE SEEMS TO LAY ALL HIS YEARS BEFORE HIM...



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... AND LIKEWISE THE GREAT MEN AND WOMEN HE HAS KNOWN, AND WHO HAVE LENT HIM STRENGTH AND INSPIRATION. HE ALSO FEELS HIS FAMILY NEARBY, AND CANNOT FAIL THEIR TRUST. A SOLUTION WILL BE FOUND FOR THIS UNPLEASANT BUSINESS AND ALL WILL BE WELL.

NEXT:  
Before dawn

3914

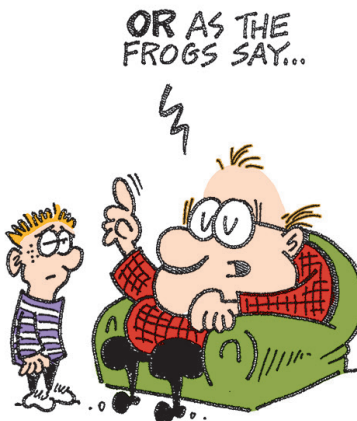
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## The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



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PICKERING

## SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

### Living Long Lives in the Blue Zones

In several parts of the world there are large populations that regularly live into their 90s and even pass 100 years. They're called Blue Zones, those parts of the world where seniors live longer, healthier lives. It started as a National Geographic project to look for the secrets to longevity. They were able to identify five locations: Loma Linda, California; Nicoya, Costa Rica; Sardinia, Italy; Ikaria, Greece; and Okinawa, Japan.

Fascinated scientists began to study these over-100 people and concluded that they had nine commonalities. They are:

- The Blue Zoners move and exercise naturally, working in gardens and going about their lives with frequent walks, not engaging in heavy-lifting gym visits.
- They have a purpose to each day.
- They do what they must to avoid stress. Some pray, some have happy hour, some take naps, but they intentionally do something.
- They follow Confucius' rule to stop eating when they're 80% full, and don't eat late at night.
- Their diets are semi-vegetarian and they stick mostly with beans and lentils, fruits and vegetables, olive oil and whole grains.
- They drink modest amounts of wine, perhaps 1 to 2 cups per day, if at all.
- They belong to a faith-based community of some kind.
- They put loved ones first and often live with or near family members.
- The people around them are engaged in similar healthy behaviors.

To read the study about the Blue Zones, go online to [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov), select PubMed from the dropdown menu and put "Blue Zones" in the search box. Look for the authors Buettner D, Skemp S. The heading includes "Lessons from the World's Longest Lived."

There is hope for all of us to extend our lives if we incorporate some of what those in the Blue Zones have to teach us.



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1. For what team did DeMarcus "Boogie" Cousins, a first-round NBA Draft pick for the Sacramento Kings in 2010, play one season of college basketball?

2. What Basketball Hall of Famer has his No. 2 jersey retired by the Philadelphia 76ers and his No. 24 jersey retired by the Houston Rockets?

3. At the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Games, teammates Jessie Diggins and Kikkan Randall won the USA's first ever Olympic gold medals in what sport?

4. What sports columnist for The Kansas City Star was suspended by the newspaper for heckling New England Patriots fans from the press box at a 1998 NFL game?

5. Name the Baseball Hall of Famer who, upon receiving a \$1 million signing bonus from the Oakland A's in 1989, framed the check and hung it on the wall instead of cashing it.

6. What NASCAR driver ran out of fuel while leading the 2017 Daytona 500 with one lap remaining in the race?

7. Offensive lineman Randy Cross spent his entire 13-year playing career and won three Super Bowls with what NFL team?



by Ryan A. Berenz

## Answers

1. The Kentucky Wildcats.

2. Moses Malone.

3. Cross-country skiing.

4. Jason Whitlock.

5. Rickey Henderson.

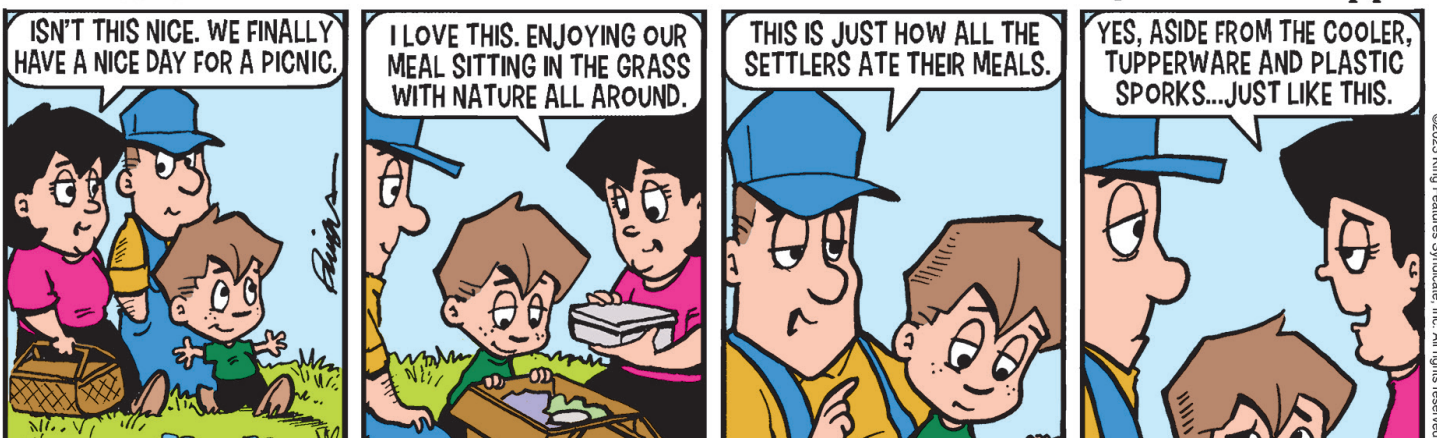
6. Kyle Larson.

7. The San Francisco 49ers.

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## Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



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## Adopting an Older Cat Can Bring Unexpected Issues

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: We recently adopted a 12-year-old orange tomcat. Abel is neutered and well behaved, but he has some health issues that we didn't bargain for. He's overweight (we're working on it) and recently needed a tooth pulled. He gets ear and eye infections frequently. I'm not about to give him up, but I wanted others to know that a senior cat often has more medical needs than younger cats. The tradeoff is that he's a sweet, gentle cat, well adapted to humans, and seems less inclined to escape from the house than a younger cat might. -- Kelly B., Salt Lake City

DEAR KELLY: Thank you for sharing your experience! Abel sounds like a wonderful cat.

Senior cats, age 11 to 14, do need extra monitoring. They often have health issues specific to older cats, and can be more susceptible to infections, bad teeth, etc. Pretty much all the same issues humans face as we grow old!

As you've noted, Abel's diet is really important. Not just to lose weight and keep it off, but to make sure he's getting the right nutrition for a senior cat. A cat food formulated for older cats is helpful, but owners should work with the veterinarian to determine the amount and type of food to give their cat each day. Lots of protein is a must, as this article by VCA points out: [vcahospitals.com/know-your-pet/feeding-mature-senior-and-geriatric-cats](http://vcahospitals.com/know-your-pet/feeding-mature-senior-and-geriatric-cats)

Dehydration is another factor for older cats. Empty and refill your cat's water bowl each morning and monitor how much the amount decreases throughout the day to determine how much he drinks.

Finally, monitor your cat's litter box habits. Write them down and take them to the next vet checkup to make sure there are no hidden health problems cropping up.

Send your tips, comments or questions to [ask@pawscorner.com](mailto:ask@pawscorner.com).

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## Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

\* An anonymous Middle Eastern prince donated \$500,000 for Hurricane Sandy relief in exchange for a 15-minute meeting with actress Kristen Stewart.

\* The creators of Dragon's Lair used Playboy magazines to create the princess.

\* After more than six decades of separation, differences in the language have developed between South and North Korea. This leads to hardship for North Korean defectors after they escape, because they have to relearn their language.

\* That distinctive odor of pool water usually de-

scribed as the smell of chlorine is actually chloramines, which are released when chlorine reacts with human sweat, oil or urine.

\* A snake's heart can move around its body to protect it from harm when the snake has eaten a large prey.

\* When is a kiss not just a kiss? Ask the fellow who, in 2010, bypassed security at the Newark Airport to smooch his girlfriend goodbye. The entire terminal was shut down for seven hours and the gentleman became known as "Airport Romeo."

\* Around 20 million years ago, 7-foot tall, 2,000-pound pigs roamed the earth.

\* The 1963 movie "Charade" entered the public domain immediately upon its release because Universal Pictures published it with an invalid copyright notice.

\* All the air in potato chip bags everyone complains about is actually nitrogen and serves a useful purpose: It preserves crispiness and provides a cushion for shipping.

\* Former Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg once went undercover as a taxi driver in Oslo because he wanted to "hear from real Norwegian voters and taxis were one of the few places where people shared their true views."

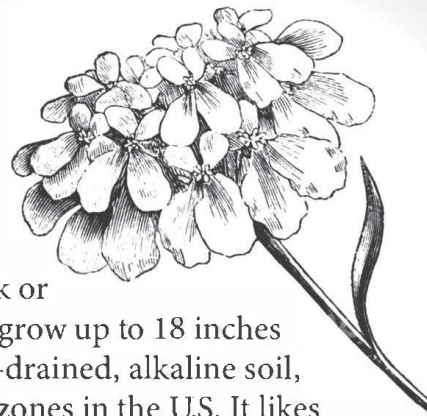
\* Abolitionist Frederick Douglass was the most photographed American of the 19th century.

\*\*\*

Thought for the Day: "The pessimist complains about the wind. The optimist expects it to change. The leader adjusts the sails." -- John Maxwell

The  
Garden  
Bug

### Candytuft



This showy beauty usually has white flowers, but sometimes pink or lilac varieties are available. It can grow up to 18 inches tall. The candytuft likes very well-drained, alkaline soil, lots of sun and does well in most zones in the U.S. It likes stony or gravelly areas, making it a great plant for a rock garden or along a rock wall. It blooms early spring through summer, and sometimes will bloom again in autumn. - Brenda Weaver

Source: [gardeningknowhow.com](http://gardeningknowhow.com)



by Freddy Groves

## When the Scammer Is a Doctor

Mostly you think of scammers who steal as lowlifes, but it's not always the case. Sometimes they're well-educated professionals who have a lot to lose when they're caught.

Take the case of the doctor who took money that was meant to go to those who'd suffered severe traumatic injuries.

This doctor, a decorated Navy commander, conspired with others to lie their way to a \$2 million profit

in an insurance program that helps servicemembers who were traumatically injured while on active duty. The co-conspirators would coax others to create fake or exaggerated claims for injuries in exchange for a portion of the proceeds.

Enter the doctor who, in exchange for a kickback, would verify that the injuries and disabilities existed and sign off on the application for the claim, sometimes saying he'd actually seen the person making the claim. Or he would provide the medical records of others to those who were submitting fake claims.

The other nine co-conspirators included a nurse (who helped to falsify medical records) and a former Navy mechanic (who actively recruited others into the scheme, where he netted nearly \$400,000). They kept the scam going for at least three years. The various charges included fraud, wire fraud and making a false and fraudulent claim.

Of all the co-conspirators, it's the Navy doctor who disappointed me the most. This wasn't a short-term scam; it went on long enough that one wonders whether in all that time the doctor thought about how he got to that point.

This is the same man who, serving in Iraq, climbed onto a roof in 2007 to help a tiny infant who wasn't breathing properly, evacuated the baby via helicopter under sniper fire, and got him into surgery in a hospital. The baby was saved and back home in a week.

It's hard to reconcile the image of that doctor with his participation in a theft scam that only netted him \$180,000 over three years. And now he's potentially facing 20 years in prison.

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## Wishing Well®

8	7	8	5	4	5	3	6	3	6	3	5	8
N	C	O	H	H	O	Y	B	O	E	U	P	T
5	2	5	7	3	5	4	7	2	5	8	3	7
E	S	S	H	R	A	A	A	W	R	H	E	R
8	5	3	6	2	8	5	7	8	3	5	2	5
I	E	C	D	E	N	R	M	G	E	E	E	A
7	3	5	3	7	2	6	8	6	5	3	8	3
E	I	L	V	D	T	I	B	P	I	E	U	B
2	4	3	8	5	3	5	7	3	7	6	5	8
V	N	O	G	Z	N	E	L	U	I	L	D	S
3	8	2	8	7	8	4	7	6	4	6	2	4
S	Y	I	O	F	U	G	E	O	I	M	C	N
2	6	4	6	4	6	4	2	6	2	4	2	4
T	A	T	T	H	I	E	O	C	R	R	Y	E

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

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1. TELEVISION: What is the name of the president in the drama "West Wing"?
2. GEOGRAPHY: Which U.S. state shares the same name as one of the Great Lakes?
3. U.S. PRESIDENTS: What are the ZIP codes assigned to the president and first lady?
4. LANGUAGE: What is cryptophasia?
5. MOVIES: What is the number on top of the bus in the movie "Speed"?
6. LITERATURE: What is the setting for Dashiell Hammett's novel "The Maltese Falcon"?
7. ANATOMY: Which two parts of the human body contain the most bones?
8. U.S. STATES: In which state would you find the Grand Teton National Park?
9. AD SLOGANS: Which popular product uses the slogan, "Is it in you?"?
10. FOOD & DRINK: What is the primary ingredient of baba ganoush?

### Answers

1. Josiah "Jed" Bartlet.
2. Michigan.
3. 20500-0001 and 20500-0002.
4. A language developed by twins that only the two children can understand.
5. 2525.
6. San Francisco.
7. More than half the bones are in the hands and feet, 27 in each hand and 26 in each foot.
8. Wyoming.
9. Gatorade.
10. Eggplant.

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South Dakota Governor

**Kristi Noem**



**South Dakota:** *Under God, the People Rule*

## The Spirit of Easter

During the Easter season, we spend time with our families, we celebrate with our friends and neighbors, and we are thankful for our many blessings. It's a time when people come together to help one another; to love one another.

South Dakotans have been through a brutal winter this year, with many severe storms from December through April. It has been a struggle, but one we have gotten through together. Through small acts of kindness and by lending a helping hand, South Dakotans continue to show their strength even in difficult times.

We often think of Easter as a celebration of the light, but it is also a celebration of the darkness. The joy of Easter Sunday means nothing without the sorrow that comes before it. And if there is one thing that the people of South Dakota have taught me, it's that tough times are always easier to get through together.

The Bible tells us to love thy neighbor as we love ourselves. And this winter, South Dakotans have done so time and time again. I have seen folks helping ranchers bring in their cattle ahead of a winter storm, clearing neighbors' driveways to help them get to work on time, and bringing homecooked meals to friends in need. I truly think that no one loves their neighbor better than a South Dakotan.

I commend our people for their hope and for their faith: the hope that we would get through this treacherous winter, and their faith that springtime is coming. Easter reminds us of these things.

Just as spring brings new life to the earth, so does Jesus bring new life to us.

I do not know how much longer our winter will last, but I do know that spring is coming. Warmer days are ahead. And South Dakotans will help one another and love one another just as much in the warmth as we have in the cold. That's just how we operate.

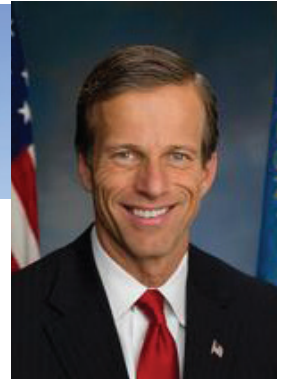
I am proud of what our people have endured. We always seem to come out of tough times stronger than before. The people of South Dakota have earned my trust, my respect, and my faith – and I will always do my best to be worthy of theirs.

So I wish everyone a very Happy Easter. I hope that you can spend this season with those that you love. And I thank you, South Dakotans, for always being there for each other – for embodying the kind of love that Jesus has for us through your love for one another. You are a light in this world, a little glimpse of springtime. May God continue to bless each and every one of you.



## John Thune U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA

### Time to Take on TikTok



More than two years ago, President Trump recognized that TikTok threatened U.S. national security and moved to ban it, but courts ruled the president lacked authority to do so. TikTok's close ties to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and questionable handling of data are reason enough for concern, but various instances have also arisen that confirm our worst fears about its malicious potential. It's no surprise that many Americans agree that TikTok should be banned. And it's why I recently introduced bipartisan legislation that would codify President Trump's forward-looking effort to confront foreign-adversary technologies like TikTok that threaten our national security.

It's widely acknowledged that TikTok poses a threat to U.S. national security. Intelligence agencies, tech experts, and a majority of Americans recognize this. TikTok's parent company, ByteDance, which is headquartered in China, has access to its 150 million American users' data and devices. Under Chinese law, the government just has to ask for it and ByteDance would be required to hand over this data to the CCP. After a Chinese spy balloon traversed the United States in February collecting intelligence, it's obvious that the CCP seeks to spy on Americans. TikTok is just another iteration of this threat. Before TikTok, Huawei and ZTE deployed technology in the United States that included "backdoors" that gave China access to global communications networks.

These risks aren't going away. Four out of the five most-downloaded apps in the United States last month are Chinese-owned. We need to be able to confront foreign-adversary technologies in a holistic and dynamic way. My bipartisan bill, the RESTRICT Act, would establish a comprehensive process for identifying, evaluating, and mitigating foreign technology threats. The RESTRICT Act would allow the secretary of commerce to address technologies that have been determined to threaten U.S. national security and to do so in a timely manner. This process would end the whac-a-mole approach that has left the United States playing catch-up as potentially malicious foreign technologies establish footholds in the U.S. market.

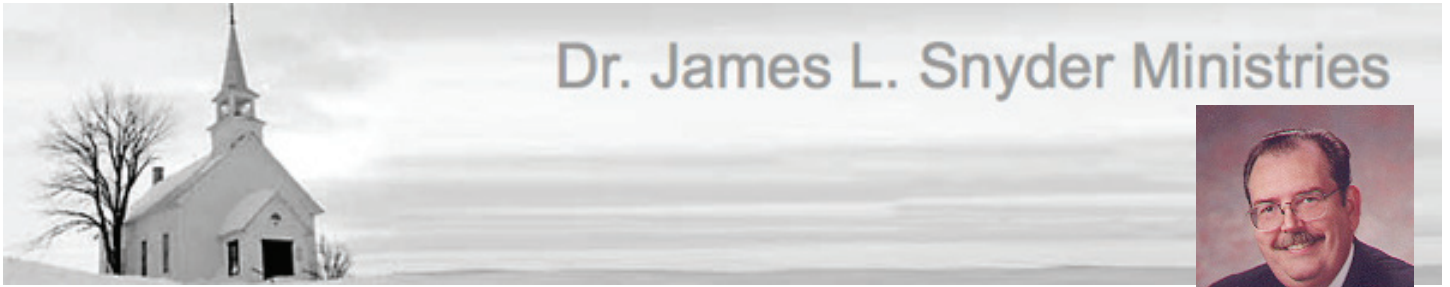
The RESTRICT Act is the most effective option to address both TikTok and future technological threats. President Trump's efforts to ban TikTok were struck down in federal court because they relied on a 1977 law that doesn't suit the digital age we now live in. Other attempts to simply ban TikTok would likely face a similar fate, but the RESTRICT Act offers a rules-based process that is narrowly tailored to foreign-adversary companies, which is more likely to withstand judicial scrutiny. It builds upon President Trump's executive order, modernizes the president's power to fit the digital age, places guardrails on presidential authority, and gives Congress a clearly defined oversight role.

