

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 1 of 90

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Newsweek Bulletin](#)
- [3- Traphagen, Johnson and girls 3200m relay take first at Milbank meet](#)
- [4- New light fixtures at basketball court](#)
- [5- Groton Citywide Spring Cleanup Ad](#)
- [6- SD Newswatch: Court documents outline cause of shuttered child porn investigation of T. Denny Sanford](#)
- [8- SD Searchlight: Brookings company looks to build bird flu vaccine](#)
- [9- SD Searchlight: Asylum limits, more border security funds proposed in U.S. House GOP immigration bill](#)
- [11- SD Searchlight: Revived push for Equal Rights Amendment blocked by U.S. Senate Republicans](#)
- [12- SD Searchlight: Biden administration to use processing centers in Latin America to handle migration](#)
- [14- SD Searchlight: Ag leaders lobby for better risk management programs at U.S. House farm bill hearing](#)
- [16- SD Searchlight: Here's where gas prices are headed \(for now\) and why](#)
- [19- Weather Pages](#)
- [23- Daily Devotional](#)
- [24- 2023 Community Events](#)
- [25- Subscription Form](#)
- [26- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [27- News from the Associated Press](#)

## Groton Community Calendar

### Friday, April 28

Senior Menu: Chicken pasta salad, grape juice, breadstick, apple crisp.

School Breakfast: Cereal.

School Lunch: Mac and cheese, peas.

**Cancelled:** Track at Webster Area, 10 a.m.

### Saturday, April 29

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.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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Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

Middle School Band Contest at GHS Gym.

### Sunday, April 30

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 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: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m., and at Zion, 11 a.m.; Sunday school, 9:45 a.m.

United Methodist: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.; Sunday school after children's sermon in worship, 10:30 a.m.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 2 of 90

## The Bulletin

by Newsweek

JANUARY 24, 2023

### World in Brief

access in South Carolina and Nebraska failed to pass their respective states' Republican-dominated legislatures.

- The European Union has passed a landmark law forcing companies that operate so-called "generative AI tools" such as ChatGPT to disclose the presence of any copyrighted material within the data used to train such bots.

- Russia rejected a U.S. request to visit Evan Gershkovich, the American Wall Street Journal reporter arrested last month in Russia on espionage charges. The U.S. meanwhile brought new sanctions against groups in Russia and Iran for their roles in the wrongful detainment of American citizens.

- The U.S. plans to open processing centers in Columbia and Guatemala to stem the flood of migrants heading for the U.S.-Mexico border. Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas' announcement comes days before border encounters are expected to surge with the lifting of Title 42 in May.

- Republican senators blocked a measure that could have enabled the Equal Rights Amendment to become part of the U.S. Constitution. Republican Senators Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Susan Collins of Maine joined Democrats in voting for the measure, which fell nine votes shy of the 60 it needed to pass.

- Dylan Mulvaney has broken her silence three weeks after the furor over her recent partnership with Bud Light, hitting back at her critics, who she referred to as "cruel."

- Three U.S. soldiers have been killed after two army helicopters collided while returning from a training flight.

- In the ongoing war in Ukraine, at least 12 people have been killed overnight in a series of Russian air strikes on cities, including the capital Kyiv.

### What to Watch in the Day Ahead

- Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis will wrap up his four-nation tour with a visit to the United Kingdom, during which he is expected to meet with British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly. DeSantis' trip, which has focused on Florida's international trade, comes ahead of his anticipated presidential campaign announcement.

- The second and third rounds of the 2023 NFL Draft start at 7 p.m. ET. The final rounds of the draft will kick off Saturday at 12 p.m. ET.

- President Joe Biden, first lady Jill Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, and second gentleman Douglas Emhoff are expected to attend the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner Saturday night in Washington, D.C. Roy Wood Jr. of The Daily Show will be the event's headliner.

- Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy has joined a growing list of Republicans urging Ron DeSantis to end his legal battles with Disney, saying the Florida Governor should instead "sit down and negotiate" with the corporation.

- Heisman Trophy winner Bryce Young was selected as the first overall pick in this year's NFL Draft. The Alabama Crimson Tide quarterback is headed to the Carolina Panthers.

- Two bills that would have severely restricted abortion

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 3 of 90

## Traphagen, Johnson and girls 3200m relay take first at Milbank meet

The Groton Area girl's track team placed third at the Milbank Invitational Track Meet held Thursday. The girls placed first in three divisions. Faith Traphagen won the 800m run, Aspen Johnson won the triple jump and the relay team of Taryn Traphagen, Faith Traphagen, Ashlynn Warrington and Rylee Dunker won the 4x800 relay event.

In the boy's division, Groton Area took second in three events - Cole Simon in the 400m dash, and the relay team of Keegen Tracy, Ryder Johnson, Andrew Marzahn and Teylor Diegel in the 4x100 and 4x200 relays.

### Girl's Division

**Team Scores:** 1. Milbank 180.5 , 2. Great Plains Lutheran 111.25, 3. Groton Area 97 , 4. Hamlin 91.5 , 5. Webster Area 65.25, 6. LaMoure/Litch-Marion 60 , 7. Aberdeen Christian 44 , 8. Aberdeen Roncalli 41 , 9. Florence/Henry 24 , 9. Sisseton 24 , 11. Tri-State 10.5 , 12. Ellendale 8 , 13. Langford Area 6,

**200 Meters:** 10. Mckenna Tietz, 29.99; 17. Talli Wright, 30.86; 25. Hannah Sandness, 31.79

**800 Meters:** 1. Faith Traphagen, 2:36.80; 3. Ashlynn Warrington, 2:50.14

**1600 Meters:** 13. Elizabeth Fliehs, 6:52.67

**100m Hurdles:** 2. Mckenna Tietz, 18.88; 6. Talli Wright, 19.36; 14. Hannah Sandness, 21.54

**300m Hurdles:** 3. Mckenna Tietz, 52.86; 4. Talli Wright, 53.26; 7. Hannah Sandness, 57.04

**4x100 Relay:** 4. (Jerica Locke, Kennedy Hansen, Kella Tracy, Laila Roberts), 54.83

**4x200 Relay:** 2. (Jerica Locke, Kennedy Hansen, Kella Tracy, Laila Roberts), 1:52.27

**4x400 Relay:** 4. (Jerica Locke, Kennedy Hansen, Kella Tracy, Laila Roberts), 4:30.89

**4x800 Relay:** 1. (Taryn Traphagen, Faith Traphagen, Ashlynn Warrington, Rylee Dunker), 10:58.13

**SMR 1600m:** 2. (Jerica Locke, Laila Roberts, Kella Tracy, Taryn Traphagen), 4:37.60

**Shot Put:** 6. Emma Kutter, 30-07.00; 15. Faith Fliehs, 27-10.50; 33. Ashley Johnson, 22-02.00; 41. Kayleigh McGannon, 19-09.00

**Discus:** 24. Faith Fliehs, 65-01; 28. Emma Kutter, 61-11; 30. Ashley Johnson, 60-08

**High Jump:** 5. Anna Fjeldheim, 4-05.00; 10. Emerlee Jones, 4-03.00; 18. Shaela McGannon, 3-11.00

**Long Jump:** 3. Aspen Johnson, 13-10.00; 10. Anna Fjeldheim, 13-03.00; 12. Sydney Leicht, 13-02.25

**Triple Jump:** 1. Aspen Johnson, 32-00.25; 18. 8 Emerlee Jones, 26-09.75

### Boy's Division

**Team Scores:** 1. Milbank 157.25, 2. Aberdeen Roncalli 109 , 3. Hamlin 95.5 , 4. Webster Area 82.5 , 5. Groton Area 67 , 6. LaMoure/Litch-Marion 64 , 7. Great Plains Lutheran 39.25 , 8. Aberdeen Christian 36.5, 9. Tri-State 34 , 10. Ellendale 23.75 , 11. Florence/Henry 22.25 , 12. Sisseton 20 , 13. Langford Area 15

**100 Meters:** 3. Korbin Kucker, 12.23

**200 Meters:** 7. Korbin Kucker, 24.95; 16. Gage Sippel, 26.10; 24. Caden McInerney, 26.58; 36. Logan Warrington, 29.46

**400 Meters:** 2. Cole Simon, 54.60; 6. Gage Sippel, 57.82; 3. Logan Warrington, 1:04.50

**800 Meters:** 7. Blake Pauli, 2:20.81; 11. Jacob Lewandowski, 2:30.16; 13. Jayden Schwan, 2:34.35

**1600 Meters:** 6. Blake Pauli, 5:22.73; 9. Jayden Schwan, 5:33.17; 11. Tristin McGannon, 5:43.59; 18. Nicolas Fernandez, 6:21.68; 19. Garrett Schultz, 6:22.78

**3200 Meters:** 9. Nicolas Fernandez, 14:31.97; 11. Garrett Schultz, 15:26.30

**110m Hurdles:** 10. Caden McInerney, 20.92

**300m Hurdles:** 9. Colby Dunker, 47.20; 13. Caden McInerney, 50.81

**4x100 Relay:** 2. (Keegen Tracy, Ryder Johnson, Andrew Marzahn, Teylor Diegel), 45.80

**4x200 Relay:** 2. (Keegen Tracy, Ryder Johnson, Andrew Marzahn, Teylor Diegel), 1:36.11

**4x400 Relay:** 3. (Keegen Tracy, Ryder Johnson, Cole Simon, Andrew Marzahn), 3:47.07

**4x800 Relay:** 3. (Blake Pauli, Tristin McGannon, Jayden Schwan, Jacob Lewandowski) 9:29.59

**Shot Put:** 7. Holden Sippel, 40-11.00; 8. Logan Ringgenberg, 40-04.50; 9. Caleb Hanten, 39-11.00; 11. Karter Moody, 36-10.00; 13. Kaleb Antonsen, 35-06.50; 44. Drew Thurston, 23-09.50; 46. Payton Mitchell, 23-02.00

**Discus:** 6. Logan Ringgenberg, 116-01; 7. Kaleb Antonsen, 108-07; 11. Holden Sippel, 101-03; 15. Caleb Hanten, 96-03; 29. Karter Moody, 77-00; 36. Drew Thurston, 68-07; 46. Payton Mitchell, 45-05

**High Jump:** 7. Tate Larson, 5-03.00; 10. Korbin Kucker, 5-01.00

**Long Jump:** 9. Jacob Zak, 17-05.50; 19. Gage Sippel, 16-00.00; 24. Tate Larson, 15-07.00

**Triple Jump:** 3. Jacob Zak, 38-03.00; 15. Tristin McGannon, 30-08.50





## **New light fixtures at basketball court**

The south bank of lights on the basketball court were changed out yesterday with new LED fixtures. Landon Johnson is pictured wiring the lights. Paul Kosel assisted with the ground work. The lights are possible with a grant from Heartland Energy. The north bank will be done in a future date.

# Groton Citywide 2023 Spring Cleanup

## April 29-May 5

**ALL ITEMS NEED TO BE DROPPED OFF  
BEFORE 10AM ON 5/5/23!!**



Bring anything you wish to dispose of to the City Shop-10 E Railroad Ave starting April 29<sup>th</sup>.

Please place items in the appropriate pile.

**RESIDENTIAL ONLY!!**

Keep Metal, Tires, Paint, Batteries & Chemicals Separate

**Pickup can be arranged for  
Monday, May 1<sup>st</sup> to Friday, May 5<sup>th</sup> ENDING AT 10AM  
by calling City Hall 397-8422.**



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **Court documents outline cause of shuttered child porn investigation of T. Denny Sanford**

**BY: JOHN HULT - APRIL 27, 2023 4:17 PM**

Nearly four years ago, detectives in South Dakota launched an investigation to determine if the state's richest man had shared or received child pornography through email.

One year ago, then-Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg issued a statement declaring that T. Denny Sanford had committed "no prosecutable offenses within the district of South Dakota."

On Thursday, after two failed attempts by Sanford at the South Dakota Supreme Court to shield the information that sparked law enforcement scrutiny, the court records outlining the cause of the investigation were finally released to the public.

Those records lay out the discovery of emailed, illicit pornographic imagery that led to the launch of the investigation into the man who founded First Premier Bank and later became South Dakota's most well-known philanthropist.

#### **Documents follow Supreme Court loss**

The release of the five documents prepared by Jeff Kollars of the South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) came 22 days after the state Supreme Court ruled that Sanford would not be allowed to review them for redaction and ordered them released.

Stacy Hegge, Sanford's attorney, sent a statement decrying their release in the absence of additional information from law enforcement, including evidence of hacking and proof that multiple people had "documented access" to Mr. Sanford's electronic devices. She said the release only serves to sully her client's good name.

"While some claim releasing affidavits that reiterate these allegations constitute transparency, releasing preliminary allegations made prior to completing the full investigation only misinforms people and obscures the investigation's conclusions that no prosecutable offense occurred," Hegge wrote.

Details on how law enforcement decided that no crimes had occurred or on the source of any "hacking" have not been released. On Thursday, DCI spokesman Tony Mangan reiterated that the agency opted against charging Sanford. At the time of the investigation, current Attorney General Marty Jackley served as Sanford's defense attorney.

"In 2022, after Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg was impeached and suspended, his administration issued a statement that it did not find probable cause for criminal charges in the state of South Dakota," Mangan wrote.

#### **Cybertip leads to investigation**

The first of the five documents was filed on Dec. 9, 2019. In it, DCI Agent Kollars requested a search warrant for data connected to an AOL email account Kollars said likely belonged to Sanford.

That August, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children alerted the DCI's Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force that an AOL user account contained images of child pornography. Kollars reviewed the tip and found 36 images, discovered on July 9, 2019.

There were "three separate unique images, repeated several times," showing nude female children between 8 and 15 years old.

The name associated with the AOL account was Denny Sanford, the document says.

In September of that year, the Brookings County State's Attorney asked for account information from a



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 7 of 90

Verizon phone associated with the images. A call to First Premier Bank led Kollars to learn that the phone was used by Sanford, the owner of the company.

That same day, Jackley, then in private practice, reached out to Kollars to tell him that Sanford "anticipates cooperating with law enforcement, but requested that all further communications go through" Jackley.

The remaining four court documents repeat much of the information contained in the first, with additional details discovered after the DCI received information from the AOL accounts. Each was signed on March 12, 2020, and sought information from Verizon Wireless and Midco.

Kollars had discovered several emails containing photographs, again sent more than once, from a Verizon Samsung Galaxy smartphone in May and June. The smartphone in question, Kollars wrote, "is currently being used by Denny Sanford."

The documents also note that the IP addresses used to access the email account "have possible subscriber geolocations that include locations in several different states."

For that reason, Kollars wrote, "I am unable to make an accurate determination regarding the location of the individual who was accessing and using the email account" on the dates in question.

Similar uncertainty surrounded the geolocations of other emails, possibly tied to "locations in Arizona, Oregon and California."

Sanford owns homes in Sioux Falls, Scottsdale, Arizona and La Jolla, California, Kollars wrote, but "I also know that it is possible that a user could be remotely accessing computers in those locations from anywhere in the world ..."

By the time he wrote the four March documents, Kollars had also reviewed the email address to verify its connections to Sanford. That involved, among other connecting threads, the review of "a letter from the Dalai Lama to T. Denny Sanford thanking him for support for a University of California San Diego T. Denny Sanford Institute for Empathy and Compassion," dated in June of 2019. The email account also included messages with a photo of a hotel receipt that listed Sanford as a guest, photos of Sanford and photos of decorative windows from Sanford Hospital in Sioux Falls.

## Revelation of investigation

The documents had been sealed as part of the open investigation, but a reporter for the Argus Leader had learned about and requested them. By the summer of 2020, that outlet and the nonprofit outlet ProPublica petitioned Minnehaha County Judge James Power to release the information in the documents, which he had signed.

Documents with details of open investigations are typically sealed in South Dakota until charges are filed, however. By October of 2020, ProPublica and the Argus Leader argued for the release of warrant information before Power.

Power ruled in favor of the media organizations, but Sanford appealed to the state Supreme Court, which heard arguments in summer of 2021 and ruled against Sanford that fall. That led to the release of the five search warrants themselves, but not the affidavits, which include written law enforcement testimony describing the reason for a warrant request.

Those would remain sealed until the investigation concluded, Power ruled. The media organizations confirmed that the investigation was over in late March of 2022, but Sanford again appealed their release.

The final set of oral arguments before the Supreme Court took place in March on the campus of South Dakota State University. The high court ruled against Sanford on April 5.

Chief Justice Steven Jensen wrote that "it is evident that the circuit court viewed Sanford's most recent motion as a belated and unpersuasive effort to further delay the unsealing of the affidavits required by statute."

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

## Brookings company looks to build bird flu vaccine

**Six-week trial comes as USDA plans for next outbreak**

**BY: JOHN HULT - APRIL 27, 2023 4:15 PM**

A Brookings company hopes a flu vaccine for turkeys might eventually help protect multiple species from Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza strains like H5N1, which has wreaked havoc on the poultry industry for the past two years.

The cost of vaccination and concerns about trade implications with foreign customers have thus far held off the use of vaccinations for chickens in the U.S., but animal science company Medgene sees a path forward that starts with turkeys.

A "vaccine platform" is a technology for producing vaccines that can be used to swiftly update the drugs for new variants. Medgene's vaccine platform already has approval from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and is used to make vaccines for swine.

New vaccines created through pre-approved platforms do not need another round of USDA review. That means that an effective bird flu vaccine for turkeys built through its platform would position Medgene to rapidly update it for use in H5N1 variants, should the USDA choose to fold vaccination into its response to the disease — a move that would break USDA international trade agreements and force renegotiation.

"Our platform technology allows our influenza vaccine for swine to be adopted to address influenza in turkeys as well as the H5N1 variant in all birds," Medgene Chief Technology Officer Alan Young wrote in a recent news release.

### Vaccines in review

The USDA is currently testing two vaccines for bird flu, and a few other bird flu vaccines were built and shipped but never used in 2014.

The other options up for consideration now are not platform-based, Young told South Dakota Searchlight, so each would require 12-18 months of testing.

Medgene is the only company with a platform-based vaccine in the works.

In an interview with South Dakota Searchlight, Medgene CEO Mark Luecke said starting with turkeys is a sensible choice, since most turkeys produced in the U.S. are consumed in the U.S. That reality would let turkey producers sidestep the trade implications that arise when livestock raised with the help of U.S. vaccines cross international borders. On the budget side, the size and growth cycles of the larger birds could make vaccination more economically viable than it would be for millions of chickens.

For chickens, it's made more sense financially to kill off sick birds than to vaccinate them, in part because the USDA covers the cost.

"If we wanted to vaccinate (chickens), it would be massive amounts of labor," said Young, who is also an animal disease professor at South Dakota State University. "And by depopulation, you're only setting yourself back a matter of weeks because they're not terribly long-lived animals."

The math may be different for turkey producers in places like Beadle County, which just this month saw another outbreak of avian flu in its barns that affected more than 75,000 birds.

Luecke said the company could collect and "bank" emergent or localized strains of bird flu, then pull those strains to update its vaccines as needed.

"Once we have turkeys approved, as you would expect, it's a very short step for us to go into layers and broilers – if the USDA decides that that's the direction that they want to move," Luecke said.

### Bird flu impact

Medgene was founded in 2011. The first seven years laid the groundwork for a ramp-up of activity in 2018. The company went from four employees at the start to 75 now, producing a host of medicines for livestock and companion animals.

Medgene built vaccines for COVID in pets in 2020 and produced what it described as the only vaccine against rabbit hemorrhagic disease in 2021.

Between the company's launch and today, there have been multiple bird flu outbreaks. Vaccines are now part of a far-reaching conversation at the USDA about how to respond to the next outbreak, in part due



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 9 of 90

to the intensity of the latest one.

Strains of H5N1 have decimated backyard and commercial flocks in an ongoing, multi-year outbreak that's the deadliest in history. Wild birds have carried the virus across migratory routes, helping its spread.

Dakota Layers, a Flandreau-based company that's one of the largest egg producers in South Dakota, had to kill off 1.35 million hens in December.

Consumers have felt the impact nationwide, as well, with egg prices driven up as high as 70% year-over-year in early 2022.

Egg prices have cratered at historic speeds in recent weeks, however, through improving bird flu conditions and increased stockpiles for producers.