My bill takes a tailored approach to address foreign companies and technologies that threaten U.S. national security. Specifically, the RESTRICT Act targets technologies from six adversary countries: China, Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Russia, and Venezuela. While the secretary of commerce could remove or add countries to this list, Congress has authority to overrule the secretary. Importantly, the RESTRICT Act does not target the content individual Americans post online, and it does not provide the administration with any authority to censor Americans' speech online. Again, it is narrowly focused on targeting foreign-adversary threats from places like China and Russia. This tailored approach safeguards U.S. national security from technological threats from our adversaries and upholds civil liberties.

Recent history indicates that communications technology will continue to be an area in which our adversaries seek to threaten U.S. national security interests. We need to have a policy that can address the modern and evolving threats that we face, whether it's a video app like TikTok, telecommunications hardware like Huawei's, or something altogether new, like the rapidly expanding artificial intelligence capabilities we have recently seen proliferate. The RESTRICT Act enables the United States to attack the challenges of today and tomorrow and keep America secure at all times.

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## Has Anyone Seen My Marbles?



Whenever a week goes by without any hitches, I have learned that something somewhere is wrong.

I have lived long enough to realize that problems are a part of life. Most of my were created by me. I guess I'm a great creator in that regard. I don't think there is any reward for that kind of creativity.

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage is exceptionally educated in this area of my mistakes. She could receive the Nobel Peace Prize. She can recognize one of my mistakes two days before it even happens. I don't know how she does that and probably never will find out.

Whenever I screw something up, she always responds, "Have you lost your marbles?"

Initially, I didn't know I had marbles, nor did I understand what marbles were. But as I grew as a husband, I began to understand what she meant by marbles. I didn't know I had as many marbles as I had lost over the last 20 years.

One morning last week, I got up before The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and went out and got my coffee, I saw the kitties out on the porch looking in, so I opened the door, and they came marching in. What a great time they had together. As I was going to feed them, I heard a familiar voice down the hallway, "Have you lost your marbles? Get those cats out of here."

Of course, I didn't have to get the cats out because they ran for fear when they saw her coming down the hallway. I just stood there looking at the floor, trying to find my missing marbles.

Life has ups and downs, and I'm unsure which is better or worse. But throughout my life, I have never been helped in any situation by my marbles. How do my marbles help me in my everyday life? After all, my life has not changed much during these years of losing my marbles.

If I had more appreciation for my marbles, maybe, just maybe, I would not be getting in as much trouble with The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. Her obsession with marbles is beyond my ability to comprehend.

If I still have one or two marbles left maybe I could figure out how I can get back at her.

We had a doctor's appointment last week, so she drove her Sissy Van, and I sat over on the passenger side. It's hard for me to get in and out of that Sissy Van, but it saves me gas money for my truck.

As we were going down the street, I looked at her and said, "Have you lost your marbles? You missed



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the street we were supposed to turn on.”

Inside I was laughing hilariously, but she did not share in that. She just looked at me and flashed one of her quirky smiles.

I sure do like it when a plan comes together.

One morning this week, I got up rather late and walked out to the living room in my pajamas. The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage looked at me and said, “Have you lost your marbles? We have a breakfast appointment in about 10 minutes across town.”

I had no idea, or at least I forgot about it, and maybe she was right; I did lose my marbles on this one.

I was thinking recently about how my life would change if I had all the marbles I lost. So what would my life be like at that point?

The other day as she was coming in the front door from a shopping trip I said to her, “Have you lost your marbles?”

Looking at me strangely, she said, “What are you talking about?”

Smiling back at her, I said, “Nothing, I just wanted to know if you had all your marbles together.”

She didn’t think that was funny and scowled at me and took the shopping bag into the kitchen.

If anybody has marbles, I think she does. So my question is simply, what is she doing with all those marbles?

I think I have one or two marbles left, and I was thinking of a plan for her birthday. I’ve been putting a lot of thought into it, and I’m almost done with the thinking aspect and about ready to put it all together.

I was in Wal-Mart the other day, and walking down one of the isles, I saw something that got my attention. There on the shelf were bags of marbles. It was the first time I ever saw marbles for sale. When I saw them, it gave me an idea. So I bought a bag of marbles.

This year I plan to give her a special birthday gift. It will be a box filled with marbles, wrapped in red paper with a lovely bow on the top.

When she opens it, I expect she will say, “Have you lost your marbles?”

I will respond, “No, my dear, I found your marbles.”

I could not help but think of a Bible verse in Isaiah 55:8-9, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

God has never lost His “marbles.” God shares His thoughts with us in the word of God.

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## EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: Have scientists been able to definitively prove links between global warming and more extreme weather phenomena in recent years, or is this still just a theory? – T.C., Chicago, IL

The question of whether science has been able to prove, let alone prove definitively, the connection between climate change and extreme weather is a very tricky one. This is because science is always reluctant to deal in certainty. "You can never have 100 percent proof of anything. There will always be doubt," reports Jack Fraser, an Oxford-trained astrophysics Ph.D. at the Wellcome Sanger Institute. "Proof can only exist when there is no doubt, and there is always doubt. You could be a brain in a vat, living in a crazy simulation. You could be hallucinating everything. You cannot prove anything."

Despite this embedded doubt in all things scientific, researchers have opened up a new branch of science called 'Extreme Event Attribution' in an attempt to work out the extent of man-made climate change's culpability. To discern this, scientists begin by setting criteria for what made the event extreme. They then turn to historical climate records and make comparisons with other similar events, checking them against the same criteria. They are looking for a change in the intensity or frequency of a certain extreme event.

If they find a change, they then work out what caused it. To do this, they use models. There are many different types of models; one example is creating two virtual worlds with exactly the same conditions, except one is pumped full of greenhouse gasses. These simulations then create thousands of weather scenarios allowing a direct comparison between the polluted world and the non-polluted world. The difference between the two suggests man-made climate change's culpability in certain weather events.

Although new, this form of science has already gone as far as science permits into proving the role of climate change in certain extreme weather events. "The vast majority of extreme weather events reviewed by researchers since 2011 – 70 percent – were shown to be more likely to occur, or were made more severe, because of global warming," Eric Roston and Brian Sullivan report in The Washington Post.

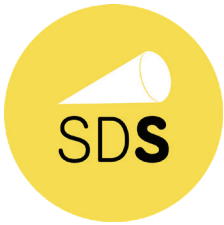
Take the floods in Pakistan in 2020, for instance. The World Weather Attribution scientists say that their "evidence suggests that climate change played an important role in the event, although our analysis doesn't allow us to quantify how big the role was." And Frederike Otto, a climatologist from Imperial College London, said that "the fingerprints of global warming [were] evident" in the disaster.

Extreme Event Attribution is a particular science that works on a case-by-case basis, but the trend is clear. Seventy percent of extreme weather events were made more likely or more damaging by man-made issues. Definitive proof will never be offered by science, but most studies point in the same direction: towards global warming.



**Skeptics say you can't prove anything, but climatologists beg to differ when it comes to proving links between extreme weather and climate change.** Credit: George Desipris, Pexels.





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### COMMENTARY

## Will the state's biggest city be small-thinking or visionary on the climate?

JULIA NATVIG

Have Sioux Falls voters elected leaders with narrow minds and small thinking, or visionaries with strategic plans and goals for a better Sioux Falls?

In February, Mayor Paul TenHaken announced that the detailed, carefully considered, and widely vetted city Sustainability Plan with clear goals and objective measures was being replaced by a framework of phony platitudes, guaranteeing no measurable success or progress. This occurred before the "real deal" plan could be considered and voted on by the city council. Now the question is whether city council members will meekly acquiesce.

The initial draft Sustainability Plan, rebuffed by the city council in March 2022, underwent revisions with input from major players including businesses, electric and gas utilities, the homebuilding industry, affordable housing, municipal government, environmental organizations, the health care sector, education and academia. The updated Sustainability Plan was approved by a 30-member Sustainability Steering Committee in December. This plan has six major focus areas: natural systems, transportation and land use, energy and buildings, materials management and waste, a sustainable economy, and community vitality and sustainable living.

Now Sioux Falls (and also Rapid City) has the opportunity to access up to \$1 million to fund many of the Sustainability Plan initiatives through money available from Climate Pollution Reduction Grants. Because Gov. Kristi Noem declined to apply for \$3 million available to the state, those funds are available to the most populous metropolitan areas in South Dakota. These cities can access the funds if they act by April 28 to request grant money for planning and implementation measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other harmful air pollution. The cities then have until May 31 to submit plans to the Environmental Protection Agency.

The EPA grant plan has two stages: planning and implementation. The grant money could be used to further develop Sioux Falls' existing Sustainability Plan as well as fund implementation measures. Many areas of the Sioux Falls Sustainability Plan dovetail closely with eligible activities included in the EPA grant program.

Activities in the transportation area include utilizing sustainable biofuels in fleet vehicles, implementing street intersection design to improve efficiencies and reduce vehicle idling, developing an electric vehicle readiness plan, and implementing recommendations to increase electric vehicle adoption and charging infrastructure.

Activities in the materials management and waste area include increasing food waste reduction and diversion from the landfill through education, community composting and industrial scale food waste diversion, which will also reduce methane production.

Activities in the area of energy and buildings include utilizing the 2018 (or newer) energy code for new municipal construction and significant renovations, increasing clean energy that powers city facilities, and educating and facilitating homeowners, building owners and others to take advantage of rebate opportunities from the Inflation Reduction Act.

So, back to the city council: The council is elected to serve the people of Sioux Falls, not to submit to

the will of a seemingly short-sighted mayor. Given that our council members' salaries are paid by city taxpayers, yes, we do expect more. We expect the city council to carefully study and consider all the proposals in the December 2022 updated Sustainability Plan. We expect them to make Sioux Falls a leader in addressing factors that impact climate change, and to create a city of excellence in policies and practices that contribute to a livable planet for us and future generations.

We expect the mayor to work toward measurable progress to help save the planet, and therefore help save us and future generations. A grant application for Climate Pollution Reduction funds would demonstrate good faith action in this regard.

Is Mayor TenHaken a small thinker or a visionary? Only time will tell.

*Julia Natvig has bachelor's degrees in biology and nursing, along with a master's in health education, and has taken two graduate courses in toxicology: target organ toxicology and environmental toxicology. She worked for more than 30 years in occupational health nursing before retiring. She participates in several local organizations, including Common Grounds Indivisible of SD, SoDak 350 and Dakota Rural Action.*

## **Viable male birth control options could be on the horizon** **One organization with a single donor is trying to lead the way in a lonely health care frontier**

**BY: KELCIE MOSELEY-MORRIS - APRIL 8, 2023 7:30 AM**

Heather Vahdat has been advocating for male contraceptive options for nearly a decade, but she is the first to say it is a lonely space to occupy in the health science field.

Vahdat is the executive director of the Male Contraceptive Initiative, based in Durham, North Carolina, which has been working with a single donor to provide up to \$1.5 million in grants per year for emerging male birth control technologies since 2017 — and that makes it the second largest funder of that type of research in the U.S., second only to the National Institutes of Health.

At the moment, the options for men are limited to condoms and vasectomies, Vahdat said, and while vasectomies can potentially be reversed, it doesn't always work.

Vahdat says demand for male contraceptives was already stronger than most would guess, but the U.S. Supreme Court's Dobbs decision in 2022 was a tipping point.

"After Roe fell, women looked around and said, 'What can you do?' and men looked around and said, 'Crap, what can I do?'" Vahdat said. "Men are waiting for this; I think it's really underestimated how much attention men are paying to this."

Cody Romero, a 32-year-old single Idaho resident, said he will be happy to take any method of male contraception once it is available, especially in the current environment of abortion restrictions.

After all, even with the birth control methods that are available for women, a recent estimate showed half of the world's yearly pregnancies are unplanned. In the United States, as of 2019 data from the Guttmacher Institute, about 45 pregnancies out of 1,000 in women between the ages of 15 and 44 were unintended.

"I don't like the idea of getting someone pregnant. That's scary," Romero said. "I always feel bad for the ladies that do get on birth control and struggle with some of them. It's like, 'Well, this is my fault as well.'"

Romero had only heard of a study on hormonal pills for male birth control that was cut short after some of the participants experienced adverse psychological effects — that was in 2016. But he said he is open to any method, particularly since he does want children at some point and doesn't want a vasectomy at his age.

Romero said among the men he knows, subjects like contraception are rarely talked about. But if more options became available, he thinks many of them would be interested in taking the contraception burden on themselves.

"Right now, it just feels like that's not something they need to take care of, 'It's someone else's problem' sort of thing, that's the impression I get," Romero said.



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## Potential 10 years of birth control with injectable gel

Although male contraceptives have been discussed and researched since as early as the 1950s, Vahdat said there has been little interest from pharmaceutical companies to invest in options for men. The Male Contraceptive Initiative has provided grant funding for research at institutes such as Emory University, Baylor College of Medicine, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Yale University.

The initiative also partnered with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to produce research released in February that assessed the demand for potential contraceptives for men across various regions of the world, including the United States, India, Africa and Vietnam. Two thousand men were surveyed in each country, and in the U.S., 78% of those surveyed said they would use male contraceptive methods if available. That included options such as hormonal pills, a gel that is rubbed into the shoulder, a nasal spray and implants or injections.

The organization is planning to replicate the survey in the U.S. to assess interest after the fall of Roe and the return of abortion regulation to the states.

One of the grants the Male Contraceptive Initiative provided in the last few years was for a hydrogel developed by Virginia-based business Contraline called ADAM, which is a similar technology in development by a company called NEXT Life Sciences.

Contraline representatives could not be reached for comment, but the ADAM technology is in use in a clinical trial in Australia that is expected to be completed by 2025.

L.R. Fox, CEO of NEXT Life, said his California-based company acquired rights to a technology that has been used in clinical trials in India for about 10 years called Reversible Inhibition of Sperm Under Guidance, or RISUG. NEXT Life is calling their product Plan A.

The non-hormonal contraceptive method involves the injection of a substance called vasalgel that forms a small, flexible filter inside the vas deferens — the duct that produces sperm — and filters sperm out while allowing other fluids to pass through.

The injection would take place during a quick doctor's visit with local anesthetic, Fox said, and he said it could potentially provide up to 10 years of birth control that could be reversed at any time. He likened it to non-hormonal IUD implants.

The company will begin clinical trials with Plan A at the end of this year, so those numbers are preliminary, according to Fox, but they are based on data from trials in India and animal studies, which he said have been promising so far. That length of time, if it holds true in clinical trials, will be much longer than similar hydrogel formulations, Fox said.

"Since the overturn of Roe, the only effective contraceptive option for men is currently a vasectomy, which solves the long-lasting problem, but is designed to be permanent," Fox said. "Therefore, it's primarily only used by men who are child complete at 45 or often 65 and older, so what we see is this massive demand from men who are in their 20s and 30s who are in committed relationships and who are saying they want to be able to participate in the family planning process."

## Contraception takes two, initiative leader says

The lack of investment into the development of male contraception hasn't gone unnoticed by Fox, who said he grew up in the foster care system and saw firsthand the "devastating consequences" that can occur when someone can't choose when to have a child.

"People aren't recognizing the problem because they sit back and say, 'Well, is it really needed?' because women have a solution," Fox said. "The assumption is we can just burden women with contraception that clearly is not sufficient."

Fox said 50,000 people have expressed interest in participating in the clinical trials, and if all goes as planned, he hopes Plan A will have approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and roll out on the market by 2026, which is "just right around the corner," he said.

Fox believes Plan A represents the best option because of its simplicity and potential effectiveness.

"Of course, those (pills and creams) are incredibly valuable contributions to science, but at the same

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time, one of the big concerns is how can you ensure effectiveness and also how do we remove user error?" Fox said. "That's why something long lasting and reversible is so key."

From Vahdat's perspective, it is unrealistic to expect an option to hit the market by 2026 given all of the bureaucratic hurdles involved in clinical trials and approval that can take years to complete. A 2018 study from the Tufts Center for the Study of Drug Development showed FDA-approved drugs and biologics spent an average of nearly 90 months — more than seven years — in the clinical trial phase.

But Vahdat does think the market in general is on a steady upward trajectory.

"What we can't do is slow that momentum," she said.

Vahdat said she'd love to see more investment from donors and organizations, but what will also aid the speed of bringing products to market is individuals demanding more options. Because in the meantime, the options remain limited.

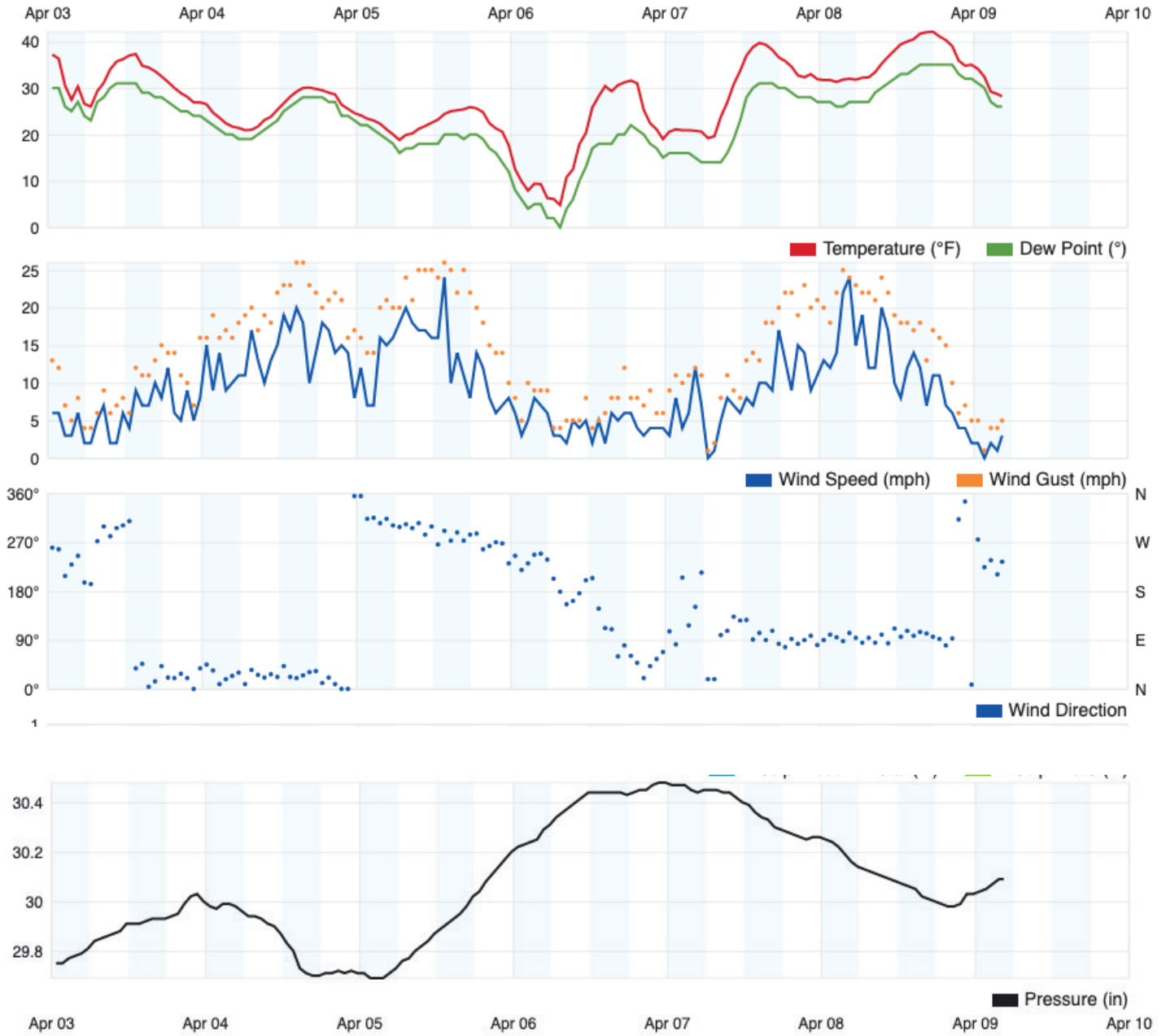
"We have to stop looking at contraception as either for men or for women. Like conception, you need two people," she said. "So with the onus being on women, we've kind of gendered that term, but really contraception is about two people preventing an unintended pregnancy."

*Kelcie Moseley-Morris is an award-winning journalist who has covered many topics across Idaho since 2011. She has a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Idaho and a master's degree in public administration from Boise State University. Moseley-Morris started her journalism career at the Moscow-Pullman Daily News, followed by the Lewiston Tribune and the Idaho Press.*

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## Past Week's Groton Weather Graphs





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Today	Tonight	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
						
Patchy Fog	Patchy Fog	Patchy Fog then Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Sunny and Breezy	Mostly Clear	Sunny
High: 44 °F	Low: 19 °F	High: 47 °F	Low: 35 °F	High: 59 °F	Low: 38 °F	High: 57 °F

## Snow Melt Continues – Warmer on Monday



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD  
[www.weather.gov/abr](http://www.weather.gov/abr)



### Today:



**Snow-cover: 40's**

**Snow-free: 50's-60's**

Patchy AM fog.

Light AM showers possible east-central SD into western MN.

### Monday:



**Snow-cover: 40's-50's**

**Snow-free: 60's-70's**

Patchy AM fog.

Partly to mostly cloudy.

Light to moderate southerly winds.

4/9/2023 5:00 AM

A couple of showers will be possible during the morning hours across portions of eastern South Dakota into western Minnesota. Otherwise, dry conditions are expected for most with a mix of sun and clouds. Temperatures will remain rather mild in snow free areas with cooler temps expected over snow cover areas. Similar set up expected on Monday as temps will be a bit warmer all around.

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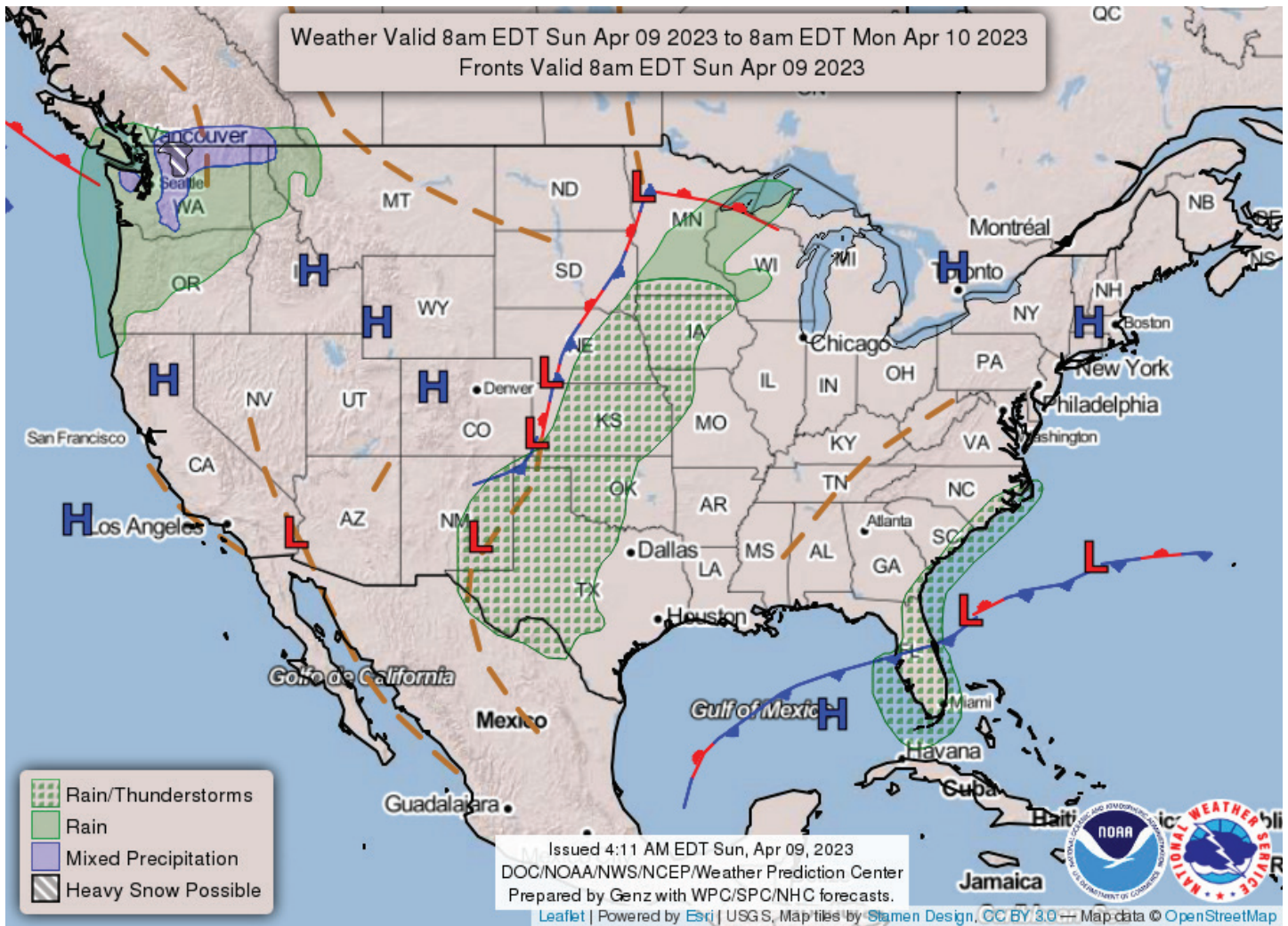
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 42 °F at 5:01 PM**  
**Low Temp: 31 °F at 2:26 AM**  
**Wind: 25 mph at 3:14 AM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 13 hours, 15 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 91 in 1977  
Record Low: 8 in 1997  
Average High: 55  
Average Low: 29  
Average Precip in April.: 0.41  
Precip to date in April.: 0.48  
Average Precip to date: 2.47  
Precip Year to Date: 4.41  
Sunset Tonight: 8:11:53 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:54:12 AM



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## Today in Weather History

April 9, 1997: A late season storm produced snow from the Black Hills through South Central South Dakota. The greatest amounts occurred in a 40-mile wide swath along and south of Interstate 90. Snowfall amounts included 9 inches at Rapid City, 12 inches at Deerfield, 10 inches at Custer, 11 inches at Mission, and 12 inches at Winner. Outside this swath, snowfall ranged from 3 to 6 inches.

April 9, 2007: Arctic air moved into central and northeast South Dakota and remained for nearly a week. High temperatures from April 3rd to April 9th were mostly in the 20s to around 30 degrees with lows in the single digits and teens. The high temperatures were from 20 to 30 degrees below average, and the lows were from 10 to 25 degrees below normal across all of the area. Some record lows and many record low maximum temperatures were set throughout the period. The first ten days of April were the coldest on record for Aberdeen. The early spring cold period affected many of the residents, especially farmers and ranchers, of central and northeast South Dakota. Also, many robins died from the cold and lack of food.

1877 - Oregon Inlet, NC, was widened three quarters of a mile by a nor'easter. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1889: The Norfolk Landmark reported that damage was more substantial than the August 1879 hurricane because it lasted for a much longer duration- the water was 18 inches higher. Rain, snow, and sleet fell, totaling 3.2 inches. Drummonds Bridge was swept away (later replaced by the Ghent Bridge). Trees were uprooted, and roofs were torn off.

1947 - A tornado struck Woodward, OK, during the late evening killing 95 persons and causing six million dollars damage. The tornado, one to two miles in width, and traveling at a speed of 68 mph, killed a total of 167 persons along its 221 mile path from Texas into Kansas, injured 980 others, and caused nearly ten million dollars damage. (David Ludlum) A man looking out his front door was swept by a tornado from his home near Higgins TX and carried two hundred feet over trees. The bodies of two people, thought to be together at Glazier TX, were found three miles apart. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1953: The first radar image of a tornado was detected by radar equipment at the University of Illinois Airport at Champaign, IL. Studies of the radar pictures from that day showed that a tornado of significant size and intensity could be detected.

1977 - A storm brought 15.5 inches of rain to Jolo, WV, in thirty hours. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - International Falls, MN, reported their sixth straight record high for the date, with a reading of 77 degrees. A cold front ushering sharply colder weather into the north central U.S. produced wind gusts to 60 mph at Glasgow MT. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Residents of Sioux City, IA, awoke to find two inches of snow on the ground following a record high temperature of 88 degrees the previous afternoon. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Eighteen cities in the southwestern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 80 degrees at Eureka CA established a record for the month of April. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced severe weather from the Central High Plains to Arkansas and northern Texas. Severe thunderstorms spawned five tornadoes, and there were seventy reports of large hail and damaging winds. A tornado injured four persons at Ardmore OK, and thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 70 mph at Kellyville OK, and hail three inches in diameter at Halmstead KS. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2011 - An EF-3 tornado hits Mapleton, IA. Officials estimate more than half the town is damaged or destroyed but none of the 1200 residents were killed. 31 tornadoes were confirmed across Iowa, Kentucky, Tennessee and North Carolina on this day.



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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### SECRET THINGS

A magician and his parrot were having a great time performing for the audiences on a large cruise ship. Whenever he would make a card disappear, the parrot would say, "It's up his sleeve." If he would make a dove appear, he would shout, "It came from his pocket."

One day, in the middle of performing their show, the ship hit an iceberg and sank. Sitting together with the magician in a life raft, the parrot asked, "OK, what did you do with the ship?"

There are many things in the Bible that are easily understood. They are clear, well-described and are obvious to the occasional reader. There are some passages that take research or an explanation from someone who has spent a lifetime searching and studying the Word of God. Then there are those passages that even the most learned scholars have difficulty explaining or interpreting. What then?

Moses wrote, "There are secret things that belong to the Lord our God, but the revealed things belong to us." Even though we can search, study and understand most of the Bible, our minds are finite. We will never be able to understand the infinite things of God. That is when and where faith begins.

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for giving us minds to know, hearts to believe and faith to accept Your Word. When doubts arise and faith fades, may we never doubt Your love! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: The LORD our God has secrets known to no one. We are not accountable for them, but we and our children are accountable forever for all that he has revealed to us, so that we may obey all the terms of these instructions. Deuteronomy 29:29



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

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## 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

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

04.07.23

12 32 49 51 66 21

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$441,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

04.08.23

1 14 35 37 39 5

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$2,150,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

04.08.23

1 16 18 20 41 5

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 11 Mins 14 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

04.08.23

8 9 18 27 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$23,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

04.08.23

15 26 44 49 51 22

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

04.08.23

11 22 24 51 60 18

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$192,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### Tensions build around Jerusalem shrine after Syria rockets

By ILAN BEN ZION Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli warplanes and artillery struck targets in Syria following rare rocket fire from the northeastern neighbor, as Jewish-Muslim tensions reached a peak Sunday at a volatile Jerusalem shrine with simultaneous religious rituals.

Thousands of Jewish worshippers gathered at the city's Western Wall, the holiest place where Jews can pray, for a mass priestly benediction prayer service for the Passover holiday. At the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, a walled esplanade above the Western Wall, hundreds of Palestinians performed prayers as part of observances during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Hundreds of Jews also visited the Al-Aqsa compound under heavy police guard Sunday, to whistles and religious chants from Palestinians protesting their presence.

Such tours by religious and nationalist Jews have increased in size and frequency over the years, and are viewed with suspicion by many Palestinians who fear that Israel plans one day to take over the site or partition it. Israeli officials say they have no intention of changing long-standing arrangements that allow Jews to visit, but not pray in the Muslim-administered site. However, the country is now governed by the most right-wing government in its history, with ultra-nationalists in senior positions.

Tensions have soared in the past week at the flashpoint shrine after an Israeli police raid on the mosque. On several occasions, 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. Police removed them by force, detaining hundreds and leaving dozens injured.

The violence at the shrine triggered rocket fire by Palestinian militants from the Gaza Strip and southern Lebanon, starting Wednesday, and Israeli airstrikes targeted both areas.

Late on Saturday and early Sunday, militants in Syria fired rockets in two salvos toward Israel and the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights. A Damascus-based Palestinian group loyal to the Syrian government claimed responsibility for the first round of rockets, saying it was retaliating for the Al-Aqsa raids.

In the first salvo, one rocket landed in a field in the Golan Heights. Fragments of another destroyed missile fell into Jordanian territory near the Syrian border, Jordan's military reported. In the second round, two of the rockets crossed the border into Israel, with one being intercepted and the second landing in an open area, the Israeli military said.

Israel responded with artillery fire into the area in Syria from where the rockets were fired. Later, the military said Israeli fighter jets attacked Syrian army sites, including a compound of Syria's 4th Division and radar and artillery posts.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan discussed the violence in a telephone call with Israeli counterpart Isaac Herzog late Saturday, telling Herzog that Muslims could not remain silent about the "provocations and threats" against the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and said the hostilities that have spread to Gaza and Lebanon should not be allowed to escalate further.

In addition to the cross-border fighting, three people were killed over the weekend in Palestinian attacks in Israel and the occupied West Bank.

The funeral for two British-Israeli sisters, Maia and Rina Dee, who were killed in a shooting was scheduled for Sunday at a cemetery in the Jewish settlement of Kfar Etzion in the occupied West Bank.

An Italian tourist, Alessandro Parini, 35, a lawyer from Rome, had just arrived in the city a few hours earlier with some friends for a brief Easter holiday. He was killed Friday in a suspected car-ramming on Tel Aviv's beachside promenade.

Over 90 Palestinians and have been killed by Israeli fire so far this year, at least half of them affiliated with militant groups, according to a tally by The Associated Press. Palestinian attacks on Israelis have

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killed 19 people in that time. All but one were civilians.

Associated Press writer Suzan Frazer in Ankara, Turkey, and Frances D'Emilio in Rome contributed to this report.

## **Pope, big crowd mark Easter in flower-adorned Vatican square**

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis opened a celebration of Mass on Easter Sunday joined by dozens of prelates and tens of thousands of pilgrims and tourists in St. Peter's Square, where spring flowers made the vast space bright. made bright by spring flowers.

Orange-red tulips, yellow sprays of forsythia and daffodils, and other colorful seasonal blooms were transported in trucks from the Netherlands on Saturday and set up in planters to decorate the Vatican square, which quickly filled up Sunday with Rome residents and Holy Week visitors to the city.

Some 45,000 people had gathered by the start of the mid-morning Mass, according to Vatican security services.

At the beginning of the Easter ceremony inspired by the core Christian belief that Jesus rose from the dead after his crucifixion, Francis sprinkled holy water and sounded somewhat tired as he recited ritual words in Latin.

A canopy on the edge of steps on the square sheltered the pontiff, who was back in the public eye 12 hours after a 2.25-hour long Easter vigil ceremony in St. Peter's Basilica the night before.

Still recovering from bronchitis, Francis, 86, skipped the traditional Good Friday procession at Rome's Colosseum due to unseasonably cold nighttime temperatures.

Sunday was breezy, but the temperature quickly rose a day after rain and strong wind gusts lashed Rome.

At the end of the Mass, Francis was set to deliver a speech that pontiffs give on Christmas and Easter. Known by its Latin name, "Urbi et Orbi," which means to the city and to the world, the message is a frequently an occasion to decry wars and injustices around the globe, including religious persecution.

Francis has generally rebounded following a three-day stay last week at a Rome hospital where he was administered antibiotics intravenously for bronchitis. He was discharged on April 1. Except for forgoing the Colosseum Way of the Cross torch-lit procession, he has stuck to a heavy schedule of Holy Week public appearances.

## **As tiger count grows, India's Indigenous demand land rights**

By SIBI ARASU Associated Press

BENGALURU, India (AP) — It was a celebratory atmosphere for officials gathered just hours away from several of India's major tiger reserves in the southern city of Mysuru, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced Sunday to much applause that the country's tiger population has steadily grown to over 3,000 since its flagship conservation program began 50 years ago after concerns that numbers of the big cats were dwindling.

"India is a country where protecting nature is part of our culture," Modi proclaimed. "This is why we have many unique achievements in wildlife conservation."

Modi also launched the International Big Cats Alliance that he said will focus on the protection and conservation of seven big cat species, namely, the tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, puma, jaguar and cheetah.

Protesters, meanwhile, are telling their own stories Sunday of how they have been displaced by wildlife conservation projects over the last half-century, with dozens demonstrating about an hour away from the announcement.

Project Tiger began in 1973 after a census of the big cats found India's tigers were fast going extinct through habitat loss, unregulated sport hunting, increased poaching and retaliatory killing by people. It's believed the tiger population was around 1,800 at the time, but experts widely consider that an overestimate due to imprecise counting methods in India until 2006. Laws attempted to address the decline,



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but the conservation model centered around creating protected reserves where ecosystems can function undisturbed by people.

Several Indigenous groups say the conservation strategies, deeply influenced by American environmentalism, meant uprooting numerous communities that had lived in the forests for millennia.

Members of several Indigenous or Adivasi groups — as Indigenous people are known in the country — set up the Nagarahole Adivasi Forest Rights Establishment Committee to protest evictions from their ancestral lands and seek a voice in how the forests are managed.

“Nagarahole was one of the first forests to be brought under Project Tiger and our parents and grandparents were probably among the first to be forced out of the forests in the name of conservation,” said J. A. Shivu, 27, who belongs to the Jenu Kuruba tribe. “We have lost all rights to visit our lands, temples or even collect honey from the forests. How can we continue living like this?”

Jenu, which means honey in the southern Indian Kannada language, is the tribe’s primary source of livelihood as they collect it from beehives in the forests to sell.

The fewer than 40,000 Jenu Kuruba people are one of the 75 tribal groups that the Indian government classifies as particularly vulnerable. Adivasi communities like the Jenu Kurubas are among the poorest in India.

Some experts say conservation policies that attempted to protect a pristine wilderness were influenced by prejudices against local communities.

The Indian government’s tribal affairs ministry has repeatedly said it is working on Adivasi rights. Only about 1% of the more than 100 million Adivasis in India have been granted any rights over forest lands despite a government forest rights law, passed in 2006, that aimed to “undo the historical injustice” for forest communities.

India’s tiger numbers, meanwhile, are thriving: the country’s 3,167 tigers account for more than 75% of the world’s wild tiger population.

Tigers have disappeared in Bali and Java and China’s tigers are likely extinct in the wild. The Sunda Island tiger, the other sub-species, is only found in Sumatra. India’s project to safeguard them has been praised as a success by many.

“Project Tiger hardly has a parallel in the world since a scheme of this scale and magnitude has not been so successful elsewhere,” said SP Yadav, a senior Indian government official in charge of Project Tiger.

But critics say the social costs of fortress conservation — where forest departments protect wildlife and prevent local communities from entering forest regions — is high.

Sharachandra Lele, of the Bengaluru-based Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment, said the conservation model is outdated.

“There are already several examples of forests used actively by local communities and tiger numbers have actually increased even while people have benefited in these regions,” he said.

Vidya Athreya, the director of Wildlife Conservation Society in India who has been studying the interactions between large cats and humans for the last two decades, agreed.

“Traditionally we always put wildlife over people,” Athreya said, adding that engaging with communities is the way forward for protecting wildlife in India.

Shivu, from the Jenu Kuruba tribe, also wants to go back to a life where Indigenous communities and tigers lived together.

“We consider them gods and us the custodians of these forests,” he said.

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Aniruddha Ghosal in New Delhi, India, contributed to this report.

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Follow Sibi Arasu on Twitter at @sibi123

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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.