The USDA is working to craft an official response plan to address future outbreaks, and fast-track testing for vaccines is on the table, particularly after a third human being died this month in China from H5N1 bird flu.

The USDA is also considering disease tracking, international trade monitoring, flock owner education and indemnity payments for producers.

## Brookings response, uncertain future

Medgene, meanwhile, will launch its six-week study for its platform-based vaccine next month.

The question of whether poultry industry players who do business internationally would be willing to adopt vaccines is wide open. Varying rules, regulations, drug approval schemes and consumer sentiments complicate the rollout of any ag tech, according to Matthew Elliott, an agribusiness expert with SDSU Extension.

"There are enormous complications in ag related to these new technologies," Elliott said. "The general notion on any vaccine is that it could raise complications on exports of meats in foreign countries."

It's a consideration for both crops and livestock, and one that can keep the use of effective biotech from widespread adoption.

About half of U.S. wheat is sold overseas, for example, often in countries that reject genetically modified foods. That means, Elliot said, that even though herbicide-resistant varieties of wheat are available, "nobody uses it."

Europe's opposition to genetically modified crops has been the topic of intense debate over the past two decades, and concerns about their alleged health or environmental impacts still affect international trade discussions. Chinese trade discussions also factor in biotech.

"Sometimes there are good reasons, sometimes it's just more protectionist," Elliot said.

The ball is in the USDA's court regarding H5N1 vaccines for poultry. Trade concerns have long been a factor in discussions of bird flu response, but the intensity, cross-species impact and geographic reach of the latest outbreak has led to reconsideration.

Previous outbreaks have flared up regionally and dissipated, Young told South Dakota Searchlight.

"This does not seem to be disappearing," said Young, Medgene's technology officer. "The fact that it's in the wild birds makes it very, very difficult to eradicate."

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

## Asylum limits, more border security funds proposed in U.S. House GOP immigration bill

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - APRIL 27, 2023 5:38 PM

WASHINGTON — Top U.S. House Republican leaders on Thursday unveiled an immigration package of bills that appropriates millions in funds for border security and imposes sweeping restrictions on asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border.

The plan is in sharp contrast with an announcement earlier Thursday by the Biden administration on

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 10 of 90

how it would begin to handle legal migration through processing centers in Colombia and Guatemala.

"Since we took the majority, we have been hard at work putting together a strong border security package," House Majority Leader Steve Scalise of Louisiana said during a press conference.

Republicans plan to put the bill on the House floor for a vote in May, the same time when a pandemic-era tool used to expel millions of migrants, known as Title 42, is set to expire. Even if passed by the House, the GOP plan will not be taken up in the Senate, where Democrats hold a slim majority.

The package combines bills from the House Judiciary and House Homeland Security committees.

GOP leaders who joined Scalise included House Judiciary Committee Chair Jim Jordan of Ohio, House Homeland Security Chair Mark Green of Tennessee, House Foreign Affairs Committee Chair Michael McCaul of Texas, and House Homeland Security Vice Chair Michael Guest of Mississippi.

"We think it's a strong bill that will correct the ... problems we have seen now, the entire two years of this administration," Jordan said.

The bill from the House Homeland Security Committee would:

Resume building a wall at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Hire 22,000 border agents.

Appropriate \$100 million in retention bonuses to agents.

Appropriate \$110 million in grants to local police.

Limit the use of an app that migrants use to make appointments to apply for asylum.

Green said that the bill takes away money from certain areas in order to cover some other areas.

The bill removes funds for nongovernmental organizations to support migrants and ends funding for the Department of Homeland Security to process migrants arriving at U.S. ports of entry.

It also does not allow funding for the Shelter Service Program, which allocates \$800 million to the Customs and Border Patrol "to transfer to FEMA to establish a new Shelter and Services Grant Program (SSP) to support CBP in effectively managing migrant processing and preventing the overcrowding of short-term CBP holding facilities."

The bill from the House Judiciary Committee would:

Expand migrant family detention.

Increase penalties for immigration violations.

Increase requirements for employment verifications.

Allow for the expedited removal of unaccompanied migrant children unless they are a victim of trafficking or can prove a credible threat to their lives.

Scalise said Republicans welcomed the Biden administration to join them in creating a legal pathway for immigration.

"What we're saying is, let's get back to the legal system," he said.

Under the Biden plan unveiled Thursday, migrants will be screened in Colombia and Guatemala — and if found eligible — referred to programs like the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, parole programs, family reunification or existing labor pathways.

Migrants who do not apply through those legal pathways and cross the U.S.-Mexico border will be subject to swift deportation "in a matter of days" and barred from applying for asylum for five years, senior administration officials said.

Scalise called those "failed policies" — the policies have not yet gone into effect — and said the processing centers would just make matters worse.

He was critical of "this idea that you just create more opportunities for people to come here illegally and then look the other way."

"That's what created this new problem, is that they're encouraging people to come into America legally knowing they don't have valid asylum claims."

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

## Revived push for Equal Rights Amendment blocked by U.S. Senate Republicans

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - APRIL 27, 2023 5:28 PM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Senate failed to advance a symbolic measure to enshrine in the Constitution equal protection on the basis of sex, a century after the idea began circulating among lawmakers.

Senators on Thursday voted 51-47 to go forward with a bill that would lift Congress' self-imposed 1982 deadline for three-fourths of states to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. The procedural vote, or cloture vote, required 60 senators for the ERA to move forward.

The joint resolution, sponsored by Democrat Ben Cardin of Maryland and Republican Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, aimed to codify protections from sex discrimination alongside other protected classes, including race, religion and national origin.

GOP senators who joined all Democrats in voting yes included Murkowski and Susan Collins of Maine. Louisiana Republican Bill Cassidy initially voted yes but then returned to change his vote to no.

All other Republicans, including South Dakota Sens. John Thune and Mike Rounds, also voted no, except for Mike Lee of Utah, who was absent.

Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein remains on an extended absence from the Senate. Majority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York changed his vote to no in a maneuver to recommit the bill for future consideration.

### Cruz protest

The vote was briefly interrupted by a protester who began yelling from the gallery when Texas Republican Ted Cruz walked onto the floor to cast his vote.

"Letting Cruz into this chamber puts the ERA at risk," the protester yelled. "... Poor women cannot afford lawyers to save their own lives."

U.S. Capitol Police escorted the woman out of the gallery seats but yelling briefly continued in the hallway outside the chamber.

Cardin and Murkowski both spoke on the Senate floor prior to the 12:30 p.m. Eastern vote.

"Most Americans already think it's part of the Constitution," Cardin said.

Murkowski highlighted that Alaska ratified the ERA in 1972.

"Some have suggested the ERA is no longer needed. We've certainly made great strides as women since 1923, but there's a lot more that needs to be done," Murkowski said.

"Women are a majority of the U.S. population but continue to be under-represented in elected office, in the courts, in the business world and in so many other areas. There remains, of course, a pay gap. We know of this, we hear the statistics all the time."

### Vote timing

The vote was scheduled during a lull in the Senate schedule. With the GOP-led U.S. House passing numerous bills that Democratic senators, who hold a slim majority, scoff at, the upper chamber has largely focused on approving executive branch appointees.

The chamber is now gearing up to find a solution to the nation's looming credit default — though Schumer and President Joe Biden have repeatedly said they will not negotiate on House Republicans' attempts to tie spending cuts to raising the debt ceiling.

Murkowski said she did not like the ERA vote "being used as filler on the floor."

"As somewhat of an exercise that runs clock on a largely empty legislative calendar, I don't see how the ERA or women in this country will ultimately benefit from that," she said. "But I am proud to lead this resolution with Sen. Cardin."

The ERA was first introduced in 1923 following the women's suffrage movement and the passage of the 19th Amendment that granted women the right to vote.

In 1972, the U.S. House and Senate passed the ERA and sent it to the states for ratification, as outlined in the Constitution. Congress imposed a seven-year deadline for the necessary ratification by three-fourths



of the states, or 38.

Only 35 had ratified the amendment by 1978 when Congress then extended the deadline to 1982.

The last three states needed did not ratify the amendment until between 2017 and 2020 — well after the 1982 cutoff. They included Nevada, Illinois and Virginia.

The fight to implement the ERA has been the subject of numerous unsuccessful court cases.

Cardin and Murkowski's S.J. Res. 4 would have voided the 1982 deadline and accepted all requisite state ratifications regardless of when they were approved.

### Reactions to vote

Following the vote, the League of Women Voters issued a statement calling the vote "a disappointing day for America."

"Our nation's elected leaders have failed yet again to see us as equal members of this democracy," said the advocacy organization's CEO Virginia Kase Solomón.

"It is shameful that despite the significant advances made in recent history, Americans continue to face discrimination on the basis of sex and lack equal rights in the Constitution. Inequality hurts everyone, and we must not continue to be a nation that harmfully excludes and marginalizes women."

Alliance Defending Freedom — the faith-based legal advocacy group representing the plaintiffs in the abortion pill case currently at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit — issued its own statement calling the ERA "legally dead for decades."

"(A)ttempting to ratify it after its expiration only undermines our rule of law. Women deserve to be treated with equality and fairness under the law, but this amendment actually would have undermined that, too," said Denise Harle, the organization's lead legal counsel.

In a nod to increasingly heated political rhetoric regarding transgender rights, Harle said: "We've seen increasing efforts from radical ideologues and activists to reject truth and redefine 'sex,' leaving the very word the ERA centers on subject to alarming reinterpretation."

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

## Biden administration to use processing centers in Latin America to handle migration

**BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - APRIL 27, 2023 1:40 PM**

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration Thursday announced the use of processing centers in Colombia and Guatemala to create legal pathways for migrants, in preparation for the ending of a pandemic-era tool used to expel migrants that is expected to cease in May.

The migrant processing centers will open shortly and be run by international organizations. Migrants will be screened — and if found eligible — referred to programs like the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, parole programs, family reunification or existing labor pathways, a senior administration official told reporters on a call.

The processing centers will also offer "local options" for migrants, a senior administration official said, but did not offer additional details as to what those local options are.

"These will be primarily nationals of the Western Hemisphere and Caribbean countries," the senior administration official said.

Spain and Canada have also agreed to accept referrals from those processing centers, the senior administration official said.

"It's this sort of partnership and collaboration that will help address the challenges of irregular migration and forced displacement in the hemisphere," a senior administration official said.

Migrants who do not apply through those legal pathways and cross the U.S.-Mexico border will be subject to swift deportation "in a matter of days" and barred from applying for asylum for five years, senior administration officials said.

The Department of Homeland Security will establish new family reunification parole processes for El

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 13 of 90

Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Colombia, and the "United States will commit to welcoming thousands of additional refugees per month from the Western Hemisphere," according to a DHS fact sheet.

"These processes, once finalized, will allow vetted individuals with already approved family-based petitions to be paroled into the United States, on a case-by-case basis," according to the fact sheet.

Senior administration officials did not give an exact location for the processing centers, or say how many would be available, but said more information would be released in the coming weeks.

## **Title 42 coming to an end**

With a May 11 end date to Title 42, U.S. officials will rely on Title 8, which allows the government to process and remove migrants to their home country if they do not establish that there is a credible threat to their lives.

Senior administration officials on the call reiterated that the ending of Title 42 "does not mean the border is open," which is a common criticism from GOP lawmakers. U.S. House Republicans have held multiple hearings on the issue.

There will also be an additional hiring of 300 U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers, the senior administration official said.

DHS has primarily used Title 42 as its main enforcement policy in recent years, using it to expel more than 2.5 million migrants back to Mexico or their home countries since 2020.

Democrats and immigration advocates have pressured the Biden administration to end the policy, but attempts to end the program have been blocked by federal courts due to lawsuits brought by Republican officials. The dispute made its way up to the U.S. Supreme Court, which decided to keep the policy in place until it ends on May 11.

The senior administration officials said these initiatives are modeled on parole programs for migrants from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela.

Senior officials also said the administration is expanding the use of the CBP One App, which was initially used for commercial trucking companies to schedule inspections at U.S. ports of entry, but is being used to screen asylum seekers and for those migrants to schedule appointments at an official U.S. port of entry.

Migrants located in Central and Northern Mexico will have access to the app, DHS said in a fact sheet.

The Biden administration in January announced dual immigration strategies in an attempt to limit migration across the U.S.-Mexico border. That policy allows up to 30,000 migrants each month from Cuba, Haiti and Nicaragua who have U.S.-based financial sponsors and have passed a background check to enter the country legally. If approved, they are then allowed to work temporarily in the U.S. for two years.

However, if they do not follow those procedures and try to cross the border without authorization, they are immediately expelled to Mexico.

Congressional Democrats criticized that policy, calling it a "transit ban," and reminiscent of a Trump administration immigration policy that banned migrants from claiming asylum if they travel through another country.

Sen. Bob Menendez, a New Jersey Democrat who chairs the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, recently released an immigration plan to help manage migration in the Western Hemisphere, urging the Biden administration to follow his "four pillars to effectively manage migration in the Americas."

"My plan provides a set of policies that will secure our borders without sacrificing our domestic and legal obligations to asylum seekers by working with partners in the region to give people alternative options to illegal smuggling networks," he said in a statement.

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

## Ag leaders lobby for better risk management programs at U.S. House farm bill hearing

BY: ADAM GOLDSTEIN - APRIL 27, 2023 11:41 AM

WASHINGTON — Commodity trade group leaders at a U.S. House Agriculture subcommittee hearing this week advocated for bolstered risk management programs and maintaining foreign market access as tools to support farmers amid volatile times.

The industry representatives said supply chain disruptions and increased production costs have tightened margins for large-scale farmers, and decreased the effectiveness of commodity and crop insurance programs in supporting them amid disasters. Such federal programs are intended to lessen the risk of farming for producers of major commodities like corn, wheat, soybeans and other crops.

The commodity group leaders emphasized the need to avoid any cuts to crop insurance and commodity programs in the farm bill, especially with a decline in projected farm income. They are considered to be the “most important” tool among producers to respond to natural disasters and challenges with overseas markets.

The farm bill’s commodity insurance programs include the Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage programs, which protect farmers from poor growing seasons and low prices, respectively.

“As the risk challenges of farming continue to mount, I think it is safe to say that if you’re not farming today, you’re likely not going to be farming tomorrow,” said Republican Rep. Austin Scott of Georgia, chairman of the House Agriculture General Farm Commodities, Risk Management, and Credit Subcommittee.

“As we deliberate we must make sure we’re doing everything we can to help all beginning young and small farmers and taking care of future generations.”

The existing plans reimburse farmers at a rate linked to a market average price set in the 2014 farm bill, and a farmer’s base acreage of a certain crop or harvested yields for previous years.

The programs are available to a range of commodity farmers, and insurance payouts under the 2018 farm bill totaled \$33 billion from 2018 to 2023.

### Hearing sought for minority, disadvantaged farmers

Democratic committee members agreed on the need for a robust safety net for all producers.

Still, party leaders highlighted issues of an imbalance in payouts from crop insurance programs between large-scale and historically underserved farmers found by the government watchdog Government Accountability Office, and the absence of diverse voices among the witnesses.

“Our nation’s strength in agriculture and as a people is our diversity,” said Rep. Shontel Brown, an Ohio Democrat and ranking member on the subcommittee. “Mr. Chairman, I hope it is easy for you to agree that a critical component of writing a farm bill that works for all is ensuring that everyone is invited to sit at the table.”

Brown submitted a request into the record that a hearing be held for “minority and disadvantaged farmers and stakeholders on farm bill issues relating to this subcommittee.”

The farm bill is a multiyear omnibus law which authorizes an array of agricultural and food programs, including federal crop insurance, food stamp benefits and farm resource conservation.

The 2018 farm bill expires at the end of September 2023, was projected to cost \$867 billion over 10 years when enacted, and has cost roughly \$428 billion over the past five years. Baseline spending for the coming farm bill is projected at \$1.5 trillion over the next 10 fiscal years, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

### Increasing reference prices

Commodity group leaders angled for legislators to keep cuts to commodity insurance and crop insurance programs off the table, while increasing what are called reference prices.

Title I is the commodity assistance title of the farm bill, which contains the commodity insurance programs, certain disaster relief programs for crops like sugar, and a fixed-rate loan program that uses commodity stocks as collateral.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 15 of 90

Reference prices are the set average commodity market prices for goods that factor into insurance reimbursement rates, along with the previous year's planted acreage or harvested crop yields. Those reference prices haven't increased since 2012.

Tom Haag, president of the National Corn Growers Association, said surveys among his producers ranked crop insurance as the most important program and title of the farm bill. He suggested finding ways to make crop insurance cheaper for growers, and increase county-level payments so they can exceed 10% of the county's benchmark farm revenue.

Haag added that the current statutory reference price for insuring corn is \$3.70 per bushel, "well below the current market price" of roughly \$6 per bushel. That means farmers could receive insurance payouts far below the market price, a problem with input costs remaining high in recent months.

"We strongly oppose any efforts to restrict producers' access to crop insurance products and oppose harmful program cuts that would negatively impact crop insurance products, their delivery or the sound structure of the program," he said.

Aaron Flansburg, chairman of the USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council, said that crop insurance must be preserved as a "central risk management system for farmers," and, further, enables growers to get a line of credit on their farms. He suggested making it easier to transition between the ARC and PLC programs year over year by reducing paperwork.

Kirk Satterfield, chairman of USA Rice, said that the PLC program presents a "true safety net" for rice farmers amid trade distortions which violate the World Trade Organization guidelines. He suggested upping reference prices across the PLC program to better counter international trade violations.

House Agriculture Committee Chairman and Republican Pennsylvania Rep. Glenn "GT" Thompson asked the panelists about rumblings in Congress to "gut" insurance programs through adjusted gross income means testing and payment limits.

"That would mean a major disaster if something like that were to happen to us," said Haag. "If we start having limitations, you might have less people involved in crop insurance. That's going to make it more expensive for that younger farmer, then, to get going."

Shawn Holladay, chairman of the National Cotton Council, said that his daughter is a full partner on his farm, and he would not have let that happen if he thought rules like those Thompson mentioned would be proposed.

"That is limiting something that we're using as a true safety net, but it's well below the cost," he said. "That's how important it is to our family operation to not have those kinds of harmful things happen to insurance, because I don't think they're justifiable."

Republican Rep. Brad Finstad of Minnesota asked Haag what he sees as the biggest challenge facing a corn grower right now.

"We have a lot of opposition that want to take a lot of the tools out of our toolbox," Haag said. "Taking tools away from us would be our biggest hindrance."

## Fighting trade barriers

Industry representatives also spoke to the need to better insulate domestic producers from harmful market manipulation occurring abroad.

Satterfield said that India, for example, has subsidized 90% of the cost of the rice production supply chain, and has flooded markets that U.S.-based exporters used to dominate.

"This is only one example of many predatory trade practices used by foreign competitors," he said. "We continue to call for the U.S. to address these blatant WTO violations by India and others."

Republican Rep. Rick Crawford of Arkansas asked how rice and wheat market manipulation practices by India are affecting producers on the ground.

"We are growing a great product, but they are getting the rice so much cheaper because of the over-subsidization of fertilizer and everything down the line from India," Satterfield said. "It's a very unlevel playing field for us for sure."

Flansburg suggested a renewed focus on free trade agreements to legislators, in light of an ongoing

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 16 of 90

agricultural tariff battle with India. He described the impacts as "disastrous" for domestic chickpea growers, who saw returns decrease from 40 cents per pound to 13 cents per pound, which did not cover the cost of production.

"I feel we as American farmers can compete with anybody in the world, and deliver a superior product," he said. "So having those trade agreements in place, and free trade, we're all for it."

*Adam Goldstein is the D.C. Bureau intern for States Newsroom. Goldstein is a graduate student at the University of Missouri School of Journalism, studying digital reporting. He is originally from San Francisco, and loves swimming, cooking, and the San Francisco 49ers.*

## Here's where gas prices are headed (for now) and why

BY: CASEY QUINLAN - APRIL 27, 2023 10:23 AM

Higher temperatures. Higher gas prices.

Drivers across the country have seen that seasonal given play out in recent weeks. The national average for a gallon of regular gas is \$3.64 on April 26, up 21 cents over the previous month, according to AAA.