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## Once everywhere, Saddam's image scrubbed from Baghdad

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB and QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Of his countless stories of his life as a hairdresser in Iraq, the one Qaiss al-Sharaa most enjoys retelling is about the day April 9, 2003, when he watched Iraqis and American Marines pull down the statue of Saddam Hussein in front of his salon in Baghdad's Firdos Square.

The 12-meter (39-foot) statue of the Iraqi dictator extending his right hand had been erected just a year earlier to celebrate his 65th birthday.

"There were lots of younger Iraqis from around the country with the American troops topping the statue — who naturally wanted their freedom," al-Sharaa told The Associated Press. "The statue showed the face of a man everyone feared."

For the world, it became an iconic moment of the U.S.-led invasion; live TV coverage as Marines tied the statue to a vehicle to pull the statue down inflated it into a symbol of the end of Saddam's quarter century rule. In reality, the Firdos Square statue was a minor part of the huge number of monuments and palaces that Saddam erected to show off his power.

All his statues and images are long gone now, 20 years after that day. Many of his palaces and buildings have been repurposed for a new Iraq. But much of the hope that came in wiping away Saddam's oppressive visual presence has also evaporated, burned away first by years of brutal violence and now by a wrecked economy and rampant corruption by the new political elite of sectarian-based factions.

Firdos Square has been refurbished as a small park, funded by private banks. On a building towering over the square is a large mural of Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani — assassinated in a 2020 U.S. drone strike — and Imam Hussein, grandson of the Prophet Muhammad. It is the sort of Shiite imagery that proliferates around Baghdad because of the domination of Iran-backed Shiite parties in the government.

"This new garden that replaced Saddam's represents the widespread corruption in Iraq today, underneath the nice greenery and fountains," said al-Sharaa. He said that while he doesn't miss Saddam's rule he does miss "the rule of the law."

"Families are too scared to take their kids there, because drug dealers hang out there at night," he said of the square.

It's not known what happened to most of the Saddam statue, but pieces of it were taken away by souvenir hunters.

A group of young U.S. Marines from Utah in 2003 said they sawed off the statue's right hand and intended to sell it on eBay. But it disappeared from their cargo as they tried to smuggle it home on their military flight back. All they have is the photo they took of themselves holding it like a prized fish. In 2016, a German antiques dealer said he bought Hussein's left leg and then resold it on eBay for over \$100,000. British journalist Nigel Ely wrote a 2017 book about a chunk of Saddam's left buttock that he pried off the statue. He tried to auction it off for charity but didn't get a high enough bid.

Saddam's policy of filling Baghdad and other cities with palaces and statues and portraits of himself "created this image of this divine leader," Senior Research Fellow at Chatham House Renad Mansour told the AP. Saddam "needed to project power in different ways to remind the people who was in charge."

Some of Saddam's signature monuments remain in place, largely because they had a nationalist meaning that went beyond him. Still towering over the Tigris River, for example, are the Victory Arch, an arch formed by two giant hands holding crossed swords, and two large turquoise half-domes called the al-Shaheed Monument, or Martyrs' Monument. They were opened in 1983 and 1989 to commemorate those killed in Iraq's war with Iran in the 1980s.

The al-Faw Palace was built on an island in the middle of an artificial lake by Saddam in the 1990s to mark the retaking of the peninsula of the same name during the war. It was first used post-2003 as a U.S. coalition military headquarters called Camp Victory. Later it was turned into the American University in Baghdad, through funding by influential Iraqi businessman Saadi Saihood.

Saddam's presence can still be found on campus. His initials are etched on the walls and ceilings. The artificial lake is still stocked with a breed of giant carp that U.S. soldiers called "Saddam bass."

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AUB Vice President Dr. Dawn Dekle said it was important to preserve the university's history. "This palace belongs to the future of Iraq," she told the AP. She now hopes the university can be a tool to retain Iraq's youth after years of Iraqis leaving the country. "The generation that went abroad are wanting to send their sons and daughters back to Iraq so they can experience it."

Anything directly reflecting Saddam was wiped away.

A day after the Firdos Square statue was taken down, Kurds pulled down a Saddam statue in the northern city of Kirkuk. They hit its face with shoes and celebrated the fall of a man who had brutally repressed their population, including a vicious campaign in the 1980s that Human Rights Watch called a genocide. That and other statues were replaced with images of Kurdish leaders, particularly Massoud Barzani, who led the Kurdish autonomous area in the north from 2005 to 2017.

In Baghdad, the biggest Shiite neighborhood had long been named Saddam City. Saddam, who brutally crushed any dissent among Iraq's Shiites, intentionally put a giant, colorful mural of himself in a main part of the district.

In June 2003, Shiites thronged to a ceremony that formally renamed the district as Sadr City, after a family of prominent Shiite clerics. A replacement mural was revealed, showing Mohammed-Baqir al-Sadr and Mohammed-Sadiq al-Sadr, two clerics killed under Saddam's regime for their opposition to his rule.

They are also the father-in-law and father, respectively, of Muqtada al-Sadr, a firebrand cleric whose militia that battled the U.S. occupation after Saddam's fall. Today, he is one of Iraq's most powerful factional leaders, presenting himself as an outsider opposed to rival, Iran-backed Shiite parties that dominate government positions. Sadr City, home to millions of mainly impoverished Shiites, is his core stronghold.

"Words cannot describe how I felt during that moment. It was like going from darkness to light," Thalal Moussa said of the renaming ceremony, which he attended as a teenager. Now 37 and a contractor at the state electricity agency, he has seen those expectations of a better future frustrated.

"Now unfortunately we have this corrupt junta that has controlled the country for the past 20 years."

## Israeli military retaliates after rockets fired from Syria

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The Israeli military said its forces attacked targets in Syria early Sunday after six rockets were launched from Syrian territory in two batches toward Israel in a rare attack from Israel's northeastern neighbor.

After the second barrage of three rockets, Israel initially said it responded with artillery fire into the area in Syria from where the rockets were fired. Later, the military said Israeli fighter jets attacked Syrian army sites, including a compound of Syria's 4th Division and radar and artillery posts.

The rocket firings came after days of escalating violence on multiple fronts over tension in Jerusalem and an Israeli police raid on the city's most sensitive holy site.

In the second barrage, which was launched early Sunday, two of the rockets crossed the border into Israel, with one being intercepted and the second landing in an open area, the Israeli military said. In the first attack, on Saturday, one rocket landed in a field in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights. Fragments of another destroyed missile fell into Jordanian territory near the Syrian border, Jordan's military reported.

There were no reports of casualties.

A Damascus-based Palestinian group loyal to the Syrian regime claimed responsibility for launching the three missiles Saturday, reported Beirut-based Al-Mayadeen TV.

The report quoted Al-Quds Brigade, a militia different than the larger Palestinian Islamic Jihad's armed wing with a similar name, as saying it fired the rockets to retaliate for the police raid on Al-Aqsa Mosque.

In Syria, an adviser to President Bashar Assad described the rocket strikes as "part of the previous, present and continuing response to the brutal enemy."

Israel, which has vowed to stop Iranian entrenchment in Syria, has carried out hundreds of strikes in government-controlled parts of that country in recent years, though it rarely acknowledges them. Before the latest strikes, Syrian officials had attributed 10 attacks to Israel this year, some of which put the Da-



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mascus and Aleppo airports temporarily out of service and killed civilians as well as Syrian soldiers and Iranian military advisers.

In the occupied West Bank, Israeli security forces fatally shot a 20-year-old Palestinian in the town of Azzun, Palestinian health officials said, stirring protests in the area. The Israeli military said troops fired at Palestinians hurling stones and explosive devices. The Palestinian Health Ministry identified the Palestinian killed as Ayed Salim.

His death came at a time of unusually heightened violence in the West Bank. Over 90 Palestinians and have been killed by Israeli fire so far this year, at least half of them affiliated with militant groups, according to a tally by The Associated Press.

Palestinian attacks on Israelis have killed 19 people in that time — including on Friday two British-Israelis shot to death near a settlement in the Jordan Valley and an Italian tourist killed by a suspected car-ramming in Tel Aviv. All but one were civilians.

The rocket fire from Syria comes against the backdrop of soaring Israeli-Palestinian tensions touched off by an Israeli police raid on Jerusalem's most sensitive site, the sacred compound home to the Al-Aqsa mosque. That outraged Palestinians marking the holy fasting month of Ramadan and prompted militants in Lebanon — as well as Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip — to fire a heavy barrage of rockets into Israel.

In retaliation, Israeli warplanes struck sites allegedly linked to the Palestinian militant group Hamas in Gaza and southern Lebanon.

Late Saturday, tensions ran high in Jerusalem as a few hundred Palestinian worshippers barricaded themselves in the mosque, which sits on a hilltop in the heart of Jerusalem's Old City sacred to both Muslims and Jews. Israeli police efforts to evict the worshippers locked in the mosque overnight with stockpiled firecrackers and stones spiraled into unrest in the holy site earlier this week.

The latest escalations prompted Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant to extend a closure barring entrance to Israel for Palestinians from the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip for the duration of the Jewish holiday of Passover, while police beefed up forces in Jerusalem on the eve of sensitive religious celebrations.

In a separate incident in the northern West Bank city of Nablus late Saturday, a leader of a local independent armed group known as the Lion's Den claimed the group executed an alleged Israeli collaborator who had tipped off the Israeli military to the locations and movements of the group's members. Israeli security forces have targeted and killed several of the group's key members in recent months.

The accused man's killing could not be immediately confirmed, but videos in Palestinian media showed medics and residents gathered around his bloodied body in the Old City, where the Lion's Den holds sway. "Traitors have neither a country nor a people," Lion's Den commander Oday Azizi said in a statement.

The moves come at a time of heightened religious fervor — with Ramadan coinciding with Passover and Easter celebrations. Jerusalem's Old City, home to key Jewish, Muslim and Christian holy sites, has been teeming with visitors and religious pilgrims from around the world.

Gallant said that a closure imposed last Wednesday, on the eve of Passover, would remain in effect until the holiday ends on Wednesday night. The order prevents Palestinians from entering Israel for work or to pray in Jerusalem this week, though mass prayers were permitted at the Al-Aqsa Mosque on Friday. Gallant also ordered the Israeli military to be prepared to assist Israeli police. The army later announced that it was deploying additional troops around Jerusalem and in the West Bank.

Over 2,000 police were expected to be deployed in Jerusalem on Sunday — when tens of thousands of Jews are expected to gather at the Western Wall for the special Passover priestly blessing. The Western Wall is the holiest site where Jews can pray and sits next to the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, where large crowds gather each day for prayers during Ramadan.

Jerusalem police chief Doron Turgeman met with his commanders on Saturday for a security assessment. He accused the Hamas militant group, which rules the Gaza Strip, of trying to incite violence ahead of Sunday's priestly blessing with false claims that Jews planned to storm the mosque.

"We will allow the freedom of worship and we will allow the arrival of Muslims to pray," he said, adding that police "will act with determination and sensitivity" to ensure that all faiths can celebrate safely.

The current round of violence erupted earlier in the week after Israeli police raided the mosque, firing

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tear gas and stun grenades to disperse hundreds of Palestinians who had barricaded themselves inside. Violent scenes from the raid sparked unrest in the contested capital and outrage across the Arab world.

## After strike, LA school district workers approve labor deal

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Los Angeles Unified School District workers have approved a labor deal following a three-day strike over wages and staffing that halted education for students in one of the nation's largest school systems.

The agreement, which was voted on this week, would increase wages by 30% for workers who are paid an average of \$25,000 a year, the Local 99 chapter of the Service Employees International Union said Saturday. It also includes a \$1,000 bonus for employees who worked during the COVID-19 pandemic and expanded family health care benefits.

The contract still needs to be approved by the school district's Board of Education. The school district said the board could take it up for a vote at a meeting on April 18.

Thousands of workers backed by teachers went on strike last month and rallied outside the school district's headquarters in downtown Los Angeles amid stalled contract talks. The goal was to demand better pay and increased staffing for the bus drivers, cafeteria workers, teachers' aides and other employees represented by the union.

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass thanked the school district and union for coming to an agreement in late March following the strike.

"We must continue working together to address our city's high cost of living, to grow opportunity and to support more funding for LA's public schools, which are the most powerful determinant of our city's future," the Democrat said in a statement.

The SEIU said many district support staffers live in poverty because of low pay or limited work hours while struggling with inflation and the high cost of housing in Los Angeles County.

The school district serves more than half a million students in the area, an enrollment size that is second only to the New York City Public Schools system.

Max Arias, the union's executive director, touted the deal as "a major step" to improve pay, hours and benefits for workers who "have been left behind for far too long."

"This contract recognizes the essential work of those who work hard to ensure students can learn in a clean, safe, and supportive environment," Arias said in a statement.

At the time of the strike, Superintendent Alberto M. Carvalho had accused the union of refusing to negotiate.

## NBA set for final day, and West race will go to the wire

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writers

The NBA will get what it wanted — drama to end the regular season.

All 30 teams will play their 82nd game of the season on Sunday, with four matchups — New Orleans at Minnesota, Utah at the Los Angeles Lakers, Golden State at Portland and the Los Angeles Clippers at Phoenix — set to decide how the Western Conference playoff and play-in bracket will look.

There are 16 possible seeding scenarios, based on the outcomes of those four games. And they'll all be starting at 3:30 p.m. Eastern, with no games scheduled to play later, meaning it's possible that the final shot of the regular season might be the one that fills out the bracket.

For the defending NBA champion Warriors and the Clippers, the math is easy: Win Sunday, and they're in the playoffs and about to get a week off to get ready for Round 1 matchups against either Sacramento or Phoenix. Lose Sunday, and the play-in tournament — which starts Tuesday — might be the daunting consolation prize.

"It's the only thing that we can control," Golden State coach Steve Kerr said. "There's other games that can factor in, but it doesn't matter to us as long as we win. That's a great position to be in and we've got to go do something about it."

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This much of the West is settled: Denver is the No. 1 seed, Memphis is No. 2, Sacramento is No. 3, Phoenix is No. 4, and Oklahoma City will be No. 10 for the play-in tournament.

The rest goes down to the wire.

The Clippers could be fifth, sixth or seventh. The Warriors could be fifth, sixth, seventh or eighth. The Lakers could be sixth, seventh or eighth. The Timberwolves could be seventh, eighth or ninth — and the Pelicans, somehow, have all the bases covered. New Orleans could be No. 5, No. 6, No. 7, No. 8 or No. 9 in the West when the final whistle blows on Sunday.

“We’ve got one more game to handle our business,” Pelicans coach Willie Green told his team Friday night.

There are some very simple possibilities Sunday:

— The loser of the New Orleans-Minnesota game will be the No. 9 seed and hosting Oklahoma City in an elimination game on Wednesday.

— The Clippers are the No. 5 seed with a win and will face the Suns in Round 1, after also seeing them in Sunday’s finale.

— New Orleans gets the No. 5 seed if it wins, combined with wins by Phoenix and Portland.

— The Lakers will be the No. 8 seed and on the road for a play-in game Tuesday if they lose to Utah. They would be No. 6 or No. 7 with a win, except if the Pelicans, Warriors and Suns all also win. That scenario would leave the Lakers No. 8.

— There is a chance for a Clippers-Lakers play-in game to happen on Tuesday night. New Orleans and Phoenix would both have to win as part of the formula, and then there would have to be Lakers-Warriors, Jazz-Warriors or Jazz-Blazers wins as well.

— The Warriors are the No. 5 seed (facing Phoenix) or the No. 6 seed (facing Sacramento in a matchup of teams separated by about 90 miles) with a win. If the Warriors and Clippers both win, Golden State is No. 6. Otherwise, a Warriors win clinches the No. 5 seed.

“Whatever team we play, I think we’ll be ready for,” Warriors guard Donte DiVincenzo said.

## EAST BRACKET

The Eastern Conference bracket is set, regardless of Sunday’s outcomes. No. 1 Milwaukee, No. 2 Boston, No. 3 Philadelphia, No. 4 Cleveland, No. 5 New York and No. 6 Brooklyn have playoff berths locked. No. 7 Miami will face No. 8 Atlanta in a play-in game Tuesday, No. 9 Toronto plays No. 10 Chicago in an elimination game Wednesday, and the Heat-Hawks loser faces the Raptors-Bulls winner on Friday.

The Heat-Hawks winner will play Boston in Round 1. The winner of the Friday game will play Milwaukee in Round 1.

## SCORING RACE

Philadelphia’s Joel Embiid will be the scoring champion for a second consecutive year, averaging 33.1 points per game. His closest pursuers — Dallas’ Luka Doncic (32.4) and Portland’s Damian Lillard (32.2) — are done for the season, and Embiid won’t play Sunday in a meaningless finale for Philadelphia.

Doncic and Lillard both did something this season that only one other player had pulled off in the last 59 seasons combined.

Before this season, only two players had ever averaged at least 32 points per game and not won the scoring crown. Allen Iverson (33.0) was second to the Los Angeles Lakers’ Kobe Bryant (35.4) in 2005-06, and Elgin Baylor (who averaged 34.0 points in 1962-63, 38.3 in 1961-62 and 34.8 in 1960-61) was the other player on that list.

Baylor lost the scoring race in all three of those seasons to Wilt Chamberlain.

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



## Ben Ferencz, last living Nuremberg prosecutor of Nazis, dies

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

Ben Ferencz, the last living prosecutor from the Nuremberg trials, who tried Nazis for genocidal war crimes and was among the first outside witnesses to document the atrocities of Nazi labor and concentration camps, has died. He had just turned 103 in March.

Ferencz died Friday evening in Boynton Beach, Florida, according to St. John's University law professor John Barrett, who runs a blog about the Nuremberg trials. The death also was confirmed by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington.

"Today the world lost a leader in the quest for justice for victims of genocide and related crimes," the museum tweeted.

Born in Transylvania in 1920, Ferencz immigrated as a very young boy with his parents to New York to escape rampant antisemitism. After graduating from Harvard Law School, Ferencz joined the U.S. Army in time to take part in the Normandy invasion during World War II. Using his legal background, he became an investigator of Nazi war crimes against U.S. soldiers as part of a new War Crimes Section of the Judge Advocate's Office.

When U.S. intelligence reports described soldiers encountering large groups of starving people in Nazi camps watched over by SS guards, Ferencz followed up with visits, first at the Ohrdruf labor camp in Germany and then at the notorious Buchenwald concentration camp. At those camps and later others, he found bodies "piled up like cordwood" and "helpless skeletons with diarrhea, dysentery, typhus, TB, pneumonia, and other ailments, retching in their louse ridden bunks or on the ground with only their pathetic eyes pleading for help," Ferencz wrote in an account of his life.

"The Buchenwald concentration camp was a charnel house of indescribable horrors," Ferencz wrote. "There is no doubt that I was indelibly traumatized by my experiences as a war crimes investigator of Nazi extermination centers. I still try not to talk or think about the details."

At one point toward the end of the war, Ferencz was sent to Adolf Hitler's mountain retreat in the Bavarian Alps to search for incriminating documents but came back empty-handed.

After the war, Ferencz was honorably discharged from the U.S. Army and returned to New York to begin practicing law. But that was short-lived. Because of his experiences as a war crimes investigator, he was recruited to help prosecute Nazi war criminals at the Nuremberg trials, which had begun under the leadership of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson. Before leaving for Germany, he married his childhood sweetheart, Gertrude.

At the age of 27, with no previous trial experience, Ferencz became chief prosecutor for a 1947 case in which 22 former commanders were charged with murdering over 1 million Jews, Romani and other enemies of the Third Reich in Eastern Europe. Rather than depending on witnesses, Ferencz mostly relied on official German documents to make his case. All the defendants were convicted, and more than a dozen were sentenced to death by hanging even though Ferencz hadn't asked for the death penalty.

"At the beginning of April 1948, when the long legal judgment was read, I felt vindicated," he wrote. "Our pleas to protect humanity by the rule of law had been upheld."

With the war crimes trials winding down, Ferencz went to work for a consortium of Jewish charitable groups to help Holocaust survivors regain properties, homes, businesses, art works, Torah scrolls, and other Jewish religious items that had been confiscated from them by the Nazis. He also later assisted in negotiations that would lead to compensation to the Nazi victims.

In later decades, Ferencz championed the creation of an international court which could prosecute any government's leaders for war crimes. Those dreams were realized in 2002 with establishment of the International Criminal Court in The Hague, though its effectiveness has been limited by the failure of countries like the United States to participate.

Ferencz is survived by a son and three daughters. His wife died in 2019.

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## Texas gov. seeks to pardon Army sergeant convicted of murder

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said Saturday that he is seeking to pardon a U.S. Army sergeant who was convicted of murder in the 2020 fatal shooting of an armed protester during nationwide protests against police violence and racial injustice.

Abbott tweeted that because the state constitution limits him to a pardon only on a recommendation by the state Board of Pardons and Paroles he is asking the board to recommend a pardon and to expedite his request in order to pardon Sgt. Daniel Perry.

"I look forward to approving the board's pardon recommendation as soon as it hits my desk," Abbott wrote.

Perry was convicted Friday by a Travis County jury of fatally shooting 28-year-old Garrett Foster during a protest in Austin. He faces up to life in prison when sentenced.

"Texas has one of the strongest 'Stand Your Ground' laws of self-defense that cannot be nullified by a jury or a progressive District Attorney," Abbott said.

A phone call to District Attorney José Garza's office on Saturday was not answered.

Perry's attorneys argued that the shooting was self-defense as Foster approached Perry's car with an AK-47 rifle. Prosecutors said Perry could have driven away before firing his revolver and witnesses testified that Foster never raised his rifle at Perry.

Perry, who was charged in 2021, was stationed at Ft. Hood about 70 miles (112 kilometers) north of Austin in July 2020 when he was working for a ride-sharing company and turned onto a street and into a large crowd of demonstrators in downtown Austin.

In video streamed live on Facebook, a car can be heard honking before several shots ring out and protesters begin screaming and scattering.

When Foster was killed, demonstrators in Austin and beyond had been marching in the streets for weeks following the police killing of George Floyd.

Floyd died May 25, 2020, after a Minneapolis police officer pressed his knee against the Black man's neck for more than nine minutes. Floyd, who was handcuffed, repeatedly said he couldn't breathe.

Floyd's killing was recorded on video by a bystander and sparked worldwide protests as part of a broader reckoning over racial injustice.

## Rain halts Masters play yet again, making Sunday a long day

By DAVE SKRETTA and STEVE REED AP Sports Writer

AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP) — Heavy rain that left pools of standing water across Augusta National brought play to a halt at the Masters on Saturday, and Brooks Koepka and the rest of the field will have a long Sunday slog to determine who will wear the green jacket.

Many players had returned to the course early to finish second rounds, which were suspended Friday when a storm came through the area. It caused three towering pine trees to fall — nobody was hurt — and workers made sure there was little evidence it even happened by the time patrons returned to the course.

The crushed chairs and other debris had been cleaned up, and all that was left were three 10-by-10 foot areas near the 16th green and 17th tee that were roped off. Some wood chips were scattered about where the workers had cut up the pines, and two of the areas were covered with green gravel and another with pine straw.

Sergio Garcia teed off at the 17th as he finished his second round, and the 2017 champion tried to crane his head over the patrons as he walked toward his shot to see where the trees had stood. Several workers around the area were still discussing what happened, and one called it "a miracle" that no one was injured or killed.

"I was standing on the right side, which is near 17, right by the back right bunker on 16 lining up my putt," 1987 champion Larry Mize said. "Then all of a sudden, I heard it, and I looked around, and I saw the trees.

"I'm thinking, 'Oh, my gosh, people, get out of there,'" Mize said. "Thank goodness no one was hurt."

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Heavy rain returned early in the third round, causing play to be suspended. The forecast looks drier for Sunday, when the field will finish that round before playing the final round.

"It is what it is," said 63-year-old Fred Couples, who was 1 over after his second round and broke Bernhard Langer's record for the oldest player to make the cut at the Masters. "Am I going to look thrilled to play 18 holes in this this afternoon? No, I'm a wimp. I'm an old wimp. But I'm excited to play."

Turns out Couples played only nine, three holes more than Koepka, who was at 13 under and had a four-shot lead.

On Friday, the course was initially cleared for 21 minutes because of an early band of storms. The air horns sounded again at 4:22 p.m. as another set arrived, forcing the evacuation of patrons and sending players and officials scrambling for cover.

Just before the second horn sounded, three enormous pines slowly fell near the 17th tee, sending about 50 people scattering. On the nearby 16th green, Harrison Crowe watched a tree fall and started to back-pedal in surprise, while on the 15th green, Garcia stopped and stared at what seemed to be happening in slow motion.

"We were cresting the fairway on 15. We thought it was a scoreboard or a grandstand," said Sahith Theegala, who is playing in his first Masters. "We were hoping it wasn't something that hit anybody."

The uprooted pines fell slowly, with two of them acting as support for the third, and that provided time for the patrons below to get out of the way. But the close call was evidenced by several crushed chairs beneath the fallen trees.

"I was talking to friends next to me and all of sudden we heard a crack," said Katie Waites of Charleston, South Carolina, who was attending the second round. "And there were three trees across the pond, and all of a sudden we saw them falling and everybody — it was just like ants. They were, like, scattering just like ants from beneath. All three fell at the same time. And then I just grabbed my friends' hands, we were like, 'Is everyone OK?' And it was silent."

Waites said she saw one woman standing between two of the fallen trees, and she heard that a man had crawled out from beneath some of the limbs. Like the workers Saturday, Waites called it "absolutely a miracle" that nobody was hurt.

"The safety and well-being of everyone attending the Masters Tournament will always be the top priority," Augusta National said in a statement. "We will continue to closely monitor weather today and through the Tournament."

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AP Sports Writers Doug Ferguson and Paul Newberry contributed to this report.

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

## Competing abortion pill rulings sow broad alarm, confusion

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN and KEN MILLER Associated Press

Emma Hernandez is defiant even if she fears what may come in the latest stage of the nation's fight over abortion: a widening prohibition to safe and legal ways to end unwanted pregnancies, including access to abortion pills.

Competing rulings by two federal judges over the availability of the abortion drug mifepristone are sowing alarm and confusion for Hernandez and countless other Americans who insist that availability must be guaranteed. Others celebrated one judge's ruling that would restrict that access but acknowledge the battle is far from over.

Hernandez's concerns were heightened Friday when U.S. District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk, a Trump appointee in Amarillo, Texas, overruled decades of scientific approval and put on hold federal approval of mifepristone, one of two drugs used in combination to end pregnancies. The judge immediately stayed his ruling for a week so federal authorities could file a challenge.

At about the same time in Spokane, Washington, U.S. District Judge Thomas O. Rice, an Obama ap-



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pointee, directed federal officials not to hinder access to the drug in at least 17 states where Democrats sued to keep the drug's availability intact. The issue will likely be settled by the U.S. Supreme Court, which last year repealed Roe v. Wade, the 1973 landmark Supreme Court decision that had established a constitutional right to abortions.

"As a person who's had multiple medication abortions, we know that the medication itself is safe and effective," said Hernandez, a 30-year-old Texas resident who works for We Testify, an organization that provides an outlet for people to share their stories about abortions.

"These restrictions are intentionally creating confusion and limiting our options to a point where we're being asked to accept whatever abortion option remains available," she said Saturday.

Abortion opponents like Rose Mimms, the executive director of Arkansas Right to Life, welcomed the Texas decision.

"That's really going to put a big dent in the abortion industry across the country, (but) I do expect it will be appealed," Mimms said.

While some states like hers have sharply curtailed access to abortions, she wants stricter controls over abortion-inducing medications that can be delivered through the mail, even in states where abortion is illegal or severely restricted.

In his ruling, Kacsmayk noted how some groups are undermining a state's ability to regulate abortion. He specifically mentioned New York-based Mayday Health, a nonprofit that provides information on how to obtain the medication.

Mayday Health's executive director, Dr. Jennifer Lincoln, urged women to begin stockpiling mifepristone in case it is banned. She said pills can be obtained from international suppliers through the mail.

"You can order them now and keep mifepristone like you would keep Tylenol. It has a shelf life of about two years," said Lincoln, a Portland, Oregon, obstetrician and gynecologist.

About a million people every month visit the organization's website. Following the Texas ruling, Lincoln said, the number of visits has become even more brisk.

"We know those numbers will climb when people see that safe healthcare is threatened," she said.

Renee Bracey Sherman, founder and executive director of We Testify, said she is "frustrated that access to abortion care is hanging on by a thread."

While mifepristone and misoprostol, another abortion-inducing drug, remain available in the U.S., Sherman calls the court battle and debate over the drugs "a very slippery slope" toward an outright ban on abortion in any form.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said during an interview Saturday on CNN that she would push legislation that would require insurance companies to cover misoprostol, which can be used alone but is more effective when taken with mifepristone.

"We're also concerned about the next phase," Hochul said. "We're trying to figure out all the different ways we can get ahead of this."

In recent years, abortion foes have won major victories, and they have become more emboldened in their efforts to further erode access to abortions, said Hernandez.

"It's something that we saw around the bend," she said. "I do know that we've been preparing for these moments and understanding how we can get people to still have access in whatever way is available in their region."

The growing restrictions could particularly hurt people who don't have the resources to travel to such places as California and New York to get in-clinic abortions.

Hernandez recalls her first abortion when she was 21. She didn't want to reveal her pregnancy to anyone; to retain her privacy, she relied on medication to abort her pregnancy. Without access to a car, she would not have had a convenient way to get to a clinic.

"For me it was the best option because it did not require any sort of sedation," Hernandez said. "And I did not have a support system that could assist me in traveling to and from a clinic for an abortion procedure."

\_\_\_\_\_ Calvin reported from New York and Miller from Oklahoma City.

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## Masters Live Updates | Play to resume at 8:30 a.m. Sunday

AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP) — Live updates from Saturday's second and third rounds of the Masters (all times local):

5:10 p.m.

Augusta National has set the schedule to complete the weather-delayed Masters on Sunday.

The third round is scheduled to resume at 8:30 a.m. If that goes according to plan, the final round would begin at 12:30 p.m., with pairs going off from both the first and 10th tees.

Stormy weather led to a suspension of play on both Friday and Saturday. Leader Brooks Koepka, who holds a four-stroke advantage over Jon Rahm, is now facing the prospect of playing 30 holes on Sunday — his final 12 holes of the third round, and the 18-hole final round.

At least the forecast looks much more favorable. The rain is expected to tail off overnight, with the sun possibly breaking through the clouds Sunday afternoon.

There hasn't been a Monday finish at the Augusta National since 1983.

3:25 p.m.

Play has been halted for the day at the Masters because of nasty weather.

A steady rain only got heavier after the third round began shortly before lunchtime, with those making the cut going off in threesomes from both the first and 10th tees.

But it became impossible to carry on as large puddles began to form on the pristine greens.

The horn sounded about 3:15 p.m. EDT, and Augusta National officials quickly announced that play was suspended for the rest of the day with the forecast showing no signs of improving.

So, everyone will return to the course early Sunday to finish off the third round, with Brooks Koepka holding a four-shot lead over Jon Rahm. Then, they'll jump right into the final round with hopes of completing play before sundown,

At least Sunday's forecast is much more promising, with temperatures expected to climb into the mid-60s and sunshine breaking through in the afternoon.

2:50 p.m.

The Masters says its prize money this year will be \$18 million, an increase from \$15 million a year ago. The winner will get \$3,240,000. That's more than the entire purse (\$3.2 million) at the Masters 25 years ago.

None of the majors has matched the PGA Tour's \$20 million purse for its elevated events — The Players Championship has a \$25 million purse.

The next major is the PGA Championship, and PGA of America officials have been waiting to see what the Masters would do with its purse. The PGA Championship also was at \$15 million last year.

The U.S. Open purse last year was \$17.5 million, while the British Open purse was \$14 million.

2:35 p.m.

Brooks Koepka has opened a four-stroke lead over Jon Rahm and is beginning to put some distance between the rest of the field in a rain-drenched third round of the Masters.

But three-time Masters champion Phil Mickelson is lurking on the fluctuating leaderboard.

Mickelson is 1 under through six holes Saturday and has moved into a tie for fifth place eight shots behind Koepka, who is 13 under. Collin Morikawa is in third place, six shots back at 7 under in third place.

Amateur Sam Bennett has fallen off the pace and is 2 over for the day, seven shots behind.

11:15 a.m.

LIV star Brooks Koepka holds a two-shot lead at the Masters over Jon Rahm at 12 under following the conclusion of the weather-delayed second round.

Despite a steady rain, the third round will get underway at 11:30 with players teeing off in threesomes from both the front and back nine as tournament officials look to squeeze in as much golf as possible with

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more bad weather in the forecast.

Amateur Sam Bennett is four shots behind at 8 under. First round co-leader Viktor Hovland is seven shots back after a shooting 73, leaving him in a tie for fifth place with Collin Morikawa.

Rahm took to the course Saturday morning at 9 under through nine holes and rallied to pull to within one shot on the lead on two occasions, but a bogey on 18 amid a heavy downpour left him two shots behind Koepka. Koepka finished his second round on Friday and will be fresh for the third round.

Tiger Woods made the cut — barely — for the 23rd straight year, tying a tournament record. For those fans harboring hopes of another miracle run and sixth Masters title by Woods, the largest 36-hole come-back in Masters history came from Jack Burke Jr., who overcame an eight-shot deficit to beat amateur Ken Venturi in 1956. Woods trails by 15 strokes.

It poured throughout the completion of the second round and the course is growing more saturated following an overnight rain, making play increasingly more difficult.

"I you manage to break 70 this afternoon in these conditions it will be a pretty good score," said Shane Lowry.

Twelve of the 18 LIV golfers made the cut. \_\_\_\_

10:35 a.m.

Tiger Woods has backed into more history at the Masters.

On a cold, rainy morning, Woods made his 23rd consecutive cut at the Masters despite closing the weather-delayed second round with back-to-back bogeys.

He ties the record shared by Gary Player and Fred Couples. Woods has never missed the Masters cut since turning professional.

Woods finished the round with a 1-over 73 and walked off the course a shot above the projected cut line of 2-over 146. But the line climbed to 3 over when Justin Thomas made a bogey at the 17th.

Woods' spot in the final two rounds was secured when Thomas failed to make a birdie at the 18th.

Thomas wound up missing the cut himself when he made another bogey at the 18th.

10 a.m.

Tiger Woods is in danger of missing the Masters cut for the first time in his professional career.

Woods closed out his weather-delayed second round with back-to-back bogeys for a 1-over 73. That left him with a 3-over 147 at the midway point of the tournament.

At the moment, he's below the projected cut line of 2 over. But there's a chance Woods could play the final two rounds if either Justin Thomas or Sungjae Im drops another shot coming in.

If so, the top-50 cut line would move to 3 over.

Woods has made 22 consecutive cuts at the Masters since turning pro. He is one away from tying the record shared by Gary Player and Fred Couples.

8:30 a.m.

It appears that Fred Couples will be playing the rest of the weekend at the Masters.

The 1992 champion finished his second round with a bogey, leaving him at 1 over for the championship and inside the projected cut line. That would make the 63-year-old Couples the oldest player to make the cut at Augusta National, beating the mark that Bernhard Langer set during the 2020 tournament by about 3 1/2 months.

It also would be the 31st career cut for Couples, trailing only Jack Nicklaus' record of 37.

At one point, Couples made 23 straight cuts to tie Gary Player for the longest such streak at the Masters. Five-time champion Tiger Woods can join them by making the cut Saturday. He had six holes left in the cold, rainy weather and was right on the projected cut line of 2 over. Woods has never missed the cut as a professional.

Players are trying to finish the second round, which was suspended Friday due to weather, before the third round begins later Saturday. The temperature is in the 40s with a cold drizzle and rain is expected to continue throughout the day with storms possible.



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8 a.m.

The second round of the Masters resumed after storms brought down three pine trees the previous day and ground play to a halt. Brooks Koepka has the clubhouse lead at 12 under with Jon Rahm among those giving chase.

There were two stoppages during the second round Friday, the first for 21 minutes and the second for the day. The second suspension came moments after the three massive pines fell near the 17th tee. Nobody in their vicinity was hurt.

The forecast for the rest of the weekend calls for more rain and high temperatures in the 50s.

Rahm resumed his second round three shots back of Koepka with the back nine still to play. Also yet to finish their second rounds were Viktor Hovland, who shared the first-round lead and was 6 under, and Cameron Young, who was 5 under.

Tiger Woods was bundled up in a stocking cap and puffy vest as he warmed up under floodlights before the sun rose on the practice range Saturday. He was 2 over and just inside the cut line with seven holes left to play. The five-time Masters champion is trying to make his 23rd consecutive cut at Augusta National, tying the record shared by Gary Player and Fred Couples. Woods has never missed one at the Masters as a professional.

Also in contention is U.S. Amateur champion Sam Bennett, who finished his second round and is 8 under. That's the second-best 36-hole score by an amateur at the Masters behind only Ken Venturi, who was one better in 1956.

Louis Oosthuizen did not return to finish his second round. He was 7 over before withdrawing due to injury.

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## Koepka leading Rahm by 4 on a short Saturday at the Masters

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP) — Moving day at the Masters was mostly about everyone leaving on Saturday.

A cold, relentless rain was too much for Augusta National to handle, leading to one of the earliest finishes for a Saturday — just 15 minutes after CBS came on the air — and setting up a marathon finish for Brooks Koepka, Jon Rahm and anyone able to catch them.

Koepka, who began the third round with a two-shot lead over Rahm, extended it to four shots when the Spaniard made consecutive bogeys. They made it to the seventh green, already filled with tiny pools of water, before play was suspended for the day.

The round was to resume at 8:30 a.m. Sunday, followed by another two-tee start.

Tiger Woods was relieved to make the cut — his 23rd in a row at the Masters, tying the tournament record — and then looked as though he couldn't get off the course fast enough after making back-to-back double bogeys for the first time ever at Augusta National. He was in last place, 22 shots behind.

Koepka was at 13-under par and faced a 10-foot par putt on the seventh green. Rahm was at 9 under and had about 8 feet for birdie. There was a long way to go.

"I'm not too concerned about playing 29 holes or however many holes we've got left," Koepka said. "It's part of the deal. I'm pretty sure I'll be up for it considering it is the Masters. So I don't think anybody should have a problem with that."

The lasting image was thousands of spectators under their green-and-white Masters umbrellas moving slowly in unison toward the exit.

There was plenty of entertainment in the short window of golf, most of it in the morning when the second round was completed.

Temperatures didn't quite reach 50 degrees Fahrenheit (10 degrees Celsius). The rain and wind made it feel worse, and playing conditions were so severe that hardly anyone could reach the par 5s. Some play-

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ers were hitting fairway metal on the par-4 18th.

Rahm did remarkably well to close the gap on Koepka, getting to within one shot when he holed a birdie putt from just off the back of the 17th green. But he came up short of the 18th with a 4-iron — he hit 8-iron into the 18th hole in warm weather on Thursday — and made bogey for a 69.

“Those two holes at the end, 17 and 18, were two absolute monsters,” Rahm said.

Cameron Young summed it for some three dozen players who were forced to handle the rain, the cold and a course that played longer than it ever has on Saturday morning.

“It’s basically impossible,” Young said. “I really don’t know what you’re supposed to do.”

Players lost tee shots to the right because of water on the face of the club — even after wiping it dry before they hit. Shots were skidding across rain-soaked greens. The ball was going nowhere.