The good news is that gas is 49 cents below where it was on April 26 of last year, and more than a dollar below last year's high of \$5.02 a gallon, which it reached in June. And right now, economists aren't expecting prices to surge this summer, though some slight increases are still expected.

"I do expect prices to move higher through the year but nothing dramatic ...," said John LaForge, head of global real asset strategy at Wells Fargo Investment Institute. "As far as 2023, there really isn't much to do. We're heading into the driving season ... I don't expect to see gasoline move up by a dollar. I think it'll be 10 cents, 20 cents. It's not going to be any fun. I don't think we're gonna get this big, big move. In the end, the answer really is conservation and just don't drive as much."

Of course, gasoline prices differ widely from state to state, with consumers paying an average \$4.70 a gallon for regular in Arizona and an average \$3.23 in Louisiana on April 26.

So why the fluctuation from one state to the other? One month to another and even year over year?

Here is a look at the factors that play into prices.

### Summertime blues

Due to environmental regulations, gas stations are changing gasoline to a summer blend, which has lower vapor pressure (making it cleaner) but costs more because it requires more refining. It could range from five cents more to 20 cents more depending on the region of the country you're buying gas in, said Andrew Gross, spokesperson for AAA.

"In some places [the switch] already happened and in other places, like in the Northeast, it continues," he said. "Retailers have until the end of May where they're able to keep selling the winter blend because they're allowed to sell what's still in their tank essentially."

And some New England states and California have stricter regulations than the EPA, making their gas pricier still.

Other circumstances influencing gas prices include what the market will bear at that particular gas station, proximity to refineries, and hurricane season lasting longer than it used to, which can disrupt refineries, Gross said.

And yes, we're driving more in the summer and demand is a big factor, though not the biggest.

### The big driver: Oil

The price of gasoline you pay at your local station is greatly influenced by the price of crude oil. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) April report, the price of crude oil makes up 57% of the retail price of gasoline, followed by refining, taxes and distribution and marketing.

OPEC producers' announcement earlier this month that they would be cutting oil production by 1.2 million barrels a day pushed the price of crude oil over \$80 a barrel. Russia and Saudi Arabia are making the highest cuts in production at 500,000 barrels per day, starting in May. The United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Algeria, Oman, and Gabon are also reducing production.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 17 of 90

"The oil market is just like the stock market. It's very headline driven and any kind of bad news will make it freak out and that's what it did," said Andrew Gross, spokesperson for AAA. "The price of oil immediately shot up to like \$85 a barrel (after the OPEC announcement). Well, since then, it's really had a hard time keeping its nose above \$80. If it stays north of \$80, that puts a lot of upward pressure on the price of gasoline. If it drops below \$80, a lot of that pressure is removed."

This week the price dropped to \$76.73 a barrel.

OPEC reductions also drove up the price of oil last year, leading to a high of \$123 a barrel. But other factors also weighed on the price at the pump, including the start of the war in Ukraine, a decrease in production of domestic oil during the pandemic and a surge in demand from a nation ready to get back to business after COVID restrictions eased. And while the war is ongoing, production both globally and domestically is expected to reach new records, according to the EIA.

## Let's not forget profits

Oil companies reported record profits in 2022, partly buoyed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine:

Exxon Mobil: \$56 billion

Shell: \$40 billion

Total Energies: \$36.2 billion

Chevron: \$35.5 billion

BP: \$28 billion

ConocoPhillips: \$18.7 billion

In October, President Joe Biden said he would work with Congress to force companies to "stop war profiteering, meet their responsibilities to this country, give the American people a break and still do very well." He suggested a higher tax on their excess profits and other possible restrictions, options that were not expected to go anywhere in the Republican-led House.

Instead of a windfall tax on profits, Biden's budget calls for increasing the tax on stock buybacks from 1% to 4%, a move aimed in part at oil companies that had reported on earnings calls that they would buy back shares of their own stocks rather than invest in more production.

However, U.S. Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) did reintroduce a bill in February that would carry out a per barrel quarterly tax of oil companies that produce or import 300,000 barrels of oil a day or more and would allow taxpayers to receive rebates of hundreds of dollars. U.S. Rep. Ro Khanna (D-CA) introduced the bill in the House.

## Can the U.S. do anything else to keep prices down?

Biden took action in 2022 to lower high gas prices by selling 180 million barrels of oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, a move that received criticism from Republicans.

"After June, the prices began to drift lower. The administration helped out with tapping the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, which really played a key, a key role in that," Gross said. "It could stop that trend of higher prices. Now can you say that it helped lower prices by 20 cents or 10? We will never be able to tell what it did but we know that it sort of stopped the momentum."

It's unlikely the Biden administration would take that measure again. The Strategic Petroleum Reserve is at its lowest level in decades.

But right now it's not expected to be needed. The EIA originally estimated that gas prices would increase to a national average of \$3.53 a gallon in April and forecast prices at \$3.45 a gallon through August. But it hedged as well, saying: "Additional OPEC production cuts, refinery outages, or changes in underlying economic conditions could all contribute to changes in gasoline supply or demand and, therefore, change the gasoline retail price outlook."

Higher domestic production will help. The U.S. produced 12,462 barrels of crude oil a day in January, a 9.6% increase over the year prior.

If demand changed, prices could also level off, but a lot would need to shift in the economy for that to happen, said Kevin L. Kliesen, an economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. Kliesen spoke to States Newsroom on April 19, before the Federal Open Market Committee's media blackout period. Kliesen



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 18 of 90

said demand could change significantly if the economy slows, but until the tight labor market changes, he expects to see some increase in gas prices this summer.

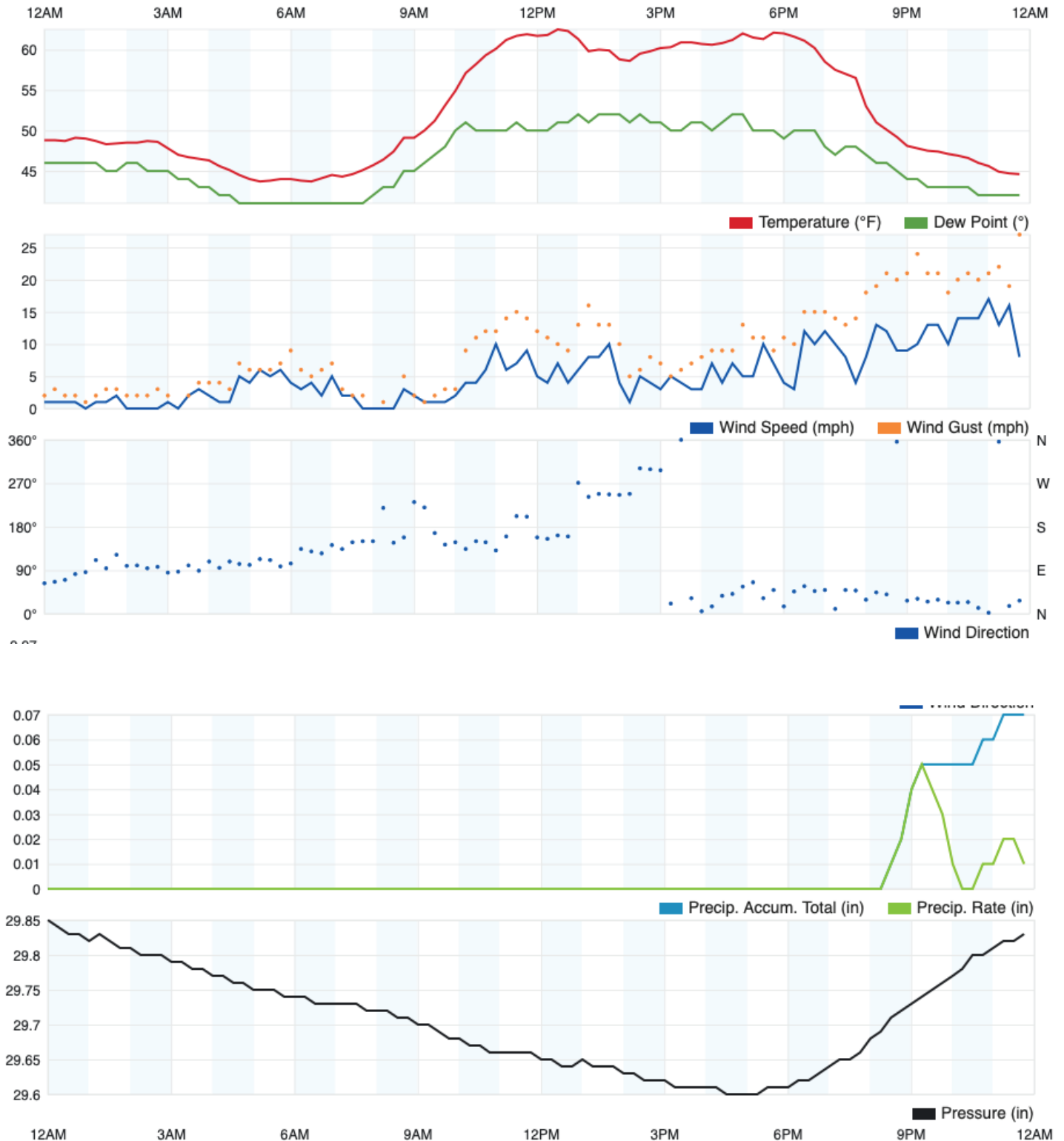
"...The unemployment rate is 3.5% so as long as the labor market continues to be quite well, that's going to hold up consumer spending and incomes," he said. "That's going to tend to increase the demand for energy and things like that, so people should expect a modest upward drift in gasoline prices."

*Casey Quinlan is an economy reporter for States Newsroom, based in Washington, D.C. For the past decade, they have reported on national politics and state politics, LGBTQ rights, abortion access, labor issues, education, Supreme Court news and more for publications including The American Independent, ThinkProgress, New Republic, Rewire News, SCOTUSblog, In These Times and Vox.*

# Groton Daily Independent








Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 19 of 90

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Groton Daily Independent

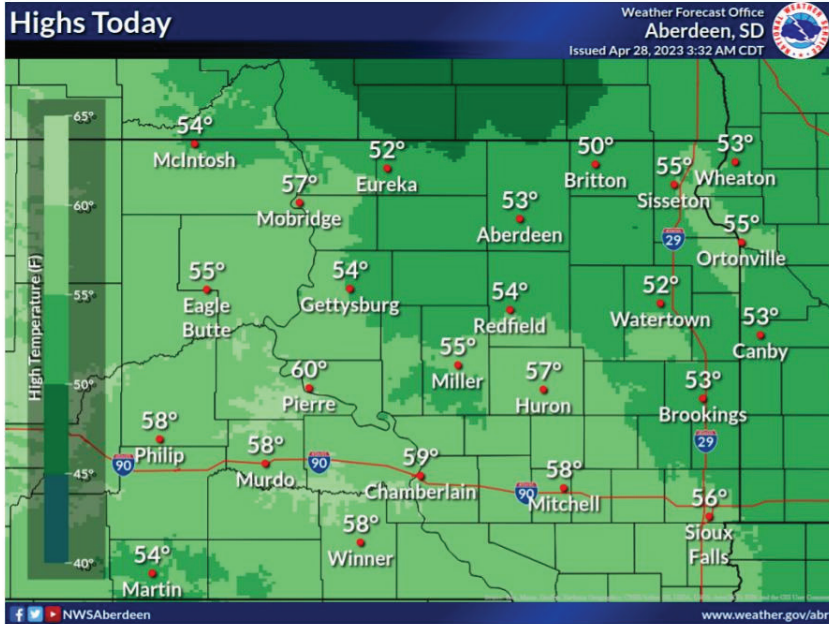
Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 20 of 90

Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
						
Decreasing Clouds	Partly Cloudy	Chance Showers and Breezy	Mostly Clear and Breezy	Mostly Sunny and Breezy	Mostly Clear and Blustery	Sunny and Breezy
High: 52 °F	Low: 33 °F	High: 54 °F	Low: 33 °F	High: 52 °F	Low: 31 °F	High: 55 °F



Rain Ending This Morning...Cooler Today

April 28, 2023  
3:45 AM



Rain will come to an end across the east this morning

Dry this afternoon and evening

Another chance for light rain showers along and east of the James River Valley Saturday



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Rain will come to an end across the east this morning Dry this afternoon and evening Another chance for light rain showers along and east of the James River Valley Saturday

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 21 of 90

## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 63 °F at 12:34 PM

Low Temp: 44 °F at 5:11 AM

Wind: 24 mph at 9:09 PM

Precip: : 0.12

Day length: 14 hours, 13 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 90 in 1934

Record Low: 19 in 2008

Average High: 63

Average Low: 36

Average Precip in April.: 1.72

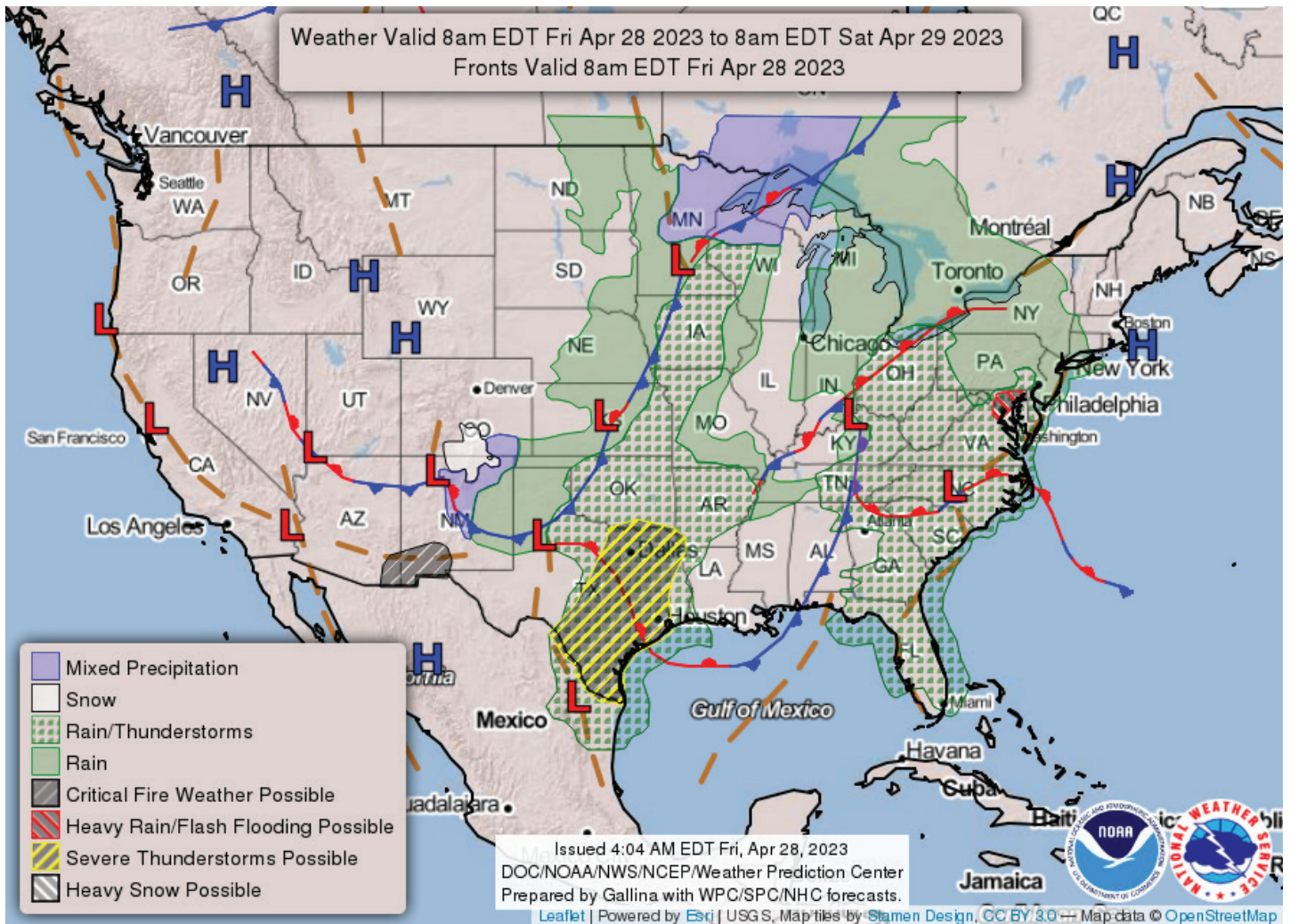
Precip to date in April.: 1.79

Average Precip to date: 3.78

Precip Year to Date: 5.72

Sunset Tonight: 8:36:23 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:21:50 AM





# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 22 of 90

## Today in Weather History

April 28, 1994: Snow accumulated 5 to 12 inches over most of the eastern half of South Dakota, with the 12-inch report from Winner. Ten to eleven inches of snow was reported at numerous places including Sioux Falls and Platte in the southeast, and Summit in the northeast. Numerous accidents were caused by snow and ice, including one which killed a man and injured two women on Highway 12 near Bath, South Dakota. There was some undetermined crop damage, and livestock loss was feared as the late season cold and snow lowered resistance to disease.

1893: A half-mile wide estimated F4 tornado killed 23 people and injured 150 as it tore a path of devastation through Cisco, Texas. Every building in the town was either destroyed or severely damaged.

1973: The record crest of the Mississippi River at St. Louis, Missouri was registered at 43.23 feet on this day. This level exceeded the previous 1785 mark by 1.23 feet. This record was broken during the 1993 Flood when the Mississippi River crested at 49.58 feet on August 1st. At Memphis, Tennessee, the Mississippi was over flood stage for 63 days, more than that of the historic 1927 flood, and the river was above flood stage for an even longer 107 days at upstream Cairo, Illinois. Out of the seven largest floods on the Mississippi between 1927 and 1997, the 1973 event ranked third in both volume discharged and duration but only sixth in flood height. Over \$250 million of damages were incurred mainly in the Mississippi Valley states of Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

1921 - A severe hailstorm in Anson County, NC, produced hail the size of baseballs. Gardens, grain fields and trees were destroyed. Pine trees in the storm's path had to be cut for lumber because of the hail damage. (The Weather Channel)

1928 - A coastal storm produced tremendous late season snows in the Central Appalachians, including 35 inches at Bayard WV, 31 inches at Somerset PA, and 30 inches at Grantsville MD. High winds accompanying the heavy wet snow uprooted trees and unroofed a number of homes. The storm caused great damage to fruit trees and wild life. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1991: Memphis, Tennessee recorded their wettest April ever with 15.03 inches, breaking their previous record of 13.90 inches in 1872.

1987 - Twenty cities in the western and central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Highs of 95 degrees at Houston TX, 95 degrees at Lake Charles LA, and 94 degrees at Port Arthur TX, were April records. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Miami, FL, hit 92 degrees, marking a record eight days of 90 degree heat in the month of April. Squalls produced snow in the Washington D.C. area. Belvoir VA reported a temperature reading of 57 degrees at the time the snow began. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Strong northerly winds and heavy snow ushered cold air into the north central U.S. Snowfall totals in Montana ranged up to 20 inches at Miles City. Thunderstorms produced severe weather from eastern Texas to the Southern Appalachians and the southern Ohio Valley. Hail four and a half inches in diameter was reported at Keller TX and White Settlement TX. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2002: During the evening hours, a violent F4 tornado carved a 64-mile path across southeast Maryland. The La Plata, Maryland tornado was part of a larger severe weather outbreak that began in the mid-Mississippi Valley early on that day and spread across portions of the Ohio Valley and the Mid-Atlantic States. In Maryland, three deaths and 122 injuries were a direct result of the storm. Property damage exceeded \$100 million. Tornadoes along the Atlantic coast are not frequent, and tornadoes of this magnitude are extremely rare. Only six F4 tornadoes have occurred farther north and east of the La Plata storm: Worcester, Massachusetts - 1953; New York/Massachusetts - 1973; Windsor Locks, Connecticut - 1979; five counties in New York - 1989; New Haven, Connecticut - 1989; North Egremont, Massachusetts - 1995. None was as close to the coast. The tornado traveled across the Chesapeake Bay almost to the Atlantic.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 23 of 90

Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### GIVE THEM A PUSH!