Koepka was among the fortunate who finished his second round in the warm breeze on Friday before the bad weather moved in and changed everything.

While it was the first time at the Masters that two players finished 36 holes at double digits under par, this felt more like survival.

No one paid the price quite like Justin Thomas. He returned to the course at 2 under for the tournament and began losing ground quickly, with a shot into the water on the 11th for a double bogey, a tee shot over the back of the green on the par-3 12th and a three-putt bogey on the par-5 15th from 45 feet.

Woods had his own issues. He was hovering around the cut line — he had never missed the cut as a pro at Augusta — when he finished bogey-bogey to fall outside the top 50 and ties. He needed either Thomas or Sungjae Im to bogey one of the last two holes to make it.

Both obliged, but Thomas wound up making bogey on Nos. 17 and 18. He had to hit 5-wood into the 18th, pulled it into the gallery and missed a 10-foot putt for a 42 on the back nine and a 78, matching his worst score in the Masters.

There was a brief respite in the rain, and then out came the umbrellas not long after the third round began.

U.S. Amateur champion Sam Bennett, who at 8-under 136 had the lowest 36-hole score by an amateur since Ken Venturi in 1956, promptly bogeyed his opening two holes.

“It was brutal out there,” Bennett said. “I think they honestly could have called it about 45 minutes earlier, but they tried their best.”

Koepka and Rahm each birdied the par-5 second hole, but then Rahm got out of position on the par-3 fourth for bogey, and three-putted from long range on the fifth. But he ended his day with two good swings and then was done for the day.

Having to complete the third round on Sunday morning is not unusual. The last two times for weather delays on Saturday (2005 and 2006), play resumed and was stopped by darkness. This time it was 3:15 p.m., an abrupt and early end.

The forecast for Sunday should allow for the Masters to finish as scheduled. But even as rain clears, it is sure to leave a softer Augusta National that can be attacked.

“It looks like it’s good weather tomorrow — so we’re going to have good weather conditions and most likely a soft golf course,” Rahm said.

Patrick Cantlay and U.S. Open champion Matt Fitzpatrick were 3 under for the second round, the best of scoring on this miserable day. They were tied for fourth, along with Collin Morikawa and Viktor Hovland, still eight shots behind.

Phil Mickelson also was in the mix. The three-time Masters champion had two early birdies before giving them back. He was in the group at 4-under par and headed to the back nine when play was stopped.

Woods ended Saturday morning with two bogeys and started Saturday afternoon — he was in the last group on the back nine — with another one. But it really got ugly at the end. His wedge to the 15th spun off the green and into the water. And on the par-3 16th, with a front right pin, he went well left and into the water.

But in only his fourth tournament since last year’s Masters, he was still playing. He joined Fred Couples

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and Gary Player in the Masters record book with his 23rd straight cut made. Couples carved out his own spot in the book. At age 63, he became the oldest player to make the cut at the Masters.

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## NBA opens investigation into Dallas' move to sit players

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

The NBA wants to know why the Dallas Mavericks held out several key players in their next-to-last game of the season, even while the team still had a mathematical chance of making the play-in tournament.

NBA officials opened an investigation Saturday into the Mavericks' decision-making surrounding Friday's game against the Chicago Bulls, in which Dallas sat Kyrie Irving for the entire game and Luka Doncic for most of the contest. The Mavericks blew an 11-point fourth-quarter lead and lost, getting eliminated from postseason consideration.

That outcome also could help ensure that Dallas has a top-10 draft pick this summer — and with it, potentially a 4.5% chance of winning the lottery and getting the opportunity to select French phenom Victor Wembanyama.

"The NBA commenced an investigation today into the facts and circumstances surrounding the Dallas Mavericks' roster decisions and game conduct with respect to last night's Chicago Bulls-Mavericks game, including the motivations behind those actions," league spokesman Mike Bass said.

Potential penalties are unclear, though Commissioner Adam Silver made clear before the season began that the league wouldn't tolerate any obvious attempts at tanking.

"I know that many of our NBA teams are salivating at the notion that potentially through our lottery that they could get (Wembanyama), so they should all still compete very hard next season," Silver said in October.

Dallas coach Jason Kidd said before the game that the decision to sit players was made by "the organization," and referenced it being made by his bosses — owner Mark Cuban and general manager Nico Harrison — after the game as well.

Dallas had Irving, Tim Hardaway Jr., Maxi Kleber, Josh Green and Christian Wood all out for Friday's win-or-else game, and it limited Doncic to about one quarter of play before pulling him for the remainder of the contest. Doncic played briefly on a night that paid tribute to his native Slovenia, with the Mavericks handing out souvenir Slovenia-themed scarves to the first 3,500 fans in attendance. He came out less than a minute into the second quarter.

The Mavs cited right foot injury recovery for Irving, right hamstring injury recovery for Kleber, left ankle soreness for Hardaway and rest for both Wood and Green. All five of those players — plus Doncic — played Wednesday in Dallas' win over Sacramento.

"The organization, they made this decision," Kidd said before Friday's game, later adding, "we have to go by that."

Postgame, Kidd added: "This is maybe a step back, but hopefully it leads to going forward. ... These are decisions that are made from my bosses and we've got to follow them and we trust that Cuban and Nico are going to put the pieces together to put us in a position to win a championship. And that's just starting the process today."

This isn't the first time the Mavericks have caught the NBA's eye when it comes to tanking.

The NBA fined Cuban \$600,000 in February 2018 for comments about tanking during a podcast with Basketball Hall of Fame player Julius Erving, which Commissioner Adam Silver called "public statements detrimental to the NBA." The Mavericks were well on their way to what became a 24-58 season when Cuban spoke to Erving and discussed tanking.

Later, Cuban acknowledged to The Associated Press that he "earned" the fine. "I got excited talking to Dr. J and said something I shouldn't have," he told the AP at the time.

Dallas, in fairness, was in an uphill spot for the last play-in berth in the West anyway entering Friday,



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and beating the Bulls would have extended postseason hopes but would not have guaranteed anything. It needed to win Friday and Sunday and hope that Oklahoma City would lose to Memphis on Sunday — just to get the No. 10 spot and still need two more road wins in play-in games to make it to a Round 1 series against Denver.

Not making the play-in tournament helps Dallas' chances of claiming no worse than the No. 10 pick in this summer's draft — which is important. If the Mavs' pick is between No. 1 and No. 10, Dallas keeps it. If it is No. 11 or deeper in the draft, it conveys to New York as part of the compensation agreed to in the Kristaps Porzingis trade in 2019.

The NBA investigation comes just days after the league denied a protest by the Mavericks over a confusing sequence that led to an uncontested basket for Golden State in a two-point win by the Warriors in a game last month.

That loss was part of a freefall by the Mavericks, who were fourth in the West in mid-February and figured to become a title contender after trading for Irving to play alongside Doncic in a suddenly starry backcourt.

But the Mavericks have gone 7-17 in their last 24 games, with only Sunday's now-meaningless finale against San Antonio remaining.

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

## Pope Francis returns to public eye for Easter vigil Mass

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis returned to public view on Saturday, presiding over Easter vigil Mass in St. Peter's Basilica, a day after unseasonably chilly weather in Rome convinced the recently ailing pontiff to skip Good Friday's nighttime procession at the Colosseum.

The evening basilica service began in darkness. Then the basilica's cavernous interior was suddenly bathed in light, reflecting the Christian beliefs that Jesus rose from his death by crucifixion and that goodness can triumph over evil.

The 86-year-old pope is recuperating from bronchitis, which saw him hospitalized on March 29 for three days. On Sunday, tens of thousands of faithful are expected to join the pope in St. Peter's Square for Easter Mass at the end of Holy Week.

In his homily, Francis sought to spur Catholics to be renewed by Easter.

"At times, we may simply feel weary about our daily routine, tired of taking risks in a cold, hard world where only the clever and the strong seem to get ahead," Francis said. "At other times, we may feel helpless and discouraged before the power of evil."

He cited other sources of discouragement: "the attitudes of calculation and indifference that seem to prevail in society, the cancer of corruption, the spread of injustice, the icy winds of war."

But Easter "motivates us to move forward, to leave behind our sense of defeat, to roll away the stone of the tombs in which we often imprison our hope," Francis said.

"The power of Easter, brothers and sisters, summons you to roll away every stone of disappointment and mistrust," the pope said.

His stamina appeared to hold during the vigil, which lasts more than two hours, although Francis at times coughed or cleared his throat.

At the start of the Easter vigil, Francis, who arrived in a wheelchair he uses to cope with knee pain, incised in the wax of a tall candle a cross, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet — alpha and omega — and the numerals of this year. Then the lit candle was carried by a cleric up the basilica's center aisle, past darkened pews filled with some 8,000 faithful. Dozens of cardinals and other prelates followed, each carrying a smaller, lit candle.

"The Church calls upon her sons and daughters, scattered throughout the world, to come together to watch and pray," Francis said, beginning the service. Later, the basilica bells tolled, resounding in the night.

The basilica Mass during the vigil of Christianity's most important day has become an occasion for pon-

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tiffs to baptize several adults from around the world. Selected to be baptized at this year's vigil were eight believers, from Albania, the United States, Nigeria, Italy and Venezuela, the Vatican said.

One by one, they approached the pope and told him that they wanted to be baptized. Then they leaned over a basin so Francis could pour water over their heads as part of the sacrament's ritual, formally welcoming them into the Catholic Church.

## Woods extends Masters cut streak to record-tying 23 straight

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Sports Writer

AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP) — Tiger Woods can thank good friend Justin Thomas for helping the five-time champion extend his streak of consecutive cuts made at the Masters to a record-tying 23 on Saturday.

Woods was in danger of missing it for the first time as a professional when he resumed his second round in a cold, driving rain and bogeyed his final two holes. That left Woods at 3 over and tied for 52nd, while the top 50 and ties make the cut.

Moments after Woods signed his scorecard, though, Thomas missed a short par putt at the 17th, dropping him to 3-over and bringing everyone at that number inside the cut line. Thomas then bogeyed the 18th, ensuring Woods would play the rest the weekend and match Fred Couples and Gary Player for the longest streak of cuts made at the Masters.

"I've always loved this golf course, and I love playing this event," Woods said before Thomas finished. "I hope I get a chance to play this weekend — I'm sorry, I got a chance to play on the weekend. I wish I get a chance to play two more rounds."

Woods got his wish — and may have regretted it later when, sopping wet, he was 6 over through seven holes in his third round and play was called for the rest of Saturday. Meanwhile, Thomas had headed home after his bogey-bogey finish.

The second round had been suspended Friday when storms swept over the course, bringing down three large pine trees near the 16th green. Nobody was hurt when they fell, and workers had them cleared by the time play resumed Saturday.

Woods was 2 over with seven holes left when he returned to the course, and his birdie at the par-5 15th gave him some breathing room. But a wayward tee shot at the 17th forced Woods to lay up short of the bunker, leading to bogey, and a tee shot into the trees left of 18 forced him to hit his approach shot off the pine straw.

Woods came up short of the green, backed up his approach shot and two-putted for another bogey.

The weather wasn't getting any better, though, and Thomas took the brunt of it. With rain driving so hard at the tough, uphill par-4 18th that he had to hit a fairway wood from 218 yards, Thomas went so far left he nearly landed among the patrons. His pitch shot checked up short, and another bogey resulted in a second-round 77 and a missed cut.

That allowed Thomas Pieters and Charl Schwartzel to join Woods in making the cut when it moved to 3 over.

That also meant 12 of the 18 players from the Saudi-back LIV Golf circuit made it. Among them was leader Brooks Koepka, who dodged the bad weather Friday and was at 12 under, two shots clear of Jon Rahm heading into the third round.

Koepka made an early birdie and was 13 under when play was halted. Rahm dropped a shot and was at 9 under.

"It's not going to be easy," said Abraham Ancer, one of the LIV players that made the cut. "It's going to be blowing. It's going to be cold. It's going to be raining. But at least everybody is going to be out there in the same stuff."

Rory McIlroy won't be there; he missed the cut after a second-round 77 on Friday left him 5 over for the championship. The runner-up a year ago will need to wait another year to take another crack at completing the career Grand Slam.

Others who missed the cut included Bryson DeChambeau, who shot back-to-back 74s to miss by one,

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and 2003 champ Mike Weir, who also finished at 4 over after he was forced to play his second round Friday with a marker.

One player who did make the cut: 63-year-old Fred Couples, who was 1 over when he finished his second round Saturday.

The 1992 champion trudged through a bogey-bogey finish, but he still became the oldest player to make the cut at Augusta National, beating the mark that Bernhard Langer set during the 2020 tournament by about 3 1/2 months.

"The last four years have been really mediocre golf. Maybe one year I was semi-close to making the cut, but that was my objective, and I did it," Couples said. "It's not like, 'Ha, ha, ha. Now I can screw around and play 36 holes for fun.' I'm going to try and compete. Play a good pairing with some younger guys and watch them play."

Couples, whose 31 made cuts at the Masters trails only Jack Nicklaus' record of 37, didn't know he'd become the oldest player to make it. When told he had bettered Langer's mark and the exact number of days, Couples replied: "Well, good."

"Today is another day," he said. "If it was Friday, it would have been 107."

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## What does 1870s Comstock Act have to do with abortion pills?

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A 19th century "anti-vice" law is at the center of a new court ruling that threatens access to the leading abortion drug in the U.S.

Dormant for a half-century, the Comstock Act has been revived by anti-abortion groups and conservative states seeking to block the mailing of mifepristone, the pill used in more than half of U.S. abortions.

On Friday, a federal judge in Texas sided with Christian conservatives in ruling that the Comstock Act prohibits sending the long-used drug through the mail.

Here's a look at the case and the law:

### WHAT HAPPENED?

In a sweeping ruling, U.S. District Judge Matthew J. Kacsmaryk said that the Food and Drug Administration's approval of mifepristone more than two decades ago violated federal rules. Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the Donald Trump appointee said the FDA overlooked "legitimate safety concerns" with the pill, which has been available since 2000.

The Biden administration and mifepristone's main drugmaker filed appeals notices within hours of the decision.

The Texas ruling came almost simultaneously with an order from a judge in Washington state, who said the FDA must maintain access to the drug in Democratic-led states that filed their own lawsuit. The dueling opinions are expected to send the matter quickly to the Supreme Court.

A former lawyer for the conservative First Liberty Institute, Kacsmaryk used the terminology of anti-abortion advocates throughout his opinion, referring to doctors who prescribe mifepristone as "abortionists," fetuses as "unborn humans" and medication abortions as "chemical" abortions.

If upheld, Kacsmaryk's 67-page decision would also dismantle recent FDA changes designed to ease access to mifepristone, particularly a 2021 switch that allowed the drug to be sent through the mail.

### WHAT IS THE COMSTOCK ACT?

Originally passed in 1873 and named for an anti-vice crusader, the Comstock Act was intended to prohibit the mailing of contraceptives, "lewd" writings and any "instrument, substance, drug, medicine, or thing" that could be used in an abortion.

The law's scope has been repeatedly narrowed by federal courts and Congress, which eliminated the reference to contraceptives in the 1970s. And the federal government hasn't enforced the law since the 1930s, according to legal experts.



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Kacsmark, though, agreed with plaintiffs that the law — as literally interpreted — prohibits mailing mifepristone.

The FDA's decision allowing the "dispensing of chemical abortion drugs through mail violates unambiguous federal criminal law," he concluded.

## WHY IS THE COMSTOCK ACT IN PLAY NOW?

The law was essentially dormant in the 50 years after Roe v. Wade established a federal right to abortion. And until the FDA loosened its requirements on mifepristone in 2021, there was no real way to enable abortion through the mail.

But Rachel Rebouché of Temple University's law school says anti-abortion groups — emboldened by the Supreme Court decision overturning of Roe — have seized on Comstock to try and shut off the flow of abortion drugs.

"The fact that pills can be mailed is an existential crisis for the anti-abortion movement — it's hard to police, it's hard to track, it's difficult to enforce," said Rebouché. "If courts are willing to breathe new life into Comstock, it has the potential to shut down the uptake of medication abortion across the country."

Comstock has also been cited by Republican state officials seeking to stop national pharmacy chains from shipping abortion pills to their states.

In February, attorneys general in 20 conservative-led states warned CVS and Walgreens that they could face legal consequences if they sell abortion pills by mail in their states. Most of those states have laws restricting abortion broadly or the pills specifically, but the attorneys general said mail-order mifepristone also runs afoul of the Comstock Act.

## HOW HAVE COURTS TREATED THE COMSTOCK ACT IN THE PAST?

Beginning in the 1930s, federal courts issued rulings drastically narrowing how the law could be applied. Read literally, the law could be interpreted to outlaw almost any medical item that could be used in an abortion.

"The interpretation being advanced would apply to all kinds of articles — like surgical gloves — that are just basic equipment for health care," Rebouché said.

A key 1936 ruling concluded that the law could only apply when the person mailing an item or drug specifically intended it to be used illegally for abortion.

In December, the Biden administration's Justice Department attempted to bolster that interpretation, issuing an opinion that Comstock could not be used to outlaw the mailing of abortion pills because of their many legal uses, including during miscarriages and under abortion-ban exceptions.

Again, Kacsmark rejected that view, stating that the law "plainly does not require intent on the part of the seller."

## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The Supreme Court has never weighed in on Comstock and — assuming the justices take up the case — the ruling could have far-reaching consequences for American women, abortion providers and their opponents.

Kacsmark's order is limited to mifepristone, but the same approach could potentially be used for other drugs.

Mifepristone is currently taken in combination with a second pill, misoprostol. Abortion clinics have said that if mifepristone were pulled from the market, they would switch to using only the second drug, which is also used to treat other medical conditions.

But whether Comstock could be used to also curtail shipments of misoprostol is not clear, since it is widely prescribed for stomach ulcers and other uses.

## WHAT IF THE SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS THE ABORTION PILL RULING?

Even if the Supreme Court affirms the Texas ruling and orders mifepristone off the market, experts say there could be more legal battles ahead.

The FDA has its own procedures for revoking drug approvals, which involve public hearings and internal agency reviews. The process can take months or years. If those steps are skipped, mifepristone-maker Danco Laboratories, which is a party to the case, could potentially sue under "due process" claims, ac-

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ording to experts.

The FDA is also facing pressure to essentially ignore a negative court decision, given there is almost no legal precedent for a judge overruling the agency's medical determinations.

"There is no way this decision has a basis in law," said Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden, of Oregon, in a statement Friday. "The FDA, doctors, and pharmacies can and must go about their jobs like nothing has changed."

Legal experts point out that the FDA has traditionally had broad leeway in deciding how to use its authority. For instance, the agency allows a number of unproven remedies and supplements to remain on the market because they are essentially harmless and removing them would drain limited agency resources.

Given that mifepristone remains safe and effective for ending pregnancy, some experts say the agency should simply allow the pill to remain on the market as an unapproved medication.

"Even if a court wants to order that the FDA does something, the agency still has discretion in how it does that thing," Rebouché said.

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## Ukraine's coal miners dig deep to power a nation at war

By VASILISA STEPANENKO Associated Press

DNIPROPETROVSK OBLAST, Ukraine (AP) — Deep underground in southeastern Ukraine, miners work around the clock extracting coal to power the country's war effort and to provide civilians with light and heat.

Coal is central to meeting Ukraine's energy needs following the Russia's military's 6-month campaign to destroy power stations and other infrastructure, the chief engineer of a mining company in Dnipropetrovsk province said.

Elevators carry the company's workers underground to the depths of the mine. From there, they operate heavy machinery that digs out the coal and moves the precious resource above ground. It is hard work, the miners said, but essential to keep the country going.

"Today, the country's energy independence is more than a priority," said Oleksandr, the chief engineer, who, like all the coal miners interviewed, spoke on the condition of giving only his first name for security reasons.

Russia's attacks on Ukraine's nuclear, thermal and other power stations continue to disrupt electricity service as the war grinds on for a second year.

Negotiations to demilitarize the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, which the Kremlin's forces captured last year at the start of the full-scale invasion, are at an impasse. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy opposes any proposal that would legitimize Russian control of the plant, which is Europe's largest nuclear energy facility.

At full capacity, the plant can produce 6,000 megawatts of electricity. The Ukrainian operators of the plant shut down the last reactor in September, saying it was too risky to run while Russia bombarded nearby areas.

Shelling has damaged the plant numerous times, raising fears of a possible nuclear meltdown. Russian missiles have also threatened the power lines needed to operate vital cooling equipment at Zaporizhzhia and Ukraine's other nuclear plants.

Before the war, the Ukrainian government planned to reduce the country's reliance on coal-fired power stations, which contribute to global warming, and to increase nuclear energy and natural gas production. But when Russian attacks damaged thermal plants in the middle of winter, it was coal that helped keep Ukrainian homes warm, Oleksandr said.

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The work of the coal miners cannot fully compensate for the loss of energy from nuclear power plants, but every megawatt they had a role in generating reduced gaps.

"We come and work with optimism, trying not to think about what is going on outside the mine," a miner named Serhii said. "We work with a smile and forget about it. And when we leave, then another life begins (for us), of survival and everything else."

While many miners from the area joined the armed forces when Russian troops invaded and are now fighting at the front in eastern Ukraine, nearly 150 displaced workers from other coal-producing regions in the east joined the team in Dnipropetrovsk.

A man named Yurii left the embattled Donetsk province town of Vuhledar, where he worked as a coal miner for 20 years. "The war, of course, radically changed my life," he said. "It is now impossible to live there and the mine where I used to work."

"Life begins from scratch," he said.

British military analysts reported Saturday that they think Russia's campaign to degrade Ukraine's energy grid over the winter through intense missile and drone strikes "highly likely failed," and that the invaded country's energy situation would improve as temperatures rise.

The U.K. Defense Ministry said that while the strikes have continued since October, large-scale attacks causing significant infrastructure damage are becoming rare. Ukraine's network operators also managed to source replacement transformers and other "critical" components to keep electricity flowing, the ministry said.

Samya Kallab contributed to this story from Kyiv, Ukraine.

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

## Memphis Zoo bids farewell to panda ahead of return to China

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — Visitors at the Memphis Zoo said goodbye Saturday to giant panda Ya Ya during a farewell party ahead of her departure back to China.

Highlighted by Chinese cultural performances, the sendoff marked the end of a 20-year loan agreement with the Chinese Association of Zoological Gardens that landed Ya Ya in Memphis. About 500 people attended the event, which featured a demonstration by the Tennessee Happy Kung Fu School.

Ya Ya was born August 3, 2000 in Beijing. She was joined in Memphis under the loan agreement by Le Le, a male panda who was born July 18, 1998 and died in February ahead of the pair's planned return to China.

Ya Ya will likely head back to China at the end of month, according to zoo spokesperson Rebecca Winchester.

The zoo says the pandas were key to research and conservation projects and helped people experience some of Chinese culture.

The life expectancy of a giant panda in the wild is about 15 years, but in captivity they have lived to be as old as 38. Decades of conservation efforts in the wild and study in captivity saved the giant panda species from extinction, increasing its population from fewer than 1,000 at one time to more than 1,800 in the wild and captivity.

Advocacy groups In Defense of Animals and Panda Voices previously applauded the return to China, saying the pandas had been suffering in the zoo setting. Zoo officials said the groups were spreading false information. Zoo President and CEO Matt Thompson called Le Le and Ya Ya "two of the most spoiled animals on the planet."

A memorial for Le Le was on display at the zoo on Saturday.



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## Small towns reclaim abandoned ski areas as nonprofits

By BRITTANY PETERSON ASSOCIATED PRESS

CUCCHARA, Colorado (AP) — It's been the longest wait, their whole lives, in fact. But Race Lessar and Landen Ozzello are finally right where they want to be, on a snowy slope close to home, molding snow into a ski jump.

Their local ski mountain just reopened.

"I'm happy that it's open for at least one year," Lessar said. It opened as a nonprofit, and that may be the key. "I didn't know that there was a hope," he said.

His ties to the mountain are so close, he's practically named after it. His dad used to race here and named his son for what brought him joy. Chad Lessar first skied on hand-me-down gear and later worked summers at a nearby ranch to earn money for more nimble racing equipment.

"We've never been very rich," Chad said of Huerfano, one of the poorest counties in the state. "It's nice to see a little area open up on the cheap," he said. The ski runs here are short, but the fact it's affordable just might be enough to keep it up and running.

Under the gaze of the imposing Spanish Peaks in southern Colorado, the 50-acre Parker-Fitzgerald Cuchara Mountain Park is the story of so many American ski areas, only the community was determined to change the script.

Ski resorts boomed in the 70s and 80s, emerging even in areas that didn't have the climate or workers to sustain them long-term. First-time ski resort owners took on debt and quickly filed for bankruptcy after a bad snow season. Ownerships transferred numerous times before resorts calcified into ghost towns.

But some communities are now finding a niche, offering an alternative to endless lift lines and soaring ticket prices. They're reopening, several as nonprofits, offering a mom-and-pop experience at a far lower cost than corporate-owned resorts.

"It's not necessarily about drawing overnight or out-of-town guests, but about bringing positive economic impact and a source of physical and mental wellness for the community," said Adrienne Isaac, marketing director for the National Ski Areas Association.

### A DELAYED REOPENING

Cuchara shuttered in 2000 after years of mismanagement, unpredictable snow and bankruptcies. It was dead for 16 years, when a group of stubborn locals with fond memories of the mountain came together. When the last owner put it up for sale, the Cuchara Foundation gave the county a down payment and helped raise the remaining funds.

Going into this season, the work of readying was in full swing. Volunteers kept holding fundraisers. There were donation jars. Inheriting snowmaking equipment and lifts may sound good, said Ken Clayton, a board member at Panadero Ski Corporation, a sister nonprofit that runs operations. But both required expensive repairs, and then the refurbished chairlift didn't even pass inspection. On top of that, it was a warm, dry winter. As the season wore on, the volunteers began to lose hope of reopening. "It just wasn't going to happen because we didn't have the snow," Clayton said.

Finally, when cold air and snowstorms arrived in late winter, Cuchara's maintenance director had an idea. They welded old school bus seats to a car-hauling trailer and hitched it to a snowcat, a tractor with snow treads, then put out the word they would be towing people up the mountain. "We're trying to give the community something because they've supported us for so long," Clayton said.

And the community showed up.

### GROWING ACCESS

There's no guidebook for how to reopen an abandoned ski area, especially as a nonprofit, so some community groups are making common cause, and learning from each other.

Will Pirkey had heard of a nonprofit ski area six hundred miles north in Wyoming, and sought them out as soon as he joined the volunteer board. The Antelope Butte Foundation had been running a nonprofit ski area in northern Wyoming since 2018 after a closure that lasted 15 years. With a limited, mostly volunteer staff, it opens Friday through Monday. Keeping skiing affordable, especially for children, is key to its mission.

For \$320, a child can receive a season pass to the Wyoming mountain, rentals, and four lessons. The

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foundation covers families who can't afford the cost. They also host classes for area schools that introduce kids to cross country and downhill skiing.

Greybull Middle School Principal Cadance Wiplinger used to chaperone students to ski areas when she taught in a Montana town with a robust outdoor industry. But her students now mainly come from mining, railroad, and farming families with fewer resources.

"A high percentage of our kids would not be getting the opportunity if we weren't taking them," Wiplinger said. "It opens up their world a little bit."

## A FUTURE WITH SHORTER, WEIRDER WINTERS

If fond memories and volunteer spirit are essential to reopening an abandoned ski area as a nonprofit, so is snow, and its consistency dictates whether it can endure.

The Antelope Butte Foundation studied 30 years of snow patterns before committing to reopen, board president Ryan White said, but knew it would face ever-shorter winters. As greenhouse gas emissions warm the atmosphere, winter is growing shorter and there are also more dramatic swings, for example last year's snow drought in the Sierra Nevada followed by this year's record snowfall.

This season, Antelope Butte was buried in powder, said former Executive Director Rebecca Arcarese, but she knows other years won't be as abundant. Snowmaking could extend the season, but it's a tough decision for a mountain that doesn't have the personnel to open seven days a week.

"Does it give us two, three more weeks, or just two or three more days? And does that make sense to make that capital investment?" Arcarese asked.

In southeast Vermont, irregular snow has long plagued standalone Mount Ascutney. A local nonprofit reopened Ascutney after five years of closure. A few seasons ago, a storm dumped several feet of snow on the slopes, but a week later, rain washed it away.

"If you spend one hundred thousand dollars on making snow, your heart gets broken when it's washed down the mountain," said Steve Crihfield, a board member of Ascutney Outdoors, the nonprofit that owns and manages the mountain.

So ski areas are dealing with climate risk by offering year-round activities from archery to concerts and weddings. But in a quiet town like La Veta, with limited outdoor winter activities and a population of fewer than 1000, there is just no substitute yet for snow sports.

On a late Sunday afternoon in March, energy pulses at the Mountain Merman Brewing Company — one of the few bars in town. Pints sling across the counter to construction workers wearing ski pants, while windburned teenagers — Lessar and his pals — nosh chicken barbecue pizza and play Battleship.

The shift is so busy, co-owner Jen Lind is having to help behind the bar. She hardly recognizes the energy in her brewery compared to its typically mellow pace at the end of a weekend.

"I think that comes right off the mountain," Lind said. "People are excited to be out and about and having stuff to do."

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## Mobile home park residents form co-ops to save their homes

By CLAIRE RUSH Associated Press/Report for America

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — When Gadiel Galvez learned that the owner of his mobile home park south of Seattle was looking to sell, he and other residents worried their largely Latino community would be bulldozed to make way for another Amazon warehouse.

So, they decided to form a cooperative and buy their park in Lakewood, Washington. With help from a nonprofit that advises communities like theirs and helps them secure loans, they bought it for \$5.25 million. Since becoming owners in September, everyone's worked to make improvements.

"Everybody thought, 'You know what? ... I'm going to make this place the best that I can,'" said Galvez, 22, who is a co-op board member. "Some people painted their homes, some people remodeled their in-

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teriors and exteriors, and some are working on their roofs.”

With rents rising at mobile home parks nationwide, advocates tout the cooperative model as a way to preserve one of the last affordable housing options for people with low- or fixed-incomes and to give them a greater voice in managing their parks.

So far these resident-owned communities are proving to be a reliable option. None of the more than 300 in the network of nonprofit ROC USA have defaulted or closed. One decided to sell back to the county housing authority it originally purchased from.

“They have a 100% track record of success, which tells you that it’s working for the residents,” said George McCarthy, president and CEO of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, a Cambridge, Massachusetts, think tank. “Resident ownership is an absolute bulwark against the intrusion of institutional capital in the market.”

The push to promote resident ownership comes as parks have become a favorite target of investment banks, hedge funds and other deep-pocketed investors.

Nearly a third of mobile home parks in the U.S. have been bought by such investors since 2015, lured by reliable cash flow and high returns from raising rents at nearly double the general rental market rate, McCarthy said.

“They’re trading on the desperation of people living in the parks,” he said. “There’s no place that they can take their homes if they can’t afford to keep paying the increasing rents.”

Park residents often own their home but rarely the land beneath it. So if a landlord raises rent, residents can be evicted or forced to sell their home. If a park is sold to be redeveloped, mobile homes that can’t be moved are demolished.

“Homelessness is really what residents are facing” if investors aggressively raise rents, said Victoria O’Banion, ROC Northwest’s marketing and acquisitions specialist.

At Rimrock Court in the central Oregon town of Madras, rent increased from \$350 to \$495 over five years. When the owner notified residents he planned to sell, they feared further increases — or worse, that it would be torn down to make way for apartments. So they decided to buy it.

“We were really worried about being forced out of our homes,” said Shawn King, who lives there with her husband on a fixed income and had experienced homelessness before.

To pay off the purchase loan, residents now pay \$520 a month — a stretch, but one that comes with reassurance, King said.

“Just to have that peace of mind, to know that our rent is going to be locked in for awhile and not keep going up, and also knowing that our rent monies ... are going back into the property, that is the cool part,” she said.

The required rent increase to go co-op was even steeper in Evergreen Village Cooperative in Mount Bethel, Pennsylvania, — from \$460 a month to \$750 to pay off the \$12 million loan.

Still, more than two-thirds of residents voted in favor, figuring their rent would stabilize in the long run.

“We are not for profit. All the money that we get has to go back into the village and pay the mortgages off,” said Stephen Laclair, board president.

Evergreen Village has earmarked funds for improvement projects for the next decade, and this year plans to enhance the sewer plant and fix electrical issues, he said.

Co-ops can also provide social support to residents. At Liberty Landing Cooperative in Missouri, residents started a food pantry to help neighbors in need.

“If there’s a hardship, we’re willing to work with somebody. ... It’s emotional when you find out that somebody’s lost their job, their child support ... and they don’t know what to do,” said Kristi Peterman, the board vice president. “Our president likes to say: ‘If it doesn’t work for the poorest of us then it’s not going to work for anybody.’”

Despite the talk of better management and stronger community, most parks aren’t co-ops.

The country’s roughly 43,000 mobile home communities are home to 22 million people, according to the Manufactured Housing Institute, a national trade organization. But only about 1,000 are resident-owned,



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according to Carolyn Carter, deputy director at the National Consumer Law Center.

Some resistance comes from residents, many of whom are seniors and people with disabilities who may not want the responsibility of managing their park. Others argue rent control or stricter zoning regulations protecting mobile home parks from redevelopment are more effective.

"Zoning is critical. ... That is what we ought to be fighting for everywhere," said Jan Leonard, who lives in a park in Walla Walla, Washington, and worked with other residents to successfully push the city council to amend zoning codes to add mobile home parks as a land-use type.

Other residents considering buying their parks are running up against the same forces that make them popular with investors — a red-hot market and competition from private equity firms and other prospective buyers.

Sarah Marchant, vice president of Community Loan Fund, ROC USA's New Hampshire affiliate, recalled Tara Estates, a 380-home park in Rochester. The steep \$45 million asking price discouraged residents from organizing.

Another challenge is that few states provide funding for residents looking to buy their parks. The lack of grants can make it difficult for residents to finance large loans.

New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Colorado and Oregon are among states with laws that have been effective in helping residents buy their parks, the National Consumer Law Center said.

A new bill in Oregon would allocate \$35 million in grants to help residents purchase their parks. Washington passed a bill last month requiring that landlords offer tenants a chance to compete to purchase their park. It also requires two years' notice if a park will be closed, although that can be reduced if landlords financially compensate residents.

Mobile homes are "an important and affordable housing option for a lot of folks, especially older people aging in place, and we need to make sure it's preserved," said state Sen. Noel Frame, the Washington bill's prime sponsor.

Some real estate groups and park owners argue the bill places an undue burden on landlords.

"If you want tenants to organize and make offers to purchase their communities ... they should not wait until there's a clock ticking," said Robert Cochran, property manager of Contempo Mobile Home Park in Spokane.

Housing advocates say they hope that \$225 million in recently approved federal funding may provide some relief for mobile home park residents. Starting this year, the money will be funneled through grants to states, resident-owned parks, nonprofits, and local and tribal governments to preserve mobile home communities and improve infrastructure.

King cherishes the mobile home that going cooperative at Oregon's Rimrock Court saved from rent increases and a potential buyout by investors.

"It's so hard to find affordable housing when you're low income. To be able to own your own home is so empowering," she said.

"It's 600-square-feet. It's not much, but it's a castle to me."

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AP writer Michael Casey in Boston contributed.

## Report: Florida officials cut key data from vaccine study

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — An analysis that was the basis of a highly criticized recommendation from Florida's surgeon general cautioning young men against getting the COVID-19 vaccine omitted information that showed catching the virus could increase the risk of a cardiac-related death much more than getting the mRNA shot, according to drafts of the analysis obtained by the Tampa Bay Times.

The nonbinding recommendation made by Florida Surgeon General Joseph Ladapo last fall ran counter to the advice provided by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Ladapo, a Harvard-trained medical doctor who was appointed by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis in 2021 to head the Florida Department of Health, has drawn intense scrutiny over his shared resistance with the Republican governor to COVID-19

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mandates for vaccines and masks and other health policies endorsed by the federal government.

The early drafts of the analysis obtained by the Times through a records request showed that catching COVID-19 could increase the chances of a cardiac-related death much more than getting the vaccine, but that information was missing from the final version put out by the Florida Department of Health last October.

Ladapo said that the risk of men ages 18 to 39 having cardiac complications outweighed the benefits of getting the mRNA vaccine.

Matt Hitchings, an infectious disease epidemiologist and professor of biostatistics at the University of Florida, told the Times that it seems that sections of the analysis were omitted because they did not fit the narrative the surgeon general wanted to push.

"This is a grave violation of research integrity," Hitchings said. "(The vaccine) has done a lot to advance the health of people of Florida and he's encouraging people to mistrust it."

In a statement on Twitter posted Saturday in response to the Times' story, Ladapo said, "It's not only unfortunate that COVID has corrupted scientists' ability to think clearly about epidemiology but also sad that people rush to defend a vaccine that has shown increased cardiovascular risk in multiple studies."

Last year, Ladapo released guidance recommending against vaccinations for healthy children, contradicting federal public health leaders whose advice says all kids should get the shots. In response, the American Academy of Pediatrics and its Florida chapter issued written statements reiterating support for vaccinating eligible children age 5 and older against COVID-19.

DeSantis, who is contemplating a run for the GOP presidential nomination, also has requested that a grand jury be convened to investigate any wrongdoing with respect to the COVID-19 vaccines. DeSantis' request argues that pharmaceutical companies had a financial interest in creating a climate in which people believed that getting a coronavirus vaccine would ensure they couldn't spread the virus to others.

The Florida Supreme Court agreed to the request last December.

## **Afghan religious scholars criticize girls' education ban**

JALALABAD, Afghanistan (AP) — Afghan religious scholars Saturday criticized a ban on female education, as a key Taliban minister warned clerics not to rebel against the government on the controversial issue.

Girls cannot go to school beyond sixth grade in Afghanistan, with the education ban extending to universities. Women are barred from public spaces, including parks, and most forms of employment. Last week, Afghan women were barred from working at the U.N., according to the global body, although the Taliban have yet to make a public announcement.

Authorities present the education restrictions as temporary suspensions rather than bans, but universities and schools reopened in March without their female students.

The bans have raised fierce international uproar, increasing the country's isolation at a time when its economy has collapsed and worsened a humanitarian crisis.

Two religious scholars who are well-known within Afghanistan said Saturday that authorities should reconsider their decision. Public opposition to Taliban policies is rare, although some Taliban leaders have voiced their disagreement with the decision-making process.

One scholar, Abdul Rahman Abid, said institutions should be permitted to re-admit girls and women through separate classes, hiring female teachers, staggering timetables, and even building new facilities.

Knowledge is obligatory in Islam for men and women, he told The Associated Press, and Islam allows women to study.

"My daughter is absent from school, I am ashamed, I have no answer for my daughter," he said. "My daughter asks why girls are not allowed to learn in the Islamic system. I have no answer for her."

He said reform is needed and warned that any delays are at the expense of the global Islamic community and also weakens the government.

Another scholar, who is a member of the Taliban, told the AP there is still time for ministries to solve the problem of girls' education. Toryali Himat cited ministries comprising the inner circle of the supreme leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada, who is based in Kandahar.