While a teenager, Jean Nidetch enjoyed walking through a park near her home. Day after day she saw children sitting in swings as mothers enjoyed themselves talking and laughing. While the mothers seemed to be enjoying one another, the children appeared to be neglected. One day she started to push them gently. Then she taught them how to pull on the ropes to set their swings in motion. Soon the children were able to swing on their own and enjoy themselves while their mothers visited.

It brought her much satisfaction to see the children having so much fun. It was from that experience that she found her role in life. She once said, "My role in life is giving others a push." Ms. Nidetch went on to become the founder of Weight Watchers.

One day Andrew found his brother Peter and gave him a "push" toward the Lord. It took someone's "push" for Peter to become a powerful leader. We must always look for opportunities to "push" people toward our Savior and Lord.

Prayer: Father, may we constantly look for ways to "give others a push" toward Jesus. May we constantly search for ways to bring people closer to You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Andrew went to find his brother, Simon, and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means "Christ"). John 1:34-43



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

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 24 of 90

## 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
- 06/17/2023 Groton Triathlon
- 07/04/2023 Couples Firecracker Golf Tournament
- 07/09/2023 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
- 07/26/2023 GGA Burger Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 08/04/2023 Wine on Nine 6pm
- 08/11/2023 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
- 09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 09/10/2023 Couples Sunflower Golf Tournament
- 10/14/2023 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)
- 10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
- 11/23/2023 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)
- 12/02/2023 Tour of Homes & Holiday Party
- 12/09/2023 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9-11am

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 25 of 90

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# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 26 of 90



## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.25.23

8 29 46 47 48 12

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$38,000,000**

NEXT 15 Hrs 14 Mins 40  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.26.23

2 11 12 27 46 9

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$2,550,000**

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 14  
DRAW: Mins 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.27.23

6 11 12 34 42 9

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

NEXT 14 Hrs 44 Mins  
DRAW: 39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.26.23

1 7 13 27 30

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

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 14  
DRAW: Mins 39 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.26.23

18 26 31 49 51 18

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

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 13  
DRAW: Mins 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.26.23

2 15 30 35 49 6

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$51,000,000**

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 13  
DRAW: Mins 40 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### **A NJ pastor-politician is gunned down, and a community reels**

By MARYCLAIRE DALE Associated Press

SAYREVILLE, N.J. (AP) — Nicole Teliano used to play games on her phone in the mayor's office while her mother worked down the hall several evenings a month, tending to the tedious, often acrimonious task of serving in local government.

The 11-year-old girl didn't mind sharing her mother, Sayreville Councilwoman Eunice Dwumfour, with the nearly 50,000 residents of the central New Jersey town, the young people she nurtured as a pastor of a prosperity gospel church in Newark or the Nigerian church colleague she married in a festive ceremony in Abuja in November.

"Well, my mom was a little bit of extra, so I could share a little bit. There was enough to go around," Nicole said in a family interview with The Associated Press this month.

Now, friends and loved ones are asking for help figuring out who gunned down the charismatic 30-year-old Dwumfour outside her Sayreville home on Feb. 1. The case is reverberating from New Jersey to West Africa, with touchpoints including politics, religion and money that echo across continents.

Authorities aren't saying much. Dwumfour's parents and new husband Peter Ezechukwu, who hoped to join his wife in the United States this spring but instead came for her funeral, are frustrated by the ongoing silence. The Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office said it recognizes their concerns but needs to protect the integrity of the investigation.

"Eunice was too good of a person to let (her death) go unanswered," Mayor Victoria Kilpatrick said at a Feb. 8 memorial service, where hundreds mourned the stylish preacher known as "Pastor Eunney\_K."

"That smile" of hers, Kilpatrick said, "is not going to let us give up."

#### A COMMUNITY SHAKEN

Dwumfour (pronounced JEW'for), the eldest of five children born to Ghanaian immigrants, had been active in Christian ministry since she was a teen. She graduated from Newark public schools and, after having Nicole, earned a degree in women's studies from William Paterson University in 2017.

During the 2021 council campaign, she described herself as a business analyst and volunteer EMT, and said she had moved to Sayreville in 2017 because it was a safe community. She had first joined the local Human Relations Commission, then won a close race for city council in 2021, running on a Republican ticket with church friend Christian Onuoha. Their surprise victories left the council with a 3-3 partisan split instead of a 5-1 Democratic majority.

Tensions often ran high at council meetings. It was something that Dwumfour addressed head-on in January. "It's 2023 and my prayer for everyone is that our mindset will change," Dwumfour said. "I'd like to wish everyone a happy and glorious new year."

Four weeks later, she was dead.

Just before the shooting, Dwumfour dropped off a housemate who had been grocery shopping with her. She lived in the suburban apartment complex, Camelot at La Mer, with her daughter and two church friends, family said.

"We were waiting for my mom to look for a parking space, and then she was taking a lot of time, so we started calling her over and over and over, but it wouldn't pick up. And then we heard gunshots, and we started calling the police," recalled Nicole, who had dinner ready for her mother. "I thought it was fireworks."

Neighbors saw a man in dark clothes argue with Dwumfour at her driver's side window, then open fire before running toward the nearby Garden State Parkway and disappearing. Her white Nissan SUV rolled down the street and smashed into two parked cars.

Family lawyer John Wisniewski acknowledges that it could take time to examine everything from Dwumfour's cellphone data to the bitter squabbles on council to the global nature of her work with her church, Champions Royal Assembly. With his help, the family finally met with investigators in March. He believes

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 28 of 90

they're "looking at everything."

But people close to her fear the death of yet another Black woman in America will be forgotten.

"It's just not common for somebody to come home from work and be ambushed in her parking lot," said Karl Badu of The Church of Pentecost, the family's pastor. "She was a councilwoman who just got murdered, brutally."

## FOCUSED ON FAITH

Most of Dwumfour's time and energy seemed devoted to Champions Royal Assembly, which met four or five times a week in a small storefront above a Goodwill store in Newark, where nearly one in three people live in poverty.

"God loves a cheerful giver!" Dwumfour said in a 2017 sermon posted online, extolling a central tenet of the prosperity gospel theology: that good things come to those who tithe.

Senior Pastor Joshua Iginla, who married Dwumfour and Ezechukwu in November, founded the group in 2006 and now oversees an 80,000-seat church in Abuja, the Nigerian capital. He travels by private jet and — according to his social media posts and Nigerian news outlets — gives away luxury cars, cash, generators and grain to widows, actors and others on his birthday. He also has a base in Johannesburg with his South African wife and bought a home in Springfield, New Jersey, a New York suburb, linked to his former wife, in 2017. Calls to that home went unanswered.

But court records and tax filings suggest money was tight in the church's newer U.S. operations. Dwumfour, as an officer, had been named in a series of landlord-tenant disputes in Newark dating from 2017 to 2020 involving a related church entity, the Fire Congress Fellowship. That entity saw its income drop sharply in recent years — from about \$250,000 in 2017 to just \$350 in 2020 as the pandemic took hold.

And an eviction warrant had been sought on Jan. 3 for her Camelot unit before property managers dismissed the case on Jan. 16, according to court records. That same month, Dwumfour wrote on LinkedIn that she was looking for a new job.

Dwumfour and Nicole had previously stayed at a second unit at Camelot, one listed as the business address for both church entities. Pastor Osi King, a regional church administrator linked to that unit, did not return calls seeking comment.

Dwumfour made \$5,000 a year for her Sayreville council work and, based on the tax filings, did not appear to take a salary from the church. The church had paid the down payment on her vehicle, but not the monthly payments, her parents said. Nicole thinks her mom also did some work as a nursing assistant, though other family members could not confirm that.

Onuoha, who does campus outreach for Champions Royal Assembly, held the lease on the Camelot unit where Dwumfour was staying when she died. He had hoped she might soon take it over.

"I was just so happy that she was married," Onuoha, who spoke movingly about Dwumfour at the memorial, told AP. She seemed, he said, to be in "a very good place."

Nicole was not so sure. She said her mother seemed down in her final days. "That week, she started acting sad," Nicole said. She asked what was wrong, and her mother replied, "It's just work. It's a lot."

"I knew it was something else," Nicole said quietly.

Dwumfour's husband spoke with her from Abuja an hour before she was killed. It was "just normal: 'I love you.' 'How are you?'" said Ezechukwu, 36. "My wife's always a happy woman. Even if she has an issue, you can never tell. Because she always smiles."

Her father, noting her generosity, said Dwumfour once gave the full contents of her bank account — some \$3,000 — to a relative in need. He had named her for his mother, giving her the middle name Konadu.

"I love her so much, and she loved me too," Prince Dwumfour said. "Oh, I'm going to miss her."

## A CONTENTIOUS COUNCIL

At the first borough council meeting of the year on Jan. 3, tempers flared over leadership assignments before Onuoha was named council president and Dwumfour — despite once saying she'd thought poorly of police growing up in Newark — the public safety chairperson.

She urged harmony in the new year.

"I'm not here because of the (Republican) party or any other thing. I'm here because I was appointed

here by God, ... and I'm here for my conscience," Dwumfour said.

Three months later, the community is still reeling from her death. Kilpatrick, the mayor, announced on April 10 that she will not seek reelection. She and her family are concerned about a threatening letter sent to her while her friend's killing goes unsolved.

Nicole is spending more time with her grandparents as she adjusts to life without her mother, whose words of wisdom she prefers to keep private. She had to give up the French bulldog mix she walked after school, which they had named Excellence. She also continues to spend time with her father. He did not return a message from the AP.

And Ezechukwu? Instead of a new life with Dwumfour, he has only memories and cellphone photos of their four-year romance, burnished through semi-annual church conferences held around the world.

"Nigerians," Ezechukwu said, "want to know: 'What really happened? We believe in America — authority, the police and everybody. ... We need justice for her.'"

The family worries that day may never come.

"And the fear. Just to be plain honest — this is a Black woman, the first Black councilwoman in Sayreville. Are they just going to sweep this under the rug just like every Black person?" Badu asked. "We just need some assurance, that's all."

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AP reporter Michael Rubinkam contributed to this report from Sayreville and investigative researcher Randy Herschaft from New York. Follow Legal Affairs Writer Maryclaire Dale on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/Maryclairedale>

## Russian missile and drone attack in Ukraine kills 17 people

By ANDREA ROSA, HANNA ARHIROVA and DAVID RISING Associated Press

UMAN, Ukraine (AP) — Russia fired more than 20 cruise missiles and two drones at Ukraine early Friday, killing at least 17 people, most of them when two missiles slammed into an apartment building in the center of the country, officials said. Three children were among the dead.

The missile attacks included the first one against Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, in nearly two months, although there were no reports of any targets hit. The city government said Ukraine's air force intercepted 11 cruise missiles and two unmanned aerial vehicles over Kyiv.

The strikes on the nine-story residential building in central Ukraine occurred in Uman, a city located around 215 kilometers (134 miles) south of Kyiv. Fifteen people died in that attack, according to the interior ministry, including two 10-year-old children and a toddler.

Another of the victims was a 75-year-old woman who lived in a neighboring building and suffered internal bleeding from the huge blast's shock wave, according to emergency personnel at the scene.

The Ukrainian national police said 17 people were wounded and three children were rescued from the rubble. Nine were hospitalized.

The bombardment was nowhere near the war's sprawling front lines or active combat zones in eastern Ukraine, where a grinding war of attrition has taken hold. Moscow has frequently launched long-range missile attacks during the 14-month war, often indiscriminately hitting civilian areas.

Ukrainian officials and analysts have alleged the strikes are part of a deliberate intimidation strategy by the Kremlin. Russian officials insist they target only Ukrainian military facilities. When images of damaged residential buildings emerge, they commonly claim it was caused by Ukraine's air defenses.

Survivors of the Uman strikes recounted terrifying moments as the missiles hit when it still was dark outside.

Halyna, a building resident, said she and her husband were covered in glass by the blast. They saw flames outside their window and scrambled out, but first Halyna checked whether her friend in a neighboring apartment was OK.

"I was calling, calling her (on the phone), but she didn't pick up. I even rang the doorbell, but still no answer," she told The Associated Press. She used the spare keys from her friend's apartment and went



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 30 of 90

inside to check on her. She found her lying dead on her apartment floor.

Halyna refused to provide her last name out of security concerns.

Another building resident, Olha Turina, told the AP that glass from the explosion flew everywhere.

Turina, whose husband is fighting on the front lines, said one of her child's classmates was missing.

"I don't know where they are, I don't know if they are alive," she said. "I don't know why we have to go through all this. We never bothered anyone."

Three body bags lay next to the building as smoke continued to billow hours after the attack. Soldiers, civilians and emergency crews searched through the rubble outside for more victims, while residents dragged belongings out of the damaged building.

One woman, crying in shock, was taken away by rescue crews for help.

Yulia Norovkova, spokeswoman for emergency rescue crews on the scene, said that local volunteers were helping nearly 150 emergency personnel. Two aid stations, including psychologists, were operating, she said.

A 31-year-old woman and her 2-year-old daughter were also killed in the eastern city of Dnipro in another attack, regional Governor Serhii Lysak said. Four people were also wounded, and a private home and business were damaged.

The attacks came days after President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that he and Chinese leader Xi Jinping held a "long and meaningful" phone call where Xi said his government will send a peace envoy to Ukraine and other nations.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said that Friday's bombardment showed the Kremlin isn't interested in a peace deal.

"Missile strikes killing innocent Ukrainians in their sleep, including a 2-year-old child, is Russia's response to all peace initiatives," he tweeted. "The way to peace is to kick Russia out of Ukraine."

Czech President Petr Pavel, on a visit to Ukraine, was unconvinced by the Kremlin's past denials of responsibility for such bloodshed.

"The number of attacks on civilian targets leads to an only conclusion that it is intentional," Pavel told Czech media. "It's a clear plan intended to cause chaos, horrors among the civilian population."

Shortly after Moscow unleashed the barrage, the Russian Defense Ministry posted a photo on Telegram showing a missile launch and saying, "Right on target."

The message triggered outrage among Ukrainians on social media and some officials, who viewed it as gloating over the casualties.

"The Ministry of Homicide of the Russian Federation is happy that it hit a residential building with a rocket and killed civilians," said Andriy Yermak, the head of Ukraine's presidential office.

In Kyiv, fragments from intercepted missiles or drones damaged power lines and a road in one neighborhood. No casualties were reported.

Ukraine officials said last week that they had taken delivery of American-made Patriot missiles, providing Kyiv with a long-sought new shield against Russian airstrikes, but there was no word on whether the system was used Friday.

The city's anti-aircraft system was activated, according to the Kyiv City Administration. Air raid sirens started at about 4 a.m., and the alert ended about two hours later.

The missile attack was the first on the capital since March 9. Air defenses have thwarted Russian drone attacks more recently.

The missiles were fired from aircraft operating in the Caspian Sea region, according to Ukrainian Armed Forces Commander in Chief Valerii Zaluzhnyi.

Overall, he said, Ukraine intercepted 21 of 23 Kh-101 and Kh-555 type cruise missiles launched, as well as the two drones.

The war largely ground to a halt over the winter, becoming a war of attrition as each side has shelled the other's positions from a distance. Ukraine has been building up its mechanized brigades with armor supplied by its Western allies, who have also been training Ukrainian troops and sending ammunition, as

Kyiv eyes a possible counteroffensive.

Hanna Arhirova and David Rising reported from Kyiv. Patrick Quinn contributed to this story from Bangkok.

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

## Guardman in leak case wanted to kill a 'ton of people': US

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER, ERIC TUCKER and TARA COPP Associated Press

WORCESTER, Mass. (AP) — The Massachusetts Air National guardsman accused of leaking highly classified military documents kept an arsenal of guns and said on social media that he would like to kill a "ton of people," prosecutors said in arguing Thursday that 21-year-old Jack Teixeira should remain in jail for his trial.

But the judge at Teixeira's detention hearing put off an immediate decision on whether he should be kept in custody until his trial or released to home confinement or under other conditions. Teixeira was led away from the court in handcuffs, black rosary beads around his neck, pending that ruling.

The court filings raise new questions about why Teixeira had such a high security clearance and access to some of the nation's most classified secrets. They said he may still have material that hasn't been released, which could be of "tremendous value to hostile nation states that could offer him safe harbor and attempt to facilitate his escape from the United States."

In Teixeira's detention hearing, Magistrate Judge David Hennessy expressed skepticism of defense arguments that the government hasn't alleged Teixeira intended leaked information to be widely disseminated.

"Somebody under the age of 30 has no idea that when they put something on the internet that it could end up anywhere in this world?" the judge asked. "Seriously?"

Teixeira entered his hearing in Worcester in orange prison garb, smiling at his father in the front row. His handcuffs were removed before he sat down and put back on when he was taken out.

The judge could order Teixeira to be confined at his father's home or conditionally released while awaiting trial, if not held in jail.

"You have a young man before you who didn't flee, has nowhere to flee," said Brendan Kelley, the defendant's lawyer. "He will answer the charges, he will be judged by his fellow citizens."

But Nadine Pellegrini from the Massachusetts U.S. attorney's office told the judge the information prosecutors submitted to the court about the defendant's threatening words and behavior "is not speculation, it is not hyperbole, nor is it the creation of a caricature. It is ... directly based upon the words and actions of this defendant."

The defense asserted Teixeira no longer has access to any top-secret information and had accused prosecutors of providing "little more than speculation that a foreign adversary will seduce Mr. Teixeira and orchestrate his clandestine escape from the United States."

The prosecution's filing reviews what it says are Teixeira social media posts, stating in November that he would "kill a (expletive) ton of people" if he had his way, because it would be "culling the weak minded."

Court papers urging a federal judge to keep Teixeira in custody detailed a troubling history going back to high school, where he was suspended when a classmate overheard him discussing Molotov cocktails and other weapons as well as racial threats. More recently, prosecutors said, he used his government computer to research past mass shootings and standoffs with federal agents.

He remains a grave threat to national security and a flight risk, prosecutors wrote. Investigators are still trying to determine whether he kept any physical or digital copies of classified information that hasn't surfaced yet.

"There simply is no condition or combination of conditions that can ensure the Defendant will not further disclose additional information still in his knowledge or possession," prosecutors wrote. "The damage the Defendant has already caused to the U.S. national security is immense. The damage the Defendant is still capable of causing is extraordinary."

Teixeira has been in jail since his arrest this month on charges stemming from the most consequential

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 32 of 90

intelligence leak in years.

Teixeira has been charged under the Espionage Act with unauthorized retention and transmission of classified national defense information. He has not yet entered a plea.

His lawyers argued in court papers that appropriate conditions can be set for his release even if the court finds him to be a flight risk — such as confinement at his father's home and location monitoring.

"The government's allegations ... offer no support that Mr. Teixeira currently, or ever, intended any information purportedly to the private social media server to be widely disseminated," they wrote. "Thus, its argument that Mr. Teixeira will continue to release information or destroy evidence if not detained rings hollow."

Prosecutors wrote that he kept his gun locker within reach of his bed and in it were handguns, bolt-action rifles, shotguns, an AK-style high-capacity weapon and a gas mask. Ammunition and tactical pouches were found on his dresser, they said.

He is accused of distributing highly classified documents about top national security issues in a chat room on Discord, a social media platform that started as a hangout for gamers. The leak stunned military officials, sparked an international uproar and raised fresh questions about America's ability to safeguard its secrets.

The leaked documents appear to detail U.S. and NATO aid to Ukraine and U.S. intelligence assessments regarding U.S. allies that could strain ties with those nations. Some show real-time details from February and March of Ukraine's and Russia's battlefield positions and precise numbers of battlefield gear lost and newly flowing into Ukraine from its allies.

Prosecutors wrote that Teixeira repeatedly had "detailed and troubling discussions about violence and murder" on the platform where authorities say he shared the documents. In February, he told another person that he was tempted to make a minivan into an "assassination van," prosecutors wrote.

In 2018, they allege, Teixeira was suspended after a classmate "overheard him make remarks about weapons, including Molotov cocktails, guns at the school, and racial threats." His initial application for a firearms identification card that same year was denied due to police concerns over those remarks.

The Justice Department said it also learned through its investigation that Teixeira used his government computer in July to look up mass shootings and government standoffs, including the terms "Ruby Ridge," "Las Vegas shooting," "Mandalay Bay shooting," "Uvalde" and "Buffalo tops shooting" — an apparent reference to the 2022 racist mass shooting at a Buffalo supermarket.