It was on his orders that the government banned girls from classrooms. Himat said there are two types of criticism, one that destroys the system and another that makes corrective criticism.

"Islam has allowed both men and women to learn, but hijab and curriculum should be considered," said Himat. "Corrective criticism should be given and the Islamic emirate should think about this. Where there is no criticism, there is the possibility of corruption. My personal opinion is that girls should get education up to university level."

Acting Higher Education Minister Nida Mohammad Nadim said Friday that clerics should not speak against government policy.

He made his remarks after another scholar, Abdul Sami Al Ghaznawi, told students at a religious school that there was no conflict over girls' education. He said Islamic scripture was clear that girls' education was acceptable. Al Ghaznawi was not immediately available for comment.

Nadim appeared to target Al Ghaznawi by mentioning "an honorable scholar" at the top of a video statement released on social media.

"You encouraged the people to rebel, so what is the result?" Nadim said. "The result is that rebellion against this (ban) is allowed. If people are encouraged to rebel against the system, will it benefit Muslims?"

The minister was not immediately available for comment. But his spokesman, Hafiz Ziaullah Hashimi, confirmed Nadim's remarks without giving further details about who they were directed at or the reason behind them.

## **Iowa won't pay for rape victims' abortions or contraceptives**

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — The Iowa Attorney General's Office has paused its practice of paying for emergency contraception — and in rare cases, abortions — for victims of sexual assault, a move that drew criticism from some victim advocates.

Federal regulations and state law require Iowa to pay many of the expenses for sexual assault victims who seek medical help, such as the costs of forensic exams and treatment for sexually transmitted infections. Under the previous attorney general, Democrat Tom Miller, Iowa's victim compensation fund also paid for Plan B, the so-called morning after pill, as well as other treatments to prevent pregnancy.

A spokeswoman for Republican Attorney General Brenna Bird, who defeated Miller's bid for an 11th term in November, told the Des Moines Register that those payments are now on hold as part of a review of victim services.

"As a part of her top-down, bottom-up audit of victim assistance, Attorney General Bird is carefully evaluating whether this is an appropriate use of public funds," Bird Press Secretary Alyssa Brouillet said in a statement. "Until that review is complete, payment of these pending claims will be delayed."

Victim advocates were caught off guard by the pause. Ruth Richardson, CEO of Planned Parenthood North Central States, said in a statement that the move was "deplorable and reprehensible."

Bird's decision comes as access to the most commonly used method of abortion in the U.S. plunged into uncertainty following conflicting court rulings on Friday over the legality of the abortion medication mifepristone. For now, the drug the Food and Drug Administration approved in 2000 appeared to remain at least immediately available in the wake of separate rulings issued in quick succession.

U.S. District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk in Texas, an appointee of former President Donald Trump, ordered a hold on federal approval of mifepristone. But that decision came at nearly the same time that U.S. District Judge Thomas O. Rice in Washington, D.C., an appointee of former President Barack Obama, essentially ordered the opposite.

The extraordinary timing of the competing orders revealed the high stakes surrounding the drug nearly a year after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* and curtailed access to abortion across the country. President Joe Biden said his administration would fight the Texas ruling.

In Iowa, money for the victim compensation fund comes from fines and penalties paid by convicted criminals. For sexual assault victims, state law requires that the fund pay "the cost of a medical examination of a victim for the purpose of gathering evidence and the cost of treatment of a victim for the purpose of



preventing venereal disease," but makes no mention of contraception or pregnancy risk.

Sandi Tibbetts Murphy, who served as director of the victim assistance division under Miller, said the longtime policy for Iowa has been to include the cost of emergency contraception in the expenses covered by the fund. She said that in rare cases, the fund paid for abortions for rape victims.

"My concern is for the victims of sexual assault, who, with no real notice, are now finding themselves either unable to access needed treatment and services, or are now being forced to pay out of their own pocket for those services, when this was done at no fault of their own," she said.

## **Berlusconi's doctor says he's responding well to treatment**

ROME (AP) — Silvio Berlusconi's doctor, who is treating him for a lung infection, said Saturday that the former Italian premier is responding well to treatment in an intensive care unit at a Milan hospital, an Italian news agency reported.

Alberto Zangrillo, who also heads the ICU at San Raffaele hospital where the Italian media mogul was admitted on Wednesday, said Berlusconi "is used to responding with his best" and that despite the "grave illness in a truly difficult situation, he's responding well to the treatments," ANSA reported.

Zangrillo revealed earlier in the week that Berlusconi, 86, has had a chronic form of leukemia for some time.

On Saturday, Berlusconi was visited by a longtime advisor, Gianni Letta, who said, "I found him better than what I thought" and eager to rebound.

"You know how every time he sets an aim, he reaches it," Letta told reporters outside the hospital.

In remarks to reporters, Zangrillo referred to the infection as a "complication," given Berlusconi's chronic leukemia. Earlier in the week, Berlusconi's doctors said they were treating his lung infection and giving him medicine to "restore preexisting clinical conditions" given the leukemia.

Berlusconi also has a history of heart problems, and in 2020, he was hospitalized with COVID-19 and pneumonia.

## **Abortion pill order latest contentious ruling by Texas judge**

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Texas judge who sparked a legal firestorm with an unprecedented ruling halting approval of the nation's most common method of abortion is a former attorney for a religious liberty legal group with a long history pushing conservative causes.

U.S. District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk, an appointee of former President Donald Trump, on Friday ordered a hold on federal approval of mifepristone in a decision that overruled decades of scientific approval. His ruling, which doesn't take immediate effect, came practically at the same time that U.S. District Judge Thomas O. Rice, an appointee of former President Barack Obama, essentially ordered the opposite in a different case in Washington. The split likely puts the issue on an accelerated path to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Kacsmaryk, a former federal prosecutor and lawyer for the conservative First Liberty Institute, was confirmed in 2019 over fierce opposition by Democrats over his record opposing LGBTQ rights. He was among more than 230 judges installed to the federal bench under Trump as part of a movement by the Republican president and Senate conservatives to shift the American judiciary to the right.

He's the sole district court judge in Amarillo — a city in the Texas panhandle — ensuring that all cases filed there land in front of him. And since taking the bench, he has ruled against the Biden administration on several other issues, including immigration and LGBTQ protections.

Interest groups of all kinds have long attempted to file lawsuits before judges they see as friendly to their points of view. But the number of conservative lawsuits filed in Amarillo has spawned accusations of "judge shopping" or that right-wing plaintiffs are seeking out Kacsmaryk because they know they'll get a sympathetic ear.

"Why are all these cases being brought in Amarillo if the litigants who are bringing them are so confi-

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dent in the strength of their claims? It's not because Amarillo is convenient to get to," said University of Texas law professor Stephen Vladeck. "I think it ought to alarm the judges themselves, that litigants are so transparently and shamelessly funneling cases to their courtroom."

The Justice Department quickly appealed Kacsmaryk's decision to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. And for now, the drug that the Food and Drug Administration approved in 2000 appeared to remain immediately available in the wake of the conflicting rulings in Texas and Washington.

Mifepristone blocks the hormone progesterone in the body and is used with the drug misoprostol to end pregnancy within the first 10 weeks. The lawsuit in the Texas case was filed by the Alliance Defending Freedom, which was also involved in the Mississippi case that led to Roe v. Wade being overturned.

Legal experts warned of questionable arguments and factual inaccuracies in the suit for months, but Kacsmaryk essentially agreed with all the plaintiffs' major points, including their contention the FDA didn't adequately review mifepristone's safety. Medical groups, by contrast, point out mifepristone has been used by millions of women over the past 23 years, and complications occur at a lower rate than with other routine procedures like wisdom teeth removal and colonoscopies.

During confirmation hearings before he took the bench, Kacsmaryk told lawmakers it would be "inappropriate" for a judge to allow their religious beliefs to impact a matter of law. He pledged to "faithfully apply all Supreme Court precedent."

"As a judicial nominee, I don't serve as a legislator. I don't serve as an advocate for counsel. I follow the law as it is written, not as I would have written it," Kacsmaryk said at the time.

Before the abortion pill case, Kacsmaryk was at the center of a legal fight over Trump's "Remain in Mexico" policy, which required tens of thousands of migrants seeking asylum to wait in Mexico for hearings in U.S. immigration court.

In 2021, he ordered that the policy be reinstated in response to a lawsuit filed by the states of Texas and Missouri. The U.S. Supreme Court overruled him and said that the Biden administration could end the policy, which it did last August. But in December Kacsmaryk ruled that the administration failed to follow federal rulemaking guidelines when terminating the practice, an issue that the Supreme Court didn't address.

He has also ruled that allowing minors to obtain free birth control without parental consent at federally funded clinics violated parental rights and Texas law.

In other cases, he has ruled that the Biden administration wrongly interpreted part of the Affordable Care Act as prohibiting health care providers from discriminating against people because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. And he sided with Texas in ruling against Biden administration guidance that said employers can't block workers from using a bathroom consistent with their gender identity.

In another case — brought by states challenging a Department of Labor rule — the Justice Department recently tried to get the case moved out of his district, writing in a court filing that "there is no apparent reason—other than judge shopping" that explains why the lawsuit was filed in Amarillo. In denying the bid to move the case, Kacsmaryk wrote that the law "does not require the Court to guess as to Plaintiffs' subjective motivations for choosing" to file there.

Kacsmaryk's decisions have been "consistent with what a lot of conservatives were hoping for, and a lot of progressives were fearful of," said Daniel Bennett, an associate professor at John Brown University in Arkansas, who wrote a book on the conservative Christian legal movement. "This is not a judge who's necessarily going to be riding the fence."

Kacsmaryk's detractors said his past writings and legal work revealed extremist views and animus toward gay and transgender people. In articles before being nominated, he wrote critically of the Supreme Court's Roe v. Wade decision that established a nationwide right to an abortion and the Obergefell decision that legalized same-sex marriage nationally.

In 2015, he slammed an effort to pass federal gender identity and sexual orientation protections, writing that doing so would "give no quarter to Americans who continue to believe and seek to exercise their millennia-old religious belief that marriage and sexual relations are reserved to the union of one man and one woman."

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A year later, he signed a letter that quoted another article as describing the "belief that one is trapped in the body of the wrong sex" as a "fixed, irrational belief" that is "appropriately described as a delusion."

Kacsmark's defenders say he has been unfairly maligned.

Mike Davis, founder of the Article III Project, a conservative judicial advocacy group, said Kacsmark has shown no evidence of bias on the bench. He noted that Kacsmark was deemed "qualified," by the American Bar Association, which means he satisfied what the group describes as "very high standards with respect to integrity, professional competence and judicial temperament."

"These allegations that he's biased are completely unfounded and they unfairly conflate his legal advocacy with bigotry," Davis said. "These Democrat politicians are sending a message to Christians and other people of faith that they are not allowed in the public square."

Before joining the bench, Kacsmark worked as an assistant U.S. attorney in Texas and was involved in such cases as the prosecution of Khalid Ali-M Aldawsari, the former Texas Tech University student from Saudi Arabia convicted in a failed bomb plot.

In 2014, Kacsmark joined the First Liberty Institute, which calls itself the "largest legal organization in the nation dedicated exclusively to defending religious liberty for all Americans." Kacsmark noted during his confirmation process that the group has represented all faiths.

Among the litigants he defended as the institute's deputy general counsel was an Oregon bakery that refused to provide a cake for a same sex-couple's wedding.

"Obviously, his decisions have been really disappointing to progressives and left-leaning folks and been very pleasing to those on the right," Bennett said. "But that's kind of the nature of our judicial branch right now, especially with these hot-button issues."

Richer reported from Boston.

## Biden's ancestral hometowns prepare warm Irish welcome

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

BALLINA, Ireland (AP) — Joe Blewitt is just about the busiest man in Ballina. His phone rings constantly with calls from locals and the world's media as he prepares to welcome a relative — U.S. President Joe Biden.

Biden is scheduled to travel to Ireland next week, with a stop in Ballina, the town from which one of his great-great grandfathers left for the United States in 1850. Blewitt, a distant cousin who first met Biden when he came to town as vice president in 2016, said the U.S. leader pledged to return once he'd won the presidency.

"He said, 'I'm going to come back into Ballina.' And sure to God he's going to come back into Ballina," Blewitt said. "His Irish roots are really deep in his heart."

The 43-year-old plumber was among Biden relations invited to the White House for St. Patrick's Day last month. He says it was a "surreal" experience that included a half-hour private meeting with the president.

"He's a people person. He loves meeting the Irish people," said Blewitt, who shares Biden's high forehead — he says people joke that he looks like the president "from the mouth up."

"The Irish people love him back."

Buildings are getting a new coat of paint and American flags are being hung from shopfronts in Ballina, a bustling agricultural town of about 10,000 at the mouth of the River Moy in western Ireland that proclaims itself the nation's "salmon capital."

There's already a mural of a beaming Biden, erected in 2020 in the center of town. Many people from Ballina and the surrounding County Mayo moved to Pennsylvania in the 19th century. Ballina is twinned with Scranton, Biden's hometown.

"I wouldn't think there's a family in Ballina that doesn't have someone, some connection with the States," said Anthony Heffernan, owner of Heffernan's Fine Foods, where Biden had lunch with his local relatives during his 2016 visit.



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"It was a fantastic day for Ballina," Heffernan recalled.

"He was very keen to talk about the town — how it was, and how it is now. He was really connected with the area."

The White House says Biden will visit Belfast, Northern Ireland, on Tuesday and Wednesday to mark 25 years since the Good Friday peace accord, before heading south to the Republic of Ireland, where he will address the Dublin parliament. In Ballina, he's due to deliver a speech Friday in front of the 19th-century cathedral, which local lore says was built partly using bricks supplied by his great-great-great grandfather, Edward Blewitt, a brickmaker and civil engineer.

The Irish Family History Centre says Biden "is among the most 'Irish' of all U.S. Presidents" — 10 of his 16 great-great grandparents were from the Emerald Isle. All of them left for the U.S. during the Great Famine of the mid-19th century, which killed an estimated 1 million people.

Biden also plans to visit the Cooley Peninsula in County Louth, about 150 miles (240 kilometers) from Ballina on Ireland's east coast. His great-grandfather, James Finnegan, left the mountainous, wind-battered peninsula as a child in 1850, one of more than a million Irish people who emigrated during the famine years.

"There's a great sense of euphoria around the place. Everyone is asking 'What's happening, when's he coming, where's he going?'" said Andrea McKeivitt, a local politician and distant Biden relative.

White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters that the president would use his Irish trip to highlight "how his family history is part of that larger shared history" between the U.S. and Ireland.

The trip is also a reminder of the central role of Irish Americans in U.S. political life. Ireland has warmly welcomed American presidents since John F. Kennedy became the first to visit in 1963. Barack Obama got a jubilant reception in 2011 when he visited the tiny hamlet of Moneygall, home to one of his great-great-great grandfathers.

"My name is Barack Obama, of the Moneygall Obamas, and I've come home to find the apostrophe we lost somewhere along the way," he joked to a crowd in Dublin.

More than 30 million Americans — almost one in 10 — claim some Irish ancestry. Richard Johnson, senior lecturer in U.S. politics at Queen Mary University of London, said Irish Americans no longer form the solidly Democrat voting bloc of decades gone by, but it's still "good politics domestically for Americans to emphasize their Irish roots."

"One of the reasons Irish identity resonates so much with Americans is that U.S. identity is based in part on the notion that the United States broke free from the British Empire and set its own course," he said. "There is a kind of echo of that story that can be found in the Irish experience. It makes it feel like the Irish have shared a common experience of breaking out of British rule that I think is attractive to Americans."

Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar said Biden "has always been a friend of Ireland," and the visit would be "an opportunity to welcome a great Irish-American president home."

In Ballina, Blewitt said the town is getting ready to give Biden a rousing welcome.

"The streets will be packed," he said. "It'll be like another St. Patrick's Day."

## Unemployment fell to 3.5% under Biden. For how much longer?

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden keeps seeing good economic news and bad public approval ratings. The unemployment rate fell to 3.5% in March. More than 236,000 jobs were added. But there has been no political payoff for the president.

US. adults are skipping past the jobs numbers and generally feeling horrible about the economy. White House aides can list plenty of reasons for the pessimism: high inflation, the hangover from the pandemic and the political polarization that leaves Republicans automatically believing the economy is sour under a Democratic president.

Going forward, an emerging challenge for Biden might be the expectation that unemployment will get much worse this year.

This is the opinion of the Federal Reserve, which expects the jobless rate to hit 4.5%. And the Congres-

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sional Budget Office (5.1%). Even the proposed budget that Biden just put forth models an increase (4.3%) from the current rate. Many Wall Street analysts are, likewise, operating under the shorthand that the Fed tames inflation by raising interest rates, which in turn causes demand to tumble and joblessness to rise.

Friday's jobs report showed that the economy is cooling as wage growth slowed, but the labor market is still running much hotter than the overall economy in a way that can fuel doubts. Biden's bet is that the conventional economic wisdom is wrong and that 6% inflation can be beaten while keeping unemployment low.

"We continue to face economic challenges from a position of strength," Biden said in a statement about the latest jobs report.

A new independent economic analysis helps to show why the low unemployment rate has yet to resonate with people: There aren't enough workers to fill the open jobs, causing the economy to operate with speed bumps and frictions that make things seem worse than they are in the data. The analysis suggests that the economy would arguably function far more smoothly with unemployment higher at 4.6%, even though that could translate into nearly 2 million fewer people holding jobs.

The job market is what economists call "inefficiently tight," a problem the United States also faced during the Vietnam War, the Korean War and World War II. The current tightness is as severe as it was at the end of World War II. This mismatch causes companies and consumers alike to feel as though the economy is in a rut, said Pascal Michailat, an economist at Brown University.

"For shopkeepers, it means operating shorter hours because it's not possible to find workers to fill the extra time slots," he said. "For households, it means more time trying to hire nannies or plumbers or construction workers and less time doing enjoyable things."

Based on his calculations on job openings and employment from a 2022 paper written with the economist Emmanuel Saez, Michailat estimates that a 4.6% unemployment rate would make the labor market efficient. At that rate, the day-to-day transactions that shape an economy would have less friction because the demand for workers would be closer to the supply. Government figures released Tuesday show that employers have 9.9 million job openings, almost double the number of unemployed people seeking work.

This sounds like a good problem to have because it implies wages should increase. But economic theory suggests the only way to resolve this situation is for unemployment to rise.

Asked what this dilemma might mean for Biden, Michailat suggested, "The economics is mingling with the politics, as it so often does."

When Republicans criticize Biden, it is often for the kinds of shortages that Michailat is describing, as well as for inflation.

House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Jason Smith, R-Mo., said small-business owners "are telling us that Democrats' anti-work policies have made it difficult to stock their shelves, hire workers and keep their doors open."

More than two years after Biden's \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package became law, it's a humbling frustration for the White House that so many people feel the economy is terrible when his record on jobs is unrivaled among modern presidencies.

Biden's unemployment rate so far is better than that of Presidents Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, Barack Obama, Jimmy Carter, Gerald Ford and both Bushes. While unemployment was lower for a period under Presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon, a smaller share of people was in the labor force compared with now.

Biden set out to use the COVID-19 aid dollars to get people back to work quickly and prevent the typical "scarring" in recessions that can leave people earning less for the rest of their careers and, in some cases, permanently jobless. He succeeded at that mission as the economy has about 4 million more jobs than the Congressional Budget Office forecasted it would at this stage.

A White House official said the policies were designed with the specific goal of bringing jobs back faster than in past recoveries. After the Great Recession began at the end of 2007 and the economy crashed, it took more than six years for the total number of U.S. jobs to return to pre-downturn levels. In the pandemic recovery, the jobs total rebounded to its prior level in a little over two years.