Those searches should have triggered the computer to generate an immediate referral to security, which could have then led to a more in-depth review of Teixeira's file, according to Dan Meyer, a lawyer who specializes in security clearance issues. The Air Force's investigation will probably discover whether a referral was generated — and whether security officers did anything with the information.

The Air Force has suspended the commander of the 102nd Intelligence Support Squadron where Teixeira worked and an administrative commander until further investigation.

Pentagon spokesman Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder wouldn't discuss the specifics of Teixeira's case. "We do want to allow the investigation to run its course," Ryder said.

Teixeira's lawyers said he has no criminal history. The incident at his high school was "thoroughly investigated" and he was allowed to come back after a few days and a psychological evaluation, they wrote. That investigation was "fully known and vetted" by the Air National Guard before he enlisted and when he obtained his top-secret security clearance, they said.

Months later, after news outlets began reporting on the documents leak, Teixeira took steps to destroy evidence. Authorities who searched a dumpster at his home found a smashed laptop, tablet and Xbox gaming console, they said.

Authorities have not alleged a motive. Members of the Discord group have described Teixeira as someone who wanted to show off rather than inform the public about military operations or influence U.S. policy.

Billing records the FBI obtained from Discord helped lead authorities to Teixeira, who enlisted in the Air National Guard in September 2019. A Discord user told the FBI that a username linked to Teixeira began posting what appeared to be classified information roughly in December.

Tucker and Copp reported from Washington.

## **Error, confusion plague review kicking millions off Medicaid**

By AMANDA SEITZ and ANITA SNOW Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Days out from a surgery and with a young son undergoing chemotherapy, Kyle McHenry was scrambling to figure out if his Florida family will still be covered by Medicaid come Monday.

One form on the state's website said coverage for their sick 5-year-old son, Ryder, had been denied. But another said the family would remain on Medicaid through next year. Still, a letter from the state said McHenry now makes too much money for him, his wife and their older son to qualify after the end of the month.

Three phone calls and a total of six frustrating hours on hold with Florida's Department of Children and Families later, the McHenrys finally got the answer they were dreading on Thursday: Most of the family is losing Medicaid coverage, although Ryder remains eligible because of his illness.

"I'm trying not to go into panic," McHenry's wife, Allie McHenry, told The Associated Press earlier in the week.

The McHenrys are among the first casualties in an unprecedented nationwide review of the 84 million Medicaid enrollees over the next year that will require states to remove people whose incomes are now too high for the federal-state program offered to the poorest Americans.

Millions are expected to be left without insurance after getting a reprieve for the past three years during the coronavirus pandemic, when the federal government barred states from removing anyone who was deemed ineligible.

Advocacy groups have warned for months that confusion and errors will abound throughout the undertaking, wrongly leaving some of the country's poorest people suddenly without health insurance and unable to pay for necessary medical care.

Medicaid enrollees are already reporting they've been erroneously kicked off in a handful of states that have begun removing people, including Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Idaho, Iowa, New Hampshire and South Dakota, according to data gathered by the AP.

Trevor Hawkins is seeing the problems play out firsthand in Arkansas, where officials told the AP that the state is moving "as fast as possible" to wrap up a review before year's end.

Hawkins spends his days driving winding roads across the state providing free legal services to people who have lost coverage or need help filling out pages of forms the state has mailed to them. In between his drives, he fields about a half-dozen phone calls daily from people seeking guidance on their Medicaid applications.

"The notices are so confusing," said Hawkins, who works for Legal Aid of Arkansas. "No two people have had the same experience with losing their coverage. It's hard to identify what's really the issue."

Some people have been mailed pre-populated application forms that include inaccurate income or household information but leave Medicaid enrollees no space to fix the state's errors. Others have received documents that say Medicaid recipients will lose their coverage before they've even had an opportunity to re-apply, Hawkins said.

Tonya Moore, 49, went for weeks without Medicaid coverage because the state used her 21-year-old daughter's wages, including incomes from two part-time jobs that she no longer worked, to determine she was ineligible for the program. County officials told Moore she had to obtain statements from the businesses — about an hour's drive from Moore's rural home in Highland, Arkansas — to prove her daughter no longer worked there. Moore says she wasn't able to get the documents before being kicked off Medicaid on April 1.

By last week, Moore had run out of blood pressure medication and insulin used to control her diabetes and was staring down a nearly empty box of blood sugar test strips.

"I got a little panicky," she said at the time. "I don't know how long it's going to take to get my insurance."



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 34 of 90

Moore was reinstated on Medicaid as of Monday with Legal Aid's help.

The McHenry family, in Winter Park, Florida, also worries the state has mixed up their income while checking their eligibility for Medicaid.

After their son Ryder was diagnosed with cancer in September 2021, Allie McHenry quit her job to take care of him, leaving the family with a single income from Kyle McHenry's job as a heavy diesel mechanic. She signed the family up for Medicaid then but says they were initially denied because the state wrongly counted disability payments for Ryder's cancer as income. She's concerned the state included those payments in its latest assessment but has been unable to get a clear answer, after calling the state three times and being disconnected twice after staying on hold for hours.

"It is always a nightmare trying to call them," Allie McHenry said of her efforts to reach the state's helpline. "I haven't had the heart or strength to try and call again."

Notices sent to the McHenrys and reviewed by the AP show they were given less than two weeks' warning that they'd lose coverage at the end of April. The federal government requires states to tell people just 10 days in advance that they'll be kicked off Medicaid.

The family's experience isn't surprising. Last year, Congress, so worried that some states were ill-equipped to properly handle the number of calls that would flood lines during the Medicaid process, required states to submit data about their call volume, wait times and abandonment rate. The federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services will try to work with states where call wait times are especially high, a spokesperson for the agency said.

Some doctors and their staffs are taking it upon themselves to let patients know about the complicated process they'll have to navigate over the next year.

Most of the little patients pediatrician Lisa Costello sees in Morgantown, West Virginia are covered by Medicaid, and she's made a point to have conversations with parents about how the process will play out. She's also encouraging her colleagues to do the same. West Virginia officials have sent letters to nearly 20,000 people telling them that they'll lose coverage on Monday.

Some people might not realize they no longer have Medicaid until they go to fill a prescription or visit the doctor in the coming weeks, Costello said.

"A lot of it is educating people on, 'You're going to get this information; don't throw it away,'" she said. "How many of us get pieces of mail and toss it in the garbage because we think it's not important?"

Every weekday, about a dozen staffers at Adelante Healthcare, a small chain of community clinics in Phoenix, call families they believe are at risk of losing Medicaid. Colorful posters on the walls remind families in both English and Spanish to ensure their Medicaid insurance doesn't lapse.

That's how Alicia Celaya, a 37-year-old waitress in Phoenix, found out that she and her children, ages 4, 10 and 16, will lose coverage later this year.

When she and her husband were laid off from their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic, they enrolled in Medicaid. Both have returned to working in the restaurant industry, but Celaya and her children remained on Medicaid for the free health care coverage because she's unable to come up with the hundreds of dollars to pay the monthly premiums for her employer-sponsored health insurance.

The clinic is helping her navigate the private health insurance plans available through the Affordable Care Act's marketplace and trying to determine whether her children qualify for the federal Children's Health Insurance Program, known in Arizona as KidsCare. Celaya said she'd never be able to figure out the marketplace, where dozens of plans covering different doctors are offered at varying price points

"I'm no expert on health insurance," she said.

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Snow reported from Phoenix. Associated Press correspondents Andrew DeMillo in Little Rock, Arkansas, Anthony Izaguirre in Tallahassee, Florida, and Leah Willingham in Morgantown, West Virginia, contributed to this report.

**Pence testifies before election probe grand jury: AP source**

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 35 of 90

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former Vice President Mike Pence testified Thursday before a federal grand jury investigating efforts by then-President Donald Trump and his allies to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Pence's appearance before a grand jury in Washington scrutinizing the president he once loyally served is a milestone in the Justice Department's investigation and likely gives prosecutors a key first-person account about certain conversations and events in the weeks preceding the deadly Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. It also carries significant political implications, coming as Pence hints at entering the 2024 presidential race and a potential run against Trump, the Republican front-runner.

The testimony, confirmed by a person familiar with the matter who insisted on anonymity to discuss a secret grand jury matter, came hours after a federal appeals court in a sealed order rejected a bid by Trump's lawyers to block Pence's appearance.

Pence was subpoenaed to testify earlier this year, but Trump's lawyers objected, citing executive privilege concerns. A judge in March refused to block Pence's appearance, though he did side with the former vice president's constitutional claims that he could not be forced to answer questions about anything related to his role as presiding over the Senate's certification of votes on Jan. 6.

"We'll obey the law, we'll tell the truth," Pence said in an interview with CBS News' "Face the Nation" that aired Sunday. "And the story that I've been telling the American people all across the country, the story that I wrote in the pages of my memoir, that'll be the story I tell in that setting."

It was not immediately clear what Pence may have told the grand jury, but he is the most high-profile Trump administration official to be summoned before the panel. Inside the federal building where the grand jury has been meeting, just blocks from the U.S. Capitol, security was high because of Pence's appearance with an unusual amount of activity from U.S. Marshals.

Pence has spoken extensively about Trump's pressure campaign urging him to reject Democrat Joe Biden's presidential election victory in the days leading up to Jan. 6, including in his book, "So Help Me God." Pence, as vice president, had a ceremonial role overseeing Congress' counting of the Electoral College vote but did not have the power to affect the results, despite Trump's contention otherwise.

Pence, a former Indiana governor and congressman, has said that Trump endangered his family and everyone else who was at the Capitol that day and history will hold him "accountable."

"For four years, we had a close working relationship. It did not end well," Pence wrote, summing up their time in the White House.

Trump was speaking in New Hampshire when news broke of Pence's grand jury appearance. Asked at a diner if he was concerned about his testimony, Trump responded, "No I'm not and I don't know anything about it."

Lawyers for Pence had raised their own, more narrow challenge to the subpoena. They argued that because Pence was serving in his capacity as president of the Senate as electoral votes were being counted in Congress on Jan. 6, he was protected from being forced to testify about that process under the Constitution's "speech or debate" clause, which is intended to protect members of Congress from being questioned about official legislative acts.

A judge agreed with that argument, effectively narrowing the scope of his expected testimony.

The Justice Department special counsel leading the investigation, Jack Smith, has cast a broad net in interviews and has sought the testimony of a long list of former Trump aides, including ex-White House counsel Pat Cipollone and former adviser Stephen Miller.

Smith is separately investigating Trump over the potential mishandling of hundreds of classified documents at his Palm Beach, Florida estate, Mar-a-Lago, as well as possible efforts to obstruct that probe.

It is not clear when either of the special counsel's investigations will end or who, if anyone, will be charged.

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Associated Press writers Michael Kunzelman, Lindsay Whitehurst and Nathan Ellgren in Washington and Michelle L. Price in Manchester, New Hampshire, contributed to this report.

This story was first published on April 27, 2023. It was published again on April 28, 2023, to correct security was high because of Pence's appearance, not because of Trump's appearance.

## BBC chief quits amid furor over role in Boris Johnson loan

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The chairman of the BBC quit Friday after a report found he failed to disclose a potential conflict of interest over his role in arranging a loan more than two years ago for Boris Johnson, as scandals from the the former prime minister's turbulent term continue to rattle U.K. public life.

The publicly funded national broadcaster has been under political pressure after it was revealed that Richard Sharp helped arrange the line of credit weeks before he was appointed to the BBC post on the government's recommendation.

The 800,000 pound (\$1 million) line of credit came from wealthy Canadian businessman Sam Blyth, a distant cousin of Johnson's. It was facilitated by Sharp, a former Goldman Sachs banker and Conservative Party donor, who arranged a meeting between Blyth and the U.K.'s top civil servant to discuss Blyth's offer of financial help.

Johnson was then Conservative Party leader as well as British prime minister.

A report on the episode by senior lawyer Adam Heppinstall published Friday found Sharp "failed to disclose potential perceived conflicts of interest."

The report found Sharp did not reveal his role in the loan guarantee to the BBC appointments panel before he was appointed chairman in early 2021.

"There is a risk of a perception that Mr. Sharp was recommended for appointment because he assisted ... the former prime minister in a private financial matter," Heppinstall wrote in his report.

"There may well have been a risk of a perception that Mr. Sharp would not be independent from the former prime minister, if appointed," he said.

Sharp said he would remain in his BBC role until the end of June while the search for a successor takes place. He said he made an "inadvertent" breach of the disclosure rules and was quitting to "prioritize the interests of the BBC."

"I feel that this matter may well be a distraction from the corporation's good work were I to remain in post until the end of my term," he said.

Sharp is the latest in a string of politicians and officials brought down through their association with Johnson, a charismatic and chaotic politician who became prime minister in 2019 and led Britain out of the European Union the following year.

Johnson himself was forced to quit last year after a series of scandals over money, ethics and judgment became too much for his Conservative Party colleagues to bear.

While he was in office, Johnson's financial arrangements sparked investigations into the funding of renovations to the prime minister's official residence — known as the "cash for curtains" scandal — and into who paid for a vacation for Johnson on the Caribbean island of Mustique.

Johnson also was among dozens of people fined by police last year for attending law-breaking parties in government buildings during COVID-19 lockdowns. The "partygate" scandal helped hasten the end of his premiership.

Sharp's resignation spares the current prime minister, Rishi Sunak, from having to decide whether to fire him. Sunak, a former banker who once worked under Sharp at Goldman Sachs, has tried to restore stability to government after three tumultuous years under Johnson and seven roller-coaster weeks under successor Liz Truss, who quit in September after her tax-slashing economic plans caused financial mayhem.

Opposition politicians accused the Conservative government of undermining the BBC's impartiality.

"This breach has caused untold damage to the reputation of the BBC and seriously undermined its independence as a result of the Conservatives' sleaze and cronyism," Labour Party culture spokeswoman Lucy Powell said.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 37 of 90

The loan investigation is the latest uncomfortable episode for the 100-year-old BBC, which is funded by an annual 159 pound (\$200) license fee paid by all households with a television and overseen by a board that includes both BBC nominees and government appointees,

The public broadcaster has a duty to be impartial in its news coverage but is frequently a political football, with some members of the Conservative government seeing a leftist slant in its news output and some liberals accusing it of having a conservative bias.

The BBC was engulfed in a storm over free speech and political bias in March when its leading sports presenter, former England soccer player Gary Lineker, criticized the government's immigration policy on social media.

Lineker was suspended – and then restored after other sports presenters, analysts and Premier League players boycotted the BBC airwaves in solidarity.

## Amid Ukraine war, pope to give vision for Europe in Hungary

By NICOLE WINFIELD and JUSTIN SPIKE Associated Press

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) — Pope Francis will outline his vision for the future of Europe during a three-day visit to Hungary that started Friday, with Russia's war in Ukraine, migration flows and Hungary's tense relations with Brussels looming large over the pontiff's weekend journey.

Hungarian officials say Francis' pilgrimage was designed primarily to let the pope minister to the country's Catholic community and to encourage its members in their faith. But with the war unfolding next door and Hungary butting heads with other European Union nations over rule of law issues and LGBTQ+ rights, Francis' words and deeds in the heart of Europe will carry strong political undertones.

After landing at Budapest's Liszt Ferenc International Airport, Francis met with President Katalin Novak and Prime Minister Viktor Orban. He was set to deliver his main political speech to Hungarian authorities and diplomats later Friday.

He will have chance to speak to Hungarian society and Europe at large in his final event Sunday, when he is scheduled to address academic and cultural figures at Budapest's Catholic University.

In between, Francis is set to meet with some of the 35,000 Ukrainian refugees who have remained in Hungary after 2.5 million fled across the country's border with Ukraine early on in Russia's invasion. It will be another opportunity for Francis to raise immigration as a topic and to reiterate his belief that European countries should, within their means, open their arms and borders to people fleeing poverty as well as conflicts.

Orban is a populist whose hard line on migration is well known. In 2015-2016, Hungary built a razor wire fence on its border with Serbia to stop people from entering. However, Francis has expressed appreciation for Hungary's recent welcome of Ukrainian refugees.

Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said Francis would use his time in the heart of Europe to look to the continent's future.

"It's difficult to not think about the European Union and all of Europe," Bruni said of the trip. He noted that the "passion" for Europe had perhaps faded over the years and that Francis aimed to revive "the Europe of peoples, with its own history and responsibility in the commitment to global peace."

For the 86-year-old pontiff, the visit will once again test his frail health after he spent four days in the hospital last month with bronchitis. While Hungarian officials had hoped Francis would travel around the country, the Vatican opted to keep him in Budapest, where he spent seven hours in 2021 to close out a church congress.

The visit comes as the European Union's parliament continues to put pressure on Hungary to counter what EU lawmakers consider a deterioration in the rule of law and democratic principles under Orban's government, including rolling back the rights of LGBTQ+ people.

The four biggest groups in the European Parliament have called on the EU's executive commission to withhold pandemic recovery funds for Hungary until liberal democracy principles are met.

The European Commission has accused Orban for years of dismantling democratic institutions, taking



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 38 of 90

control of the media and infringing on minority rights, allegations the prime minister has denied.

Hungary's Constitution, approved unilaterally by Orban's right-wing populist Fidesz party in 2011, outlaws same-sex marriage, and the government has prohibited same-sex couples from adopting children. The government has also outlawed the depiction of homosexuality or divergent gender identities to minors in media content.

Catholic doctrine also prohibits same-sex marriages, but Francis has backed legal protections for people in same-sex unions. He has long ministered to gay and transgender Catholics, while blasting "gender ideology" as an alleged form of the West's ideological colonization of the developing world.

In a move linked to the pontiff's visit, Hungary's president on Thursday commuted the prison sentences of several members of a far-right Hungarian group convicted of executing political acts of terrorism. The group's members have frequently harassed members of the LGBTQ+ community.

In a statement, Novak wrote that Francis' visit "is a special occasion for the head of state to exercise her power of pardon." She referred directly to those members of the radical Hunnia Movement group, which espouses anti-EU, irredentist views and was linked to Molotov cocktail attacks on the homes of Socialist government officials between 2007 and 2009.

Hungary's ambassador to the Holy See, Eduard Habsburg, said he thinks Hungary is actually upholding Europe's founding ideals better than many of its EU partners.

"Hungary has stayed true to the values that have always been the values of the European Union, which is family, faith, Christian, Judeo-Christian roots, sovereignty and all these things," Habsburg said. "And you sometimes have the idea that ... some of these have been lost in the western parts of Europe."

With Francis traveling closer to Ukraine than at any time since Russia invaded Ukraine, the war will also be front and center during his visit. He plans to visit a Greek Catholic church that delivered aid to Ukrainian refugees.

Francis, who met with Ukraine's prime minister at the Vatican on Thursday, is likely to repeat his call for a peaceful resolution of the war and to express solidarity with the Ukrainian people.

Orban has called for a cease-fire but been lukewarm in his support of Ukraine, refusing to supply Kyiv with weapons and threatening to veto EU sanctions against Moscow while maintaining Hungary's strong dependence on Russian energy.

While there was speculation that Francis might meet with Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill while in Budapest, no such meeting is planned, according to the Rev. Csaba Torok, the parochial administrator for the Cathedral of Esztergom and coordinator of Catholic programming on state media.

Francis held an unprecedented meeting with Kirill in 2016 and had hoped to pursue a second encounter, but Kirill's support for Russia's invasion put the plans on indefinite hold.

Associated Press religion coverage receives support through the AP's collaboration with The Conversation US, with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

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

## 2 US Army helicopters crash in Alaska, killing 3 soldiers

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska (AP) — Two U.S. Army helicopters collided and crashed Thursday in Alaska while returning from a training flight, killing three soldiers and injuring a fourth.

Two of the soldiers died at the scene of the crash near Healy, Alaska, and a third died on the way to a hospital in Fairbanks. A fourth soldier was being treated at a hospital for injuries, the Army said in a statement.

The names of those killed were being withheld until relatives could be notified, the Army said.

Each AH-64 Apache helicopter was carrying two people at the time of the crash, John Pennell, a spokesman for the U.S. Army Alaska, said earlier Thursday.

The helicopters were from the 1st Attack Battalion, 25th Aviation Regiment at Fort Wainwright, based near Fairbanks.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 39 of 90

"This is an incredible loss for these soldiers' families, their fellow soldiers, and for the division," Maj. Gen. Brian Eifler, commanding general of the 11th Airborne Division, said in the Army statement. "Our hearts and prayers go out to their families, friends and loved ones, and we are making the full resources of the Army available to support them."

The Army said the cause of the crash was under investigation and more details would be released when they become available.

The crash is the second accident involving military helicopters in Alaska this year.

In February, two soldiers were injured when an Apache helicopter rolled after taking off from Talkeetna. The aircraft was one of four traveling to Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage from Fort Wainwright.

In March, nine soldiers were killed when two U.S. Army Black Hawk medical evacuation helicopters crashed during a routine nighttime training exercise about 30 miles (48 kilometers) northeast of Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

Healy is located about 10 miles (16.09 kilometers) north of Denali National Park and Preserve, or about 250 miles (402 kilometers) north of Anchorage.

Healy is a community of about 1,000 people located on the Parks Highway in Alaska's interior region. It is a popular place for people to spend the night while visiting the nearby park, which is home to Denali, the continent's tallest mountain.

Healy is also famous for being the town closest to the former bus that had been abandoned in the backcountry and was popularized by the book "Into the Wild" and the movie of the same name. The bus was removed and taken to Fairbanks in 2020.

## **Hong Kong's economy is recovering, but its freedoms are not**

By KANIS LEUNG and ZEN SOO Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Like most people in Hong Kong, taxi driver Leung Tat-chong says it feels like the city is recovering after years of protests, crackdowns and pandemic restrictions, while it also has changed forever.

He's earning almost as much as he did before the pandemic. But, Leung said, the city has been divided since the 2019 protests, in which hundreds of thousands of people marched, and many battled police, in opposition to a government they saw as a proxy for Beijing.

For the first time since the start of the pandemic, the city welcomed more than 2 million visitors in the month of March. Crowds of art collectors and dealers spilled across two floors of a convention center at the Art Basel Hong Kong fair in late March. Excited chatter returned to a dim sum shop at the high-speed rail terminus.

Yet Leung sometimes doesn't turn on the radio in his cab because the news or a public affairs program could get his customers cursing. A supporter of the government, he watches what he says in front of friends to avoid starting fights.

Living in Hong Kong today means juggling contradictory feelings. In 20 interviews, many said that when they focus on business indicators and everyday life, they see a recovery gathering pace after years of travel restrictions. But when it comes to anything political, the openness and freedoms that were once hallmarks of the Chinese-ruled former British colony seem permanently gone.

Following the 2019 protests, Beijing declared "patriots must run Hong Kong," increasing its loyalists' control over elections and imposing a National Security Law that criminalized many forms of dissent. The government of Hong Kong used that law to arrest former opposition lawmakers and activists who participated in an unofficial primary election.

Hong Kong's government says things are back to normal, a message delivered in a tourism-promotion campaign it calls "Hello Hong Kong."

Economic indicators seem to support that message: retail sales are up, the country's GDP is growing and unemployment is a low 3.1%. In the first quarter of the year, the city received 4.41 million visitors,

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 40 of 90

about 12 times more than the previous quarter, and about 30% of pre-pandemic levels.

Mak Kwai-pui, co-founder of dim sum chain Tim Ho Wan, said his business is reaping some of the benefits. Foreign tourists are filling his restaurants, something he had not seen in three years, helping drive revenue to more than 80% of pre-pandemic levels.

"It's really coming back. It's true," he said.

Anne Kerr, the chair of the British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, said more U.K. firms are inquiring about setting up shop in Hong Kong.

A survey by The American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong in the first two months of 2023 showed its members are "cautiously optimistic" about business. Among those with headquarters in Hong Kong, 61% planned to remain for the next three years, up from 48% last year. But 9% plan to move, compared to 5% last year.

Local artist Wong Ka-ying said cultural life is recovering, too. At Art Basel, she saw a rise in emerging artists, independent art spaces and cultural activities, offering her more exposure and opportunities.

But, she said, even at the glamorous art fair, she felt the chill of the National Security Law. The art felt tamer than in past years and overtly political art was rare. At the Chinese University of Hong Kong where she teaches, she advises her students to plan their work cautiously.

"Maybe it looks the same on the surface. But when you look with a magnifying glass, you'll see the essence isn't the same," the 32-year-old said.

When Cyrus Chan decided to organize a protest against a proposal on land reclamation and building waste-processing facilities in March, the changes were not subtle.

Hong Kong used to have a vibrant tradition of street politics, from massive marches to local issues. But Cyrus Chan, one of the march organizers, said police told organizers that they could have just 100 people. Participants were warned against wearing all black, as many protesters did during the 2019 protests. They also discussed their slogans with police in advance.

Even with official approval, it was a nerve-wracking experience, Chan said. For a week before the march, he checked news reports, online forums and social media hourly to see if anything had changed.

On the day, attendees were required to wear numbered badges around their necks and had to walk within a moving cordoned-off zone.

After the protest, Chan said he still could not let his guard down. On April 2, security minister Chris Tang said "some people" who likened the numbered tags to dog leashes or the armbands Nazis forced upon Jews were stirring hatred against the government — a red flag to many activists under the sedition law. Chan had previously made the Nazi analogy on a radio show.

"Those who say the city will go back to the old days ... are lying. Everyone knows it's impossible," Chan said.

Weeks later, a former leader of a now-disbanded pro-democracy union withdrew his plan to hold a Labor Day march, his co-applicant said Wednesday. The National Security Law prevented disclosure of further details, he told the applicant.

Leung, the taxi driver, agreed that a part of Hong Kong will never come back. But life must go on.

"As an ordinary person, I can't do anything about politics," he said. "I will just keep living my simple and unadorned life."

## Summer Movie Guide: What to watch from May through Labor Day

There is something for everyone at the movies this summer, both in theaters and streaming at home. In May, audiences can bid farewell to the Guardians of the Galaxy, go to Italy with Jane Fonda, Diane Keaton, Mary Steenburgen and Candice Bergen, or under the sea with Halle Bailey and Melissa McCarthy.

June brings "Indiana Jones 5," a "Spider-Verse" sequel, "The Flash" a new Pixar pic and one film many have already called the best of the year ("Past Lives").

And things get really exciting in July with the highly anticipated debuts of "Oppenheimer," "Mission: Impossible 7," "Barbie," while August promises a new take on the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and introduces

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 41 of 90

a new DC superhero, Blue Beetle.

Here's a month-by-month guide of this summer's new movies.

May 5

"Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3" (Disney/Marvel, theaters): Nine years after the non-comic obsessed world was introduced to Peter Quill, Rocket, Groot and the rest of the Guardians of the Galaxy, the misfits are closing out the trilogy and saying goodbye to director James Gunn, who is now leading rival DC.

"What's Love Got to Do with It?" (Shout! Studios, theaters): Lily James plays a documentary filmmaker whose next project follows her neighbor (Shazad Latif) on his road to an arranged marriage in this charming romantic comedy.

May 12

"Book Club: The Next Chapter" (Focus Features, theaters): Jane Fonda, Diane Keaton, Candice Bergen and Mary Steenburgen travel to Italy to celebrate an engagement.

"The Mother," (Netflix, streaming): Jennifer Lopez is an assassin and a mother in this action pic timed to Mother's Day.

"Love Again" (Sony, theaters): Priyanka Chopra Jonas plays a woman mourning the death of her boyfriend who texts his old number not knowing it belongs to someone new (Sam Heughan). Celine Dion (and her music) co-star in this romantic drama.

"STILL: A Michael J. Fox Movie" (AppleTV+): Davis Guggenheim helps Michael J. Fox tell his story, from his rise in Hollywood to his Parkinson's diagnosis and beyond.

"Monica" (IFC, theaters): A transgender woman, estranged from her family, goes home to visit her dying mother in this film starring Tracee Lysette and Patricia Clarkson.

"The Starling Girl" (Bleecker Street, theaters): Eliza Scanlen plays a 17-year-old girl living in a fundamentalist Christian community in Kentucky whose life changes with the arrival of Lewis Pullman's charismatic youth pastor.

"Fool's Paradise" (Roadside Attractions, theaters): Charlie Day writes, directs and plays dual roles in this comedic Hollywood satire.

"Hypnotic" (Ketchup Entertainment): Ben Affleck plays a detective whose daughter goes missing in this Robert Rodriguez movie.

"It Ain't Over" (Sony Pictures Classics): A documentary about Lawrence Peter 'Yogi' Berra.

"Blackberry" (IFC): Cary Elwes stars in this movie about the rise of the Blackberry.

May 19

"Fast X" (Universal, theaters): In the tenth installment of the Fast franchise, Jason Momoa joins as the vengeful son of a slain drug lord intent to take out Vin Diesel's Dom.

"White Men Can't Jump" (20th Century Studios, streaming on Hulu): Sinqwa Walls and Jack Harlow co-star in this remake of the 1992 film, co-written by Kenya Barris and featuring the late Lance Reddick.

"Master Gardener" (Magnolia, theaters): Joel Edgerton is a horticulturist in this Paul Schrader drama, co-starring Sigourney Weaver as a wealthy dowager.

"Sanctuary" (Neon, theaters): A dark comedy about a dominatrix (Margaret Qualley) and her wealthy client (Christopher Abbott).

May 26

"The Little Mermaid" (Disney, theaters): Halle Bailey plays Ariel in this technically ambitious live-action remake of a recent Disney classic directed by Rob Marshall ("Chicago") and co-starring Melissa McCarthy as Ursula.

"You Hurt My Feelings" (A24, theaters): Nicole Holofcener takes a nuanced and funny look at a white lie that unsettles the marriage between a New York City writer (Julia Louis-Dreyfus) and a therapist (Tobias Menzies).

"About My Father" (Lionsgate, theaters): Stand-up comic Sebastian Maniscalco co-wrote this culture clash movie in which he takes his Italian-American father (Robert De Niro) on a vacation with his wife's WASPy family.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 42 of 90

"Victim/Suspect" (Netflix, on May 23): This documentary explores how law enforcement sometimes indicts victims of sexual assault instead of helping.

"The Machine," (Sony, theaters): Stand-up comedian Bert Kreischer brings Mark Hamill into the fray for this action-comedy.

"Kandahar" (Open Road Films, theaters): Gerard Butler plays an undercover CIA operative in hostile territory in Afghanistan.

June 2

"Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse" (Sony, theaters): Miles Morales (Shameik Moore) is back, but with things not going so well in Brooklyn, he opts to visit the multiverse with his old pal Gwen Stacy (Hailee Steinfeld), where he encounters the Spider-Society.

"The Boogeyman" (20th Century Studios, theaters): "It's the thing that comes for your kids when you're not paying attention," David Dastmalchian explains to Chris Messina in this Stephen King adaptation.

"Past Lives" (A24, theaters): Already being hailed as one of the best of the year after its Sundance debut, Celine Song's directorial debut is a decades and continent-spanning romance about two friends separated in childhood who meet 20 years later in New York.

June 9

"Transformers: Rise of the Beasts" (Paramount, theaters): Steven Caple Jr directs the seventh Transformers movie, starring Anthony Ramos and Dominique Fishback.

"Strays" (Universal, theaters): Will Ferrell and Jamie Foxx voice dogs in this not-animated, R-rated comedy.

"Blue Jean" (Magnolia, theaters): It's 1988 in England and hostilities are mounting towards the LGBTQ community in Georgia Oakley's BAFTA-nominated directorial debut about a gym teacher (Rosy McEwan) and the arrival of a new student.

"Daliland" (Magnolia, theaters): Mary Harron directs Ben Kingsley as Salvador Dalí.

June 16

"The Flash" (Warner Bros., theaters): Batmans past Ben Affleck and Michael Keaton assemble for this standalone Flash movie directed by Andy Muschietti and starring Ezra Miller as the titular superhero.

"Elemental" (Pixar, theatrical): In Element City, residents include Air, Earth, Water and Fire in the new Pixar original, featuring the voices of Leah Lewis, Mamoudou Athie and Catherine O'Hara.

"Extraction 2" (Netflix, streaming): Chris Hemsworth's mercenary Tyler Rake is back for another dangerous mission.

"Asteroid City" (Focus Features, limited and expanding June 23): Wes Anderson assembles Tom Hanks, Scarlett Johansson, Jason Schwartzman and Jeffrey Wright for a stargazer convention in the mid-century American desert.

"The Blackening" (Lionsgate, theaters): This scary movie satire sends a group of Black friends including Grace Byers, Jermaine Fowler, Melvin Gregg and X Mayo to a cabin in the woods.

June 23

"No Hard Feelings" (Sony, theaters): Jennifer Lawrence leads a raunchy comedy about a woman hired by a shy teen's parents to help him get out of his shell before Princeton.

June 30

"Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny" (Lucasfilm, theaters): Harrison Ford puts his iconic fedora back on for a fifth outing as Indy in this new adventure directed by James Mangold and co-starring Phoebe Waller-Bridge.

"Every Body" (Focus Features, theaters): Oscar-nominated documentarian Julie Cohen turns her lens on three intersex individuals in her latest film.

"Ruby Gillman, Teenage Kraken" (Universal, theaters): Lana Condor ("To All the Boys I've Loved Before") lends her voice to this animated action-comedy about a shy teenager trying to survive high school as a part-Kraken.

"Harold and the Purple Crayon" (Sony, theaters): Zachary Levi, Zooey Deschanel and Lil Rel Howery help bring this adaptation of the children's bedtime story to life.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 43 of 90

July 7

"Insidious: The Red Door" (Sony, theaters): Patrick Wilson and Rose Byrne are back to scare everyone in the fifth edition.

"Joy Ride" (Lionsgate, theaters): Adele Lim directs this raucous comedy about a girls trip to China to find someone's birth mother, starring Ashley Park, Stephanie Hsu, Sherry Cola and Sabrina Wu.

"The Lesson" (Bleecker Street): A young novelist helps an acclaimed author in this thriller with Richard E. Grant.

"Biosphere" (IFC): Mark Duplass and Sterling K. Brown are the last two men on Earth.

July 14

"Mission: Impossible-Dead Reckoning Part I" (Paramount, theaters, on July 12): Tom Cruise? Death-defying stunts in Venice? The return of Kittridge? What more do you need?

"Theater Camp" (Searchlight, theaters): Musical theater nerds (and comedy fans) will delight in this loving satire of a childhood institution, with Ben Platt and Molly Gordon.

July 21

"Oppenheimer" (Universal, theaters): Christopher Nolan takes audiences into the mind of the "father of the atomic bomb," J. Robert Oppenheimer (Cillian Murphy) as he and his peers build up to the trinity test at Los Alamos.

"Barbie" (Warner Bros., theaters): Margot Robbie plays the world's most famous doll (as do many others) opposite Ryan Gosling's Ken in Greta Gerwig's comedic look at their perfect world.

"Stephen Curry: Underrated" (Apple TV+): Peter Nicks directs a documentary about the four-time NBA champion.

"They Cloned Tyrone" (Netflix): John Boyega, Teyonah Parris and Jamie Foxx lead this mystery caper.

July 28

"Haunted Mansion" (Disney, theaters): A Disney ride comes to life in with the help of Rosario Dawson, Tiffany Haddish, Owen Wilson and Danny DeVito.

"Talk to Me" (A24, theaters): A group of friends conjure spirits in this horror starring Sophie Wilde and Joe Bird.

"Happiness for Beginners" (Netflix, on July 27): Ellie Kemper is a newly divorced woman looking to shake things up.

"Sympathy for the Devil" (IFC): Joel Kinnaman is forced to drive a mysterious gunman (Nicolas Cage) in this thriller.

"Kokomo City" (Magnolia): This documentary follows four Black transgender sex workers.

August 4

"Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Mutant Mayhem" (Paramount, theaters): This animated movie puts the teenage back in the equation with a very funny voice cast including Seth Rogen and John Cena as Bebop and Rocksteady.

"Meg 2: The Trench" (Warner Bros., theaters): Jason Statham is back fighting sharks.

"Passages" (Mubi): The relationship of a longtime couple (Franz Rogowski, Ben Whishaw) is thrown when one begins an affair with a woman (Adèle Exarchopoulos).

"A Compassionate Spy" (Magnolia): Steve James' documentary about the youngest physicist on the Manhattan Project who fed information to the Soviets.

"Dreamin' Wild" (Roadside Attractions): Casey Affleck stars in this film about musical duo Donnie and Joe Emerson.

August 11

"Gran Turismo" (Sony, theaters): A gamer gets a chance to drive a professional course in this video game adaptation starring David Harbour and Orlando Bloom.

"The Last Voyage of the Demeter" (Universal, theaters): This supernatural horror film draws from a chapter of "Dracula."

"Heart of Stone" (Netflix): Gal Gadot played an intelligence operative in this action thriller, with Jamie Dornan.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 44 of 90

After selecting quarterback C.J. Stroud with the second overall pick, the Houston Texans kicked off a flurry of draft-day trades by getting the third overall pick from Arizona and selecting linebacker Will Anderson Jr.

The Cardinals got the 12th pick from the Texans but quickly sent that selection to Detroit for the sixth overall selection so they could draft tackle Paris Johnson.

The Lions selected running back Jahmyr Gibbs at No. 12 after the Eagles and Bears swapped picks so Philly could take Jalen Carter at No. 9. Chicago, which once owned the No. 1 overall pick before sending it to the Panthers, drafted tackle Darnell Wright at No. 10.

Then, the Steelers and Patriots swapped picks. Pittsburgh got tackle Broderick Jones at No. 14 and the Patriots grabbed cornerback Christian Gonzalez with the 17th overall pick.

## ROLL TIDE: ALABAMA PLAYERS GO EARLY

Alabama is the early leader on NFL draft night.

Crimson Tide quarterback Bryce Young was the top overall pick by the Carolina Panthers and linebacker Will Anderson Jr. went third to the Houston Texans. No major surprises there, but then Alabama running back Jahmyr Gibbs going 12th overall to the Detroit Lions.

Gibbs is the second running back selected so far. Bijan Robinson of Texas went eighth overall to the Atlanta Falcons.

And while Gibbs was considered the next best running back behind Robinson, he was widely expected to get drafted in the middle of Friday's Round 2.

Running back is a position that teams are usually reluctant to spend first-round picks on, much less at the top of Round 1.

## EAGLES TAKE JALEN CARTER AT NO. 9

Carter is a 313-pound defensive-stopper with power and quickness who collapses pockets as deftly as he splits double-teams. The Eagles selected him ninth overall but he might have gone even higher were it not for questions about his maturity and legal problems. He's on probation after pleading no contest to reckless driving and racing, charges related to an auto accident that killed a Georgia teammate and a football staffer.

## ANTHONY RICHARDSON'S DECLARATION

"I'm going to be a dynamic player for the franchise. I'm going to work hard and I'm going to be a leader. But it's time to make my own legacy now. No more Cam-Jacksons. It's Anthony Richardson now." – new Colts QB Anthony Richardson, who has called himself Cam Jackson, a combination of Cam Newton and Lamar Jackson, in describing his stature and style.

## SEAHAWKS TAKE DEVON WITHERSPOON AT NO. 5

As a senior, Witherspoon is a rarity by being selected this high in the NFL draft. He's a physical and disruptive defensive back who is aggressive on the field but patient in life. He didn't play football until midway through high school and spent a year at a junior college before going to Illinois, where he took a huge leap as a senior to become one of the nation's best players.

## ANTHONY RICHARDSON GOES NO. 4

Some things to know about the quarterback the Indianapolis Colts selected out of Florida. Richardson is 6-foot-4 and just shy of 250 pounds. He's the most intriguing quarterback prospect in the class with Cam Newton-tipe size, athleticism and arm strength. But he's still very raw. He had 13 career starts and only 393 pass attempts in three seasons at Florida. He'll need to work on his mechanics and become a more accurate passer in the pros like Josh Allen did in Buffalo.

## TEXANS TRADE UP, TAKE WILL ANDERSON JR.

After the Houston Texans got their franchise quarterback in C.J. Stroud they made a blockbuster trade

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 45 of 90

"The Eternal Memory" (MTV Documentary Films): This documentary explores a marriage and Alzheimer's disease.

August 18

"Blue Beetle" (Warner Bros., theaters): Xolo Maridueña plays the DC superhero Jaime Reyes / Blue Beetle in this origin story.

"Please Don't Destroy" (Universal, theaters): The "SNL" trio Ben Marshall, John Higgins, and Martin Herlihy expand their popular sketch for the big screen.

"birth/rebirth" (IFC, theaters): A woman and a morgue technician bring a little girl back to life in this horror.

"White Bird: A Wonder Story" (Lionsgate, theaters): Helen Mirren tells her grandson, expelled from school for bullying, a story about herself in Nazi-occupied France.

"Landscape with Invisible Hand" (MGM, theaters): Teens come up with a unique moneymaking scheme in a world taken over by aliens.

"The Hill" (Briarcliff Entertainment): This baseball drama starring Dennis Quaid is based on the true story of Rickey Hill.

August 25

"They Listen" (Sony, theaters): John Cho and Katherine Waterston lead this secretive Blumhouse horror.

"Golda" (Bleecker Street): Helen Mirren stars in this drama about Golda Meir, the Prime Minister of Israel during the Yom Kippur War.

"The Dive" (IFC, theaters): In this suspense pic about two sisters out for a dive, one gets hurt and is trapped underwater.

September 1

"The Equalizer 3" (Sony, theaters): Denzel Washington is back as Robert McCall, who is supposed to be retired from the assassin business but things get complicated in Southern Italy.

## Music takes over New Orleans as Jazz Fest 2023 kicks off

By CHEVEL JOHNSON RODRIGUE Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — This year's New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival begins its two-weekend run on Friday, filling the air with the sounds of R&B, rock 'n roll, Zydeco, pop, blues, country, rap, gospel — and of course jazz.

Music fans will converge on the Fair Grounds Race Course when gates open at 11 a.m. and dash to find a spot in front of one of the 14 stages or tents featuring some of the best musicians in the world.

Friday's lineup includes performances by Lizzo; Robert Plant & Alison Krauss; Big Freedia; Tank and The Bangas; Wu-Tang Clan + The Soul Rebels; Nicholas Payton; Mavis Staples; Kermit Ruffins & the Barbecue Swingers; Charlie Musselwhite; and Terrance Simien and the Zydeco Experience.

"I'm super excited for the elevation this year," said Freedia, whose bounce/rap show is scheduled for the festival's main stage before Lizzo and Tank and The Bangas. "I love that I get the opportunity to showcase my artistry before a bigger audience and there's a lot more room to do my thing. We're here to entertain and we're gonna bust it open."

Freedia known for collaborations with Drake on "Nice for What" and Beyonce on "Break My Soul," said there are no plans to join Lizzo's closing performance even though the two paired up for Freedia's 2018 hit "Karaoke."

"I support her either way," she said.

Fans, however, will hear new music that Freedia plans to drop on Friday — "\$100 Bill," a collaboration with R&B songstress Ciara.

This year's festival is also casting a spotlight on Puerto Rico with appearances Friday by two artists from the U.S. territory: Tambuye of Puerto Rico and Plena Libre of Puerto Rico, a Grammy-nominated Latin dance band.

"There's a whole vibe out there and people should come out and feel it. I'm thrilled with what's about to happen," festival producer Quint Davis said.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 46 of 90

"We've got a lot of people coming in," he said. "Lizzo, a phenomenal talent on Friday, and Ed Sheeran and Jazmine Sullivan on Saturday and Jill Scott on Sunday. And that's just the first weekend. We've also got H.E.R. coming next week along with Dead & Company, Kane Brown and Jon Batiste. Everybody wants to play the festival and everything just fell together to allow that to happen."

The weather was expected to cooperate too, which Davis said has helped drive ticket sales. Forecasters expect low 80s with lots of sun for Friday's start. Spotty showers, however, may dampen Saturday and Sunday shows.

Kelly Schulz, a spokeswoman for New Orleans and Company, said hotel occupancy for the city's downtown corridor was above the 2022 numbers but not quite as good as those for 2019.

"We're at 83% occupancy for Saturday. In 2022, that was 78% and in 2019, pre COVID, it was 92%," she said.

Schulz said this was just a snapshot of how well the city's tourism industry is rebounding after COVID-19 forced a shutdown: "I think the numbers we're seeing for Jazz Fest is just another example of people ready to travel again and experience face-to-face connections again."

This year's festival is also going cashless for the first time in its 52-year run. For those who come just with cash, the festival will offer cash exchange booths where they can obtain a prepaid card. All major credit cards, debit cards, prepaid cards as well as Apple Pay, Google Pay and Samsung Pay will be accepted for tickets, food, merchandise and more.

## Corden addresses divided America in final 'Late Late Show'

By ALICIA RANCILIO Associated Press

James Corden used part of his farewell speech on Thursday's final episode of CBS' "The Late Late Show" to address the deep rift in America over hot button issues including politics and ideology.

"We started this show with Obama, then Trump and a global pandemic. I've watched America change a lot. I've watched divisions grow and I've felt a sense of negativity boil over," said the host. He implored his audience to "remember what America signifies to the rest of the world. My entire life it has always been a place of optimism. ... Yes, it has flaws but show me a place that doesn't. Show me a person that doesn't.

"Just because somebody disagrees with you it doesn't make them bad or evil. We are all more the same than we are different. There are so many people who are trying to stoke those differences and we have to try as best we can to look for the light, look for the joy. If you do, it's out there. That's all this show has ever been about," he said.

Corden announced one year ago that he would be ending his late-night show after eight seasons, citing a desire to return to his native UK to be closer to family and loved ones. His parents were seated in the audience for the final taping, and his sisters, he joked, were in town too — but at a bar instead.

Also Thursday CBS aired a primetime special called "The Last Last Late Late Show Special" featuring taped segments with Tom Cruise (where they performed stunts and sang a duet of "Can You Feel the Love Tonight" from "The Lion King") and Adele, where they taped a final Carpool Karaoke segment.

Corden reminded the singer that she has an Emmy, Grammy and Oscar and wondered if she would ever actively pursue a Tony Award. "You have the EGO" he said.

"I really don't think that that is ever gonna happen. I would never write a musical or anything like that because I (expletive) hate musicals," said Adele to laughter. "I also think the EGO suits me better."

Harry Styles and Will Ferrell were Corden's final guests. Styles has been a frequent visitor to the show, and has even guest-hosted twice. He's been game for a number of taped bits with Corden including the time the host directed a music video for Styles' song "Daylight" for just \$300 and when the musician took part in a more than 11-minute segment featuring a UK Vs. US dodgeball game where Corden, Styles, "Games of Thrones" actor James Bradley and Benedict Cumberbatch faced off against players including Michelle Obama, Mila Kunis, Kate Hudson, Lena Waithe, and Melissa McCarthy.

"As a friend, I'm so incredibly proud of you," Styles told Corden. "On a personal note, you've been a safe space to me always as a friend." He added that he was "selfishly very excited that you're coming home."

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 47 of 90

Styles, Corden and Ferrell then embraced in a group hug.

There were also goodbyes from the other late night hosts. Seth Meyers, Jimmy Kimmel, Jimmy Fallon, Stephen Colbert and David Letterman all appeared in a pre-taped segment with Corden. They joked that since Corden was ending his show, they could each call dibs on one of his segments.

They all chose Carpool Karaoke, referencing Corden's most popular sketch where he drives around Los Angeles with celebrities and sing songs. Paul McCartney, Justin Bieber, Mariah Carey, Stevie Wonder and Chris Martin are a few of his Carpool Karaoke passengers. The segment was such a hit that it spun-off into its own series for Apple. Corden only appeared in the debut episode with Will Smith in the car.

Corden closed out the night by playing a piano and singing a song with the crew and staff gathered around the stage. "Part of me thinks I should stay here forever but deep in my heart I just know," Corden sang. "No more shows to be showing, it's time I was going, It's time. Thanks for watching, that's our show."

## NFL Draft 2023 Live | Young goes first, all 1st round picks

By The Associated Press undefined

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — The NFL draft has begun! The Carolina Panthers kicked off Thursday night's proceedings by taking quarterback Bryce Young with the No. 1 pick. The draft can be viewed on NFL Network, ABC, ESPN and ESPN Deportes. Follow for live updates from Associated Press reporters across the country (all times EST).

What to know:

- Panthers make Bryce Young top pick in the NFL draft
- Eagles select Georgia's Jalen Carter, who had role in fatal crash

**BRYCE YOUNG IS YOUR NO. 1, WHO'S ON DECK FRIDAY?**

The first round of the NFL draft is in the books. And what a thriller it was!

Three quarterbacks in the top four picks, starting with Bryce Young to the Panthers. Two Texans selections in the top three. Two running backs in the top dozen picks.

The Super Bowl champion Chiefs capped the rousing Round 1 by selecting Kansas State edge rusher Felix Anudike-Uzomah in Kansas City, which is hosting the draft for the first time.

In all there were 15 offensive and 16 defensive players selected in Round 1. The Miami Dolphins forfeited their first round pick for tampering.

The most popular position was edge rusher with six selections.

One player who wasn't selected was Will Levis. The Kentucky quarterback was projected to go as high as No. 2 but sat under the watchful eye of millions of television viewers only not to hear his name called on Thursday.

Among the top players in Round 2 Friday in addition to Levis are Notre Dame tight end Michael Mayer and Alabama cornerback Brian Branch.

—  
**FIRST TIGHT END, WIDE RECEIVER FINALLY SELECTED**

Buffalo's Josh Allen has a red-zone option now in Utah's Dalton Kincaid, the first tight end off the board in the NFL draft.

Five picks before Kincaid heard his name called as the 25th selection, the Seattle Seahawks made Ohio State's Jaxon Smith-Njigba the first wide receiver taken on Thursday night.

The Bills jumped ahead of the Dallas Cowboys to get Kincaid, who along with Notre Dame's Michael Mayer are considered the best of a crop of tight ends that's the deepest in the last decade.

Seattle's selection of Smith-Njigba was the start of a run of four consecutive wideouts being chosen for the first time in the first round. Quentin Johnson went to the Chargers. Zay Flowers was chosen by Baltimore and the Vikings selected Jordan Addison.

—  
**TRADING PLACES AT NFL DRAFT**

NFL teams are wheeling and dealing on the first night of the draft.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 48 of 90

with the Arizona Cardinals to move up and took Alabama's Will Anderson Jr. Here is some things to know about the defensive standout:

With so many potential franchise quarterbacks coming out this year, there was no way Anderson was going to be the first overall pick. But he was projected as the top non-QB prospect in the draft and was the the best defensive player selected. He racked up 34 1/2 sacks and 62 tackles for loss in 41 games at Alabama.

## TEXANS TAKE C.J. STROUD NO. 2

The Houston Texans have selected C.J. Stroud with the No. 2 pick. Here are some things to know about the former Ohio State quarterback:

He has elite accuracy and touch combined with good arm strength and size at 6-foot-3 and 214 pounds. He broke a Big Ten record held by Drew Brees by throwing 85 touchdown passes over two seasons. But while he's flashed above-average athleticism, he has at times seemed reluctant to use it and has a tendency to linger in the pocket and lock on receivers, habits he'll have to break in the NFL.

## BRYCE YOUNG GOES NO. 1

The Carolina Panthers have selected Bryce Young as the No. 1 pick in the NFL draft. Here are some things to know about quarterback out of Alabama:

For the last quarter century or so any undersized quarterback prospect has been compared to Drew Brees. Maybe one day Young, at 5-foot-10, will be the one drawing such comparisons. He is a poised leader and creative playmaker with an elite combination of instincts and intelligence with a good arm, but, boy, is he small for an NFL quarterback.

## NFL HONORS VIRGINIA PLAYERS

The NFL honored the three University of Virginia football players that were slain in November as the honorary first players selected in the draft.

The families of Lavel Davis Jr., D'Sean Perry, and Devin Chandler were presented jerseys with their names and the No. 23 on them before a crowd of more than 100,000 in front of Kansas City's Union Station.

Christopher Darnell Jr., a former walk-on with the Cavaliers' football team, is accused of opening fire on a charter bus as he and other students arrived back on campus after seeing a play and having dinner together in Washington, D.C.

## RAIDERS FAN: DRAFT IS OUR SUPER BOWL

Fans from across the country have converged on downtown Kansas City for the NFL draft.

Las Vegas Raiders fan Isaac Lingelbach said he drove about 2 1/2 hours to celebrate what he calls their "Super Bowl" in the heart of Chiefs country.

It's a reversal from a year ago, when many Chiefs fans headed to Las Vegas for the draft.

"The Chiefs fan are celebrating a Super Bowl season from last year, but they don't realize that the draft is our Super Bowl each year," Lingelbach said. "There's not a game today, so we're just here to have a good time and we have so far. The Chiefs fans have been nice."

## RICHARDSON'S MOM, BROTHER BY HIS SIDE

Florida quarterback Anthony Richardson's stock has been on the rise, especially given the way he performed in the workouts leading up to the draft.

Richardson's mother, LaShawnda Cleare, joined him on the red carpet outside Union Station. His younger brother, Corey, was also on hand in a suit that nearly matched big brother and a thick diamond-filled chain of his own.

LaShawnda said of Richardson: "I've always been proud of him. Everybody else is now getting to see how awesome they both are."

Richardson is expected to join Bryce Young of Alabama, C.J. Stroud of Ohio State and Kentucky's Will

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 49 of 90

Levis among QBs taken in the first round. There could be a fifth in Tennessee's Hendon Hooker, too.

## BRYCE YOUNG'S PINK SUIT LOOKS FAMILIAR

The pink suit that likely No. 1 pick Bryce Young wore to the NFL draft should resonate in Kansas City: It's the same jacket by Dior that Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce wore when he hosted "Saturday Night Live."

The jacket retails for \$3,300 and, according to Dior, "reveals an ultramodern and unique silhouette with innovative details." It is crafted in pink wool twill and "features a removable interior scarf that mimics the style of the sleeves."

The red carpet, and the styles worn by NFL prospects, has become a big part of the festivities in recent years.

Fellow quarterback C.J. Stroud was blinging with a diamond-encrusted chain in the shape of the No. 7, which he wore at Ohio State. Alabama defensive back Brian Branch wore a diamond-filled chain that included a palm tree and his initials.

## ALABAMA'S ANDERSON 'A COMPLETE PERSON'

Alabama edge rusher Will Anderson Jr. is considered among the best non-quarterback prospects in the NFL draft.

His talent is obvious. The 6-foot-3, 253 pound Anderson has speed, raw power and the ability to dominate a game.

Anderson also takes pride in being well-rounded off the field, too.

"I bring a complete person," Anderson told the AP's Rob Maaddi. "I hold myself to a very high standard and high expectation and never to embarrass myself or my family. I always treat people with respect. Whatever culture I get in, I'm gonna do my best to uphold that culture, hold myself accountable. Also, treat everyone in the facility with respect, with care, with love."

## NO PARTY AT CHIEFS FACILITY

There is usually a buzz of activity around the Kansas City Chiefs practice facility on draft night, when the Super Bowl champs welcome season ticket-holders to a massive party capped by them making their first-round pick.

That party moved about 10 miles west this year to Union Station, where the NFL is hosting the draft for the first time.

Rather than hundreds of cars pouring into the parking lots at Arrowhead Stadium on Thursday night, there was a lonely FedEx worker delivering some packages and one car that apparently got lost and was turning around.

The Chiefs are scheduled to pick last in the first round.

## RAVENS SIGN LAMAR JACKSON BEFORE DRAFT

One quarterback that wasn't on the NFL draft board but was likely to impact some teams' decisions is no longer in play.

Hours before the draft, the Baltimore Ravens agreed in principle with Lamar Jackson on a five-year deal, securing their star quarterback for the foreseeable future and ending a contract negotiation saga that was dominating the team's offseason.

It's fair to say that in Baltimore at least, this news will overshadow whoever the team might take in the first round.

## C.J. STROUD NOT CONCERNED ABOUT CRITICISM

C.J. Stroud has gone from being considered the likely No. 1 overall pick to potentially dropping out of the top 10 after reports the Ohio State quarterback scored poorly in the S2 Cognition test.

"First, second, third, 20th, 105th, whatever it looks like, I'm just blessed to be able to have an oppor-



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 50 of 90

tunity," Stroud, seemingly not concerned about any of the negative criticism, told AP Pro Football Writer Rob Maaddi hours before the draft. "Wherever I do go, I'm gonna take full advantage of the opportunity. "I'm not mad about it," Stroud said of the reports. "I have nothing to hide or to be ashamed of."

## STICK WITH YOUR PICK?

With about 4 hours before the first pick, are you sticking with your guy to be selected No. 1 in tonight's NFL draft?

Alabama quarterback Bryce Young is the overwhelming favorite according to most oddsmakers and most mock drafts.

The Carolina Panthers will kick things off after trading four draft picks and wide receiver DJ Moore to the Chicago Bears for the No. 1 overall pick.

The Panthers are choosing between Alabama's Bryce Young, Ohio State's C.J. Stroud, Kentucky's Will Levis and Florida's Anthony Richardson as they try to escape the quarterback quagmire they've been trapped in for half a decade.

## THE JALEN CARTER WATCH

The NFL draft is set to begin in Kansas City in five hours and one of the more intriguing names to watch is that of Georgia defensive lineman Jalen Carter, writes AP's Rob Maaddi.

Carter was once projected to be the No. 1 overall pick in the draft before the Chicago Bears made a trade with the quarterback-needy Carolina Panthers.

There are questions about how far the Bulldogs' standout defensive lineman may slip because of his involvement in a car crash that killed a Georgia teammate and a team staffer. Carter was given 12 months' probation and a \$1,000 fine after pleading no contest to misdemeanor charges of reckless driving and racing

## NO DRAFT PICKS FOR YOUR TEAM

Draft parties in some cities won't be so raucous tonight because five teams don't have any first-round selections in the NFL draft that begins in six hours.

Moving up in the draft for quarterbacks has become a common occurrence, but the Broncos, Rams and Browns bucked that trend by parting with their 2023 first-round picks in trades for veteran quarterbacks. The 49ers don't have a first-rounder because of the Trey Lance trade in 2021 and the Dolphins forfeited their first-rounder for tampering with Tom Brady and Sean Payton while they were with other teams.

AP Football Writer Josh Dubow reviews some of the best and worst trade-ups for quarterbacks.

## FASHION STATEMENTS LOOMING

Who will steal the spotlight with a daring fashion statement at the NFL draft tonight?

While top prospects in this year's draft like quarterbacks Bryce Young, C.J. Stroud and Anthony Richardson prepare their outfits for the big night, Kristie Rieken looks back at some of the most memorable draft night ensembles since Deion Sanders made a splash with his track suit and gold chains in 1989.

## WILL BIJAN BE FIRST RUNNING BACK DRAFTED?

Bijan Robinson is expected to be the first running back selected in the NFL draft. How high he goes is the big question.

The Texas star has top-10 talent but NFL teams no longer place a premium on running backs, so he could still be on the board late in the first round. Only four running backs have been selected in the first round since Saquon Barkley was chosen at No. 2 by the New York Giants in 2018. None went higher than No. 24.

"Everybody has their opinions and understandably so because the running back position came to be one-dimensional," Robinson told AP. "But if you have a guy who is really versatile and can line up as a receiver, in the slot and have as much effect (as a receiver) as at running back, that's when the value really takes off."

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 51 of 90

## DRAFT TAKES BACKSEAT ONLY TO SUPER BOWL

The NFL draft will be held at Kansas City's Union Station, where the league has built its largest stage complex for its second-biggest event behind the Super Bowl, writes Dave Skretta.

Once a fixture at Radio City Music Hall in New York, the draft has grown in popularity since it took to the road eight years ago in 2015. The event has become a major boon for the league, teams and host cities.

AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/hub/nfl> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_NFL](https://twitter.com/AP_NFL)

## **GOP uses state capitol protests to redefine 'insurrection'**

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI and ALI SWENSON Associated Press

Silenced by her Republican colleagues, Montana state Rep. Zooey Zephyr looked up from the House floor to supporters in the gallery shouting "Let her speak!" and thrust her microphone into the air — amplifying the sentiment the Democratic transgender lawmaker was forbidden from expressing.

It was a brief moment of defiance and chaos. While seven people were arrested for trespassing, the boisterous demonstration was free of violence or damage. Yet later that day, a group of Republican lawmakers described it in darker tones, saying Zephyr's actions were responsible for "encouraging an insurrection."

It's the third time in the last five weeks — and one of at least four times this year — that Republicans have attempted to compare disruptive but nonviolent protests at state capitols to insurrections.

The tactic follows a pattern set over the past two years when the term has been misused to describe public demonstrations and even the 2020 election that put Democrat Joe Biden in the White House. It's a move experts say dismisses legitimate speech and downplays the deadly Jan. 6, 2021, assault on the U.S. Capitol by supporters of former President Donald Trump. Shortly after, the U.S. House voted to impeach him for "incitement of insurrection."

Ever since, many Republicans have attempted to turn the phrase on Democrats.

"They want to ring alarm bells and they want to compare this to Jan. 6," said Andy Nelson, the Democratic Party chair in Missoula County, which includes Zephyr's district. "There's absolutely no way you can compare what happened on Monday with the Jan. 6 insurrection. Violence occurred that day. No violence occurred in the gallery of the Montana House."

This week's events in the Montana Legislature drew comparisons to a similar demonstration in Tennessee. Republican legislative leaders there used "insurrection" to describe a protest on the House floor by three Democratic lawmakers who were calling for gun control legislation in the aftermath of a Nashville school shooting that killed three students and three staff. Two of them chanted "Power to the people" through a megaphone and were expelled before local commissions reinstated them.

As in Montana, their supporters were shouting from the gallery above, and the scene brought legislative proceedings to a halt. Tennessee House Speaker Cameron Sexton condemned the Democratic lawmakers.

"(What) they did today was equivalent, at least equivalent, maybe worse depending on how you look at it, of doing an insurrection in the Capitol," Sexton, a Republican, told a conservative radio station on March 30.

He later clarified to reporters that he was talking just about the lawmakers and not the protesters who were at the Capitol. He has maintained that the Democratic lawmakers were trying to cause a riot.

To Democrats, Republicans' reaction was seen as a way to distract discussion from a critical topic.

"They are trying to dismiss the integrity and sincerity of what all these people are calling for," said Tennessee Democratic Rep. John Ray Clemmons. "They're dismissing what it is just to avoid the debate on this issue."

Legal experts say the term insurrection has a specific meaning — a violent uprising that targets government authority.

That's how dictionaries described it in the 18th and 19th centuries, when the term was added to the Constitution and the 14th Amendment, said Laurence Tribe, a constitutional law professor at Harvard University.

Protests at the capitols in Montana and Tennessee didn't involve violence or any real attempts to dis-

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 52 of 90

mantle or replace a government, so it's wrong to call them insurrections, Tribe said.

Michael Gerhardt, a law professor at the University of North Carolina, said insurrection is understood as a coordinated attempt to overthrow government.

"Disrupting things is a far cry from insurrection," Gerhardt said. "It's just a protest, and protesters are not insurrectionists."

Nevertheless, conservative social media commentators and bloggers have used the word insurrection alongside videos of protesters at state capitols in attempts to equate those demonstrations to the Jan. 6 attack, when thousands of Trump supporters stormed the Capitol in an attempt to halt certification of the presidential vote and keep Trump in office. Some of the rioters sought out then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and shouted "Hang Mike Pence" as they roamed the Capitol.

Republicans' use of the term insurrection in these cases isn't just wrong, it's also strategic, said Yotam Ophir, a University at Buffalo communications professor who focuses on misinformation. Repeating a loaded term over and over makes it lose its meaning and power, he said.

The term also serves two other purposes for Republicans: demonizing Democrats as violent and implying that the accusations against Trump supporters on Jan. 6 were exaggerated, Ophir said.

In Montana, one widely shared Twitter post falsely claimed transgender "insurgents" had "seized" the Capitol, while the right-wing website Breitbart called the protest Democrats' "second 'insurrection' in as many months."

The Montana Freedom Caucus, which issued the statement that included the insurrection description, also demanded that Zephyr be disciplined. The group includes 21 Montana Republican lawmakers, or a little less than a third of Republicans in the Legislature. It was founded in January with the encouragement of U.S. House Freedom Caucus member Rep. Matt Rosendale, a hardline Montana conservative who backed Trump's false statements about fraud in the 2020 presidential election.

Republican lawmakers eventually voted to bar Zephyr from participating on the House floor, forcing her to vote remotely. Notably, Republicans largely avoided referencing insurrection when discussing the motion, but some did accuse Zephyr of attempting to incite violence and putting her colleagues at risk of harm.

The Montana and Tennessee examples follow at least two other statehouse protests that prompted cries of "insurrection" from Republicans.

Donald Trump Jr. cited "insurrection" in February in a tweet claiming transgender activists had taken over and occupied the Oklahoma Capitol. But according to local news reports, hundreds of supporters of transgender rights who rallied against a gender-affirming care ban before the Republican-controlled Legislature were led in through metal detectors by law enforcement and protested peacefully.

In Minnesota, some conservative commentators used the word insurrection earlier this month as demonstrators gathered peacefully outside the Senate chambers while lawmakers in the Democratic-controlled Legislature debated contentious bills ranging from LGBTQ issues to abortion. There was no violence or damage.

The rhetoric lines up with the refusal among many Republicans to acknowledge that the Jan. 6 attack was an assault on American democracy and the peaceful transfer of power.

"My colleagues across the aisle have spent so much time trying to silence the minority party that anyone speaking up and amplifying their voice probably strikes them as insurrectionist, even though it doesn't resemble anything like it," said Clemmons, the Democratic lawmaker in Tennessee.

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Kruesi reported from Nashville and Swenson from New York. Associated Press writers Kate Brumback in Atlanta; Steve Karnowski in St. Paul, Minnesota; Sam Metz in Salt Lake City and Gary Robertson in Raleigh, North Carolina, contributed to this report.

## What to know about tick, Lyme season following a mild winter

By PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — After a mild winter in the U.S., will there be an uptick in ticks this year?

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 53 of 90

Researchers say it is hard to predict how the tick season will play out. This year's mild winter and early snow melt, though, could mean more ticks earlier than usual and a wider spread of Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases, scientists said.

In Connecticut, ticks are showing up in greater numbers this year, according to Goudarz Molaei, a tick expert for the state. So far, more than 700 ticks have been sent in for a testing program that normally would have gotten 200 to 300 by now. The state typically sees a lot of Lyme disease, which got its name from a Connecticut town.

"It's going to be an above average year for tick activity and abundance," Molaei said.

## WHAT DISEASES DO TICKS SPREAD?

Infected ticks spread bacteria, viruses and parasites that make people sick. Lyme disease is the most common tick-borne infection in the U.S., mostly in the Northeast and Midwest. An estimated 476,000 Americans are diagnosed with Lyme disease each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Black-legged ticks, also called deer ticks, can carry more than Lyme-causing bacteria. They can also spread babesiosis, anaplasmosis and Powassan virus disease. The lone star tick, mainly located in southern, eastern and midwestern states, can carry ehrlichiosis and Heartland virus disease. American dog ticks can spread Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Ticks pick up disease-causing germs by biting infected wildlife, usually rodents.

## WHEN IS TICK SEASON?

It varies by region, but tick season generally stretches from April to October. Ticks are mostly dormant during the cold winter months, and emerge as temperatures rise, but can be active on warm winter days, too. Memorial Day is often considered the start of the season but that's largely because that's when people in cold-weather states start spending more time outdoors, said Sam Telford of Tufts University's school of veterinary medicine in North Grafton, Massachusetts. Lyme disease cases typically peak in June, July and August. April and May are typically lighter months, but not always.

Tiny ticks at the nymph stage — about the size of poppy seed — could be active early this year, said Dr. Bobbi Pritt, who studies tick-borne diseases at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. "When we have mild winters, we do anticipate that the ticks are going to be out earlier, and biting humans," Pritt said.

## WHAT MAKES FOR A BAD SEASON?

Government disease trackers say predicting how tick-borne diseases will trend is complicated. The number of ticks can vary from region to region, and diagnoses can be affected by how well different doctors test and report cases. The changing climate has both positive and negative implications for ticks, as warm, wet weather is beneficial to them, but especially hot weather is not, Telford said. Tiny ticks could indeed be active early, but a dry, hot summer could also kill ticks, he said. The best approach is to assume ticks will be very active. "Every year should be considered a bad tick year," he said.

## HOW CAN PEOPLE PROTECT AGAINST TICKS?

Thankfully, there are numerous ways to prevent tick bites. The CDC recommends treating clothing with products containing 0.5% permethrin. It's also important to be especially cautious in areas where ticks live, such as grassy and wooded areas. Using repellents and doing thorough checks afterward is also key, the CDC says. Limiting exposed skin also helps avoid bites.

The disease can cause a fever, chills, fatigue and muscle and joint pain. It is treated with antibiotics, and most people recover. Left untreated, it can worsen, causing symptoms such as heart problems and debilitating pain. There is no Lyme vaccine on the market in the U.S. for people but one is being tested.

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AP reporter Mike Stobbe in New York and data journalist Camille Fassett in Seattle contributed to this report.

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## NFL draft dominated early by QBs, including top pick Young

By ROB MAADDI AP Pro Football Writer

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Finding a franchise quarterback is the quickest path to success so it's no surprise teams made them a priority in the NFL draft.

Bryce Young, C.J. Stroud and Anthony Richardson were among the top four picks Thursday night, an expected result in a rich draft class that's been anticipated since last year. The surprise in the first round was that Will Levis didn't hear his name called.

Young, the slender and dynamic Alabama quarterback, went No. 1 to the Carolina Panthers, seven weeks after the team made a blockbuster trade with Chicago to move up to get their choice.

The biggest question surrounding the 2021 Heisman Trophy winner is size. He measured at 5-foot-10 1/8 and weighed 204 pounds at the combine. Though he dominated the SEC, some scouts and coaches fear Young may not be able to physically withstand all the hits in the NFL.

"Those that doubt me are entitled to their opinion," Young said. "I think that is the beauty of sports. We all come together and have arguments on who you think is good or not. I choose to focus on what I can control."

Stroud didn't have to wait long despite speculation he may drop out of the top 10 after scoring poorly in the S2 Cognition test. He told the AP earlier in the day he didn't know where he would end up going but Houston snagged him at No. 2. The Texans then made a blockbuster deal with Arizona to acquire the No. 3 pick and selected Alabama edge rusher Will Anderson Jr.

"I can't wait to play with Will," Stroud said. "I hope he doesn't hit me too hard in practice."

Richardson was selected at No. 4 by the Indianapolis Colts, who will begin a sixth straight season with a different starting QB.

Richardson might have the most upside of the group but he has the least experience. He threw just 393 passes at Florida. Colts owner Jim Irsay is fond of Philadelphia Eagles QB Jalen Hurts and Richardson has similar playmaking ability.

He'll play for Shane Steichen, who was the offensive coordinator in Philadelphia when Hurts developed into an MVP runner-up.

"I know what he did with Hurts but I am excited to get to work with him," Richardson said. "He has told me we are going to do great things so I am looking forward to it."

Heading into the draft, there was no certainty beyond the No. 1 pick and even that wasn't a lock. Some thought Kentucky's Levis would be the second QB taken but he slipped out of the first round. Tennessee's Hendon Hooker, who is coming off ACL surgery, also wasn't taken on the first day.

New Panthers coach Frank Reich said earlier in the week that the organization only reached a consensus Monday after several weeks of deliberation.

"I learned so much in my short time there," Young said of his visit with the Panthers. "It is an amazing staff. You can tell there is an energy, focus, drive and will to win."

A dual-threat playmaker with a strong arm and an elite combination of instincts and intelligence, Young also possesses the intangibles and characteristics coaches desire, including leadership ability and a strong work ethic.

The Panthers have sought an answer at quarterback since moving on from Cam Newton, who was the No. 1 overall pick in 2011 and the NFL MVP in 2015 when he led the Panthers to a 15-1 record and a Super Bowl appearance.

Young had a spectacular career at Alabama and the Panthers are hoping he can deliver the franchise's first Lombardi Trophy. He played in a pro-style offense under offensive coordinator Bill O'Brien, the former Texans head coach who has returned to the NFL to run New England's offense.

Stroud, a finalist for the Heisman Trophy the past two seasons at Ohio State, goes to Houston to help the rebuilding Texans move past Deshaun Watson. It's the ninth time two QBs went 1-2 and the first time

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 55 of 90

it was two Black QBs.

"I hope that inspired a lot of Black children," Stroud said.

After the run on QBs, defense-needy Seattle took Illinois cornerback Devon Witherspoon at No. 5 and the wheeling-and-dealing Cardinals moved up to No. 6 to select Ohio State offensive lineman Paris Johnson. Las Vegas then chose Texas Tech edge Tyree Wilson and Atlanta made Bijan Robinson the first running back taken in the top 10 since Saquon Barkley went No. 2 to the Giants in 2018.

NFC champion Philadelphia moved up one spot to take troubled Georgia defensive tackle Jalen Carter at No. 9 and Chicago went with Tennessee offensive lineman Darnell Wright with the 10th pick. The Eagles got Carter's teammate, edge Nolan Smith, at No. 30.

At No. 11, the Titans passed on Levis for Northwestern offensive lineman Peter Skoronski. The Tampa Bay Buccaneers also passed on Levis at No. 19, taking Pitt defensive tackle Calijah Kancey.

It took until the 20th pick for the first wide receiver to go. The Seahawks chose Jaxon Smith-Njigba. That started a run of four wideouts in a row. The Chargers then took Quentin Johnston, the Ravens grabbed Zay Flowers to team up with Odell Beckham Jr., and the Vikings added Jordan Addison to go with Justin Jefferson.

Two months after the hometown Kansas City Chiefs celebrated another Super Bowl title with a downtown parade, a sea of red-clad fans lined up in the streets where the century-old Union Station served as the backdrop for the draft.

Super Bowl MVP Patrick Mahomes and All-Pro tight end Travis Kelce walked on stage with the Vince Lombardi Trophy and riled up the crowd before turning it over to NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell.

Mahomes implored fans to scream louder — they did. Kelce asked if they wanted to trade up for the No. 1 pick.

But the Chiefs don't need a QB. Carolina, Houston and Indianapolis did.

If they got the right one, they might be set for a decade or longer.

AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/hub/nfl> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_NFL](https://twitter.com/AP_NFL)

## **Congress' anger at FBI shapes surveillance program's future**

By NOMAAN MERCHANT and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Growing anger at the FBI from both parties in Congress has become a major hurdle for U.S. intelligence agencies fighting to keep their vast powers to collect foreign communications that often sweep up the phone calls and emails of Americans.

Key lawmakers say they won't vote to renew the programs under Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act that expire at the end of this year without major changes targeting the FBI. Many blame problems with how the FBI's special agents search for U.S. citizens using Section 702 — along with publicly revealed mistakes in other intelligence investigations by the bureau.

Among the revelations since the law was last renewed in 2018: The bureau misled surveillance court judges in seeking to wiretap a 2016 campaign aide for former President Donald Trump, and agents didn't follow guidelines in searching Section 702 databases for the names of a congressman on the House Intelligence Committee, a local political party, and people of Middle Eastern descent.

Two successive chief judges of the primary U.S. surveillance court criticized the bureau in written opinions, with one saying the frequency of mistakes in the bureau's investigation of Russian election interference "calls into question whether information contained in other FBI applications is reliable."

The debate is of great consequence to U.S. intelligence officials, who argue that the law is perhaps their most critical tool to stopping terrorism, enemy spies, and cyberattacks. According to the intelligence community, 59% of the items in the briefing given daily to President Joe Biden last year featured information the National Security Agency captured under Section 702.

And the classified Pentagon documents leaked online in recent weeks make clear how much the U.S. relies on electronic snooping, with dozens of items on allies and foes alike sourced to what's known as

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 56 of 90

"signals intelligence."

"Section 702 has kept American citizens safe and our U.S. service members abroad out of danger," said Rep. Mike Turner, the Ohio Republican who chairs the House Intelligence Committee, in a statement. "However, changes must be made in order to prevent further FBI misuse and abuse of this vital national security tool."

Reps. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., and Warren Davidson, R-Ohio, issued a joint statement in March saying the FBI was searching for Americans "at an alarming scale" and calling for an overhaul of the program.

The FBI says it uses foreign communications for its national security investigations and tightly controls how agents access Americans' data. Bureau officials this week released a checklist their agents are supposed to use in conducting searches. They also have overhauled their computer systems and added new mandatory training for agents in December 2021.

Searches likely to bring back 100 or more results must now be cleared first with an FBI attorney, and the deputy director must personally approve what the FBI calls "certain types of sensitive queries," including searches of U.S. public officials.

"Like any major institution, we have made mistakes," FBI Director Chris Wray testified before Congress in March. "To me, the mark of a leading organization is not whether it makes mistakes or not ... but whether or not we learn from those mistakes. And I think we have."

Rep. Jim Himes of Connecticut, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said he supported the FBI's changes and wanted them to be included in a new surveillance law.

Himes argued some Republican critics were motivated by the investigations against Trump, including the search that the FBI conducted last year of his Florida residence.

"I think anger at the FBI has become an article of faith in the Republican conference," he said in an interview.

Under Section 702, the U.S. collects foreign communications without a warrant — and with the required participation of American telecom companies — to create databases that analysts can search for intelligence purposes. They can also target foreigners outside the U.S. for collection.

Agencies cannot target American citizens or foreigners on U.S. soil, or go after a foreigner with the purpose of collecting a U.S. citizen's emails or phone calls.

But civil liberties advocates have long argued that the program may violate the Fourth Amendment by giving the FBI warrantless access to vast amounts of Americans' communications. The FBI disclosed that it conducted as many as 3.4 million searches of Section 702 data for Americans in 2021 — a figure that officials say dropped sharply to roughly 200,000 last year.

Patrick Toomey, deputy director of the American Civil Liberties Union's National Security Project, said Section 702 has become "a domestic spying tool for the FBI."

"The rules are extraordinarily permissive in practice, and yet FBI agents still regularly violate them," Toomey said in an email. "Congress should require a warrant for these searches to protect Americans, because the FBI cannot be left to police itself."

Some lawmakers also support requiring the FBI to get warrants for every search of Section 702 data. National security officials oppose a warrant requirement, saying it would flood courts with thousands of new cases and make many uses of the program impractical.

Majority Republicans on the House Intelligence Committee are instead pushing for new criminal penalties against agents who willfully provide false information to a surveillance court, according to multiple people familiar with their plans who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations.

That proposal is driven by a perception that the FBI won't punish agents who abuse their authorities and a concern from Republicans that the bureau and Wray won't answer their questions about disciplinary actions taken, said Rep. Chris Stewart, R-Utah.

"One thing that societies cannot sustain is when they feel they cannot trust their own law enforcement, their own intelligence agencies," he said. "We have to implement reforms to regain some of that trust."

A senior FBI official declined to say how many agents have been dismissed or disciplined for violations,

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 57 of 90

"I absolutely will promise you to God above that I will do the job, and I will do the job that will make you proud," Justice told a crowd to a standing ovation.

Justice's entry increases the spotlight on what will be one of the most watched 2024 races in the closely divided U.S. Senate, with the GOP hoping to flip the seat in the overwhelmingly Republican state. Manchin is one of three Democratic senators up for reelection in 2024 who represent a state won by former President Donald Trump in the 2020 election. He has been the only Democrat elected to statewide office in West Virginia since Justice switched his party affiliation in 2017.

Among the speakers at the announcement were West Virginia's other U.S. senator, Republican Shelley Moore Capito, and South Carolina GOP Sen. Lindsey Graham.

Earlier Thursday, Justice's campaign filed a statement of organization for a Senate run on the Federal Election Commission's website.

"Jim Justice is a proven winner whose record of creating jobs, cutting taxes, and fighting for conservative values has made him one of the most popular governors in the country," National Republican Senatorial Committee chairman Steve Daines said in a statement.

Manchin, who endorsed Justice in his first gubernatorial bid before Justice switched parties six years ago and their relationship deteriorated, has said he'll decide his future political plans in December. Manchin didn't wait for Justice to make his announcement to throw out a warning Thursday morning.

"I am laser focused on doing the job West Virginians elected me to do — lowering healthcare costs, protecting Social Security and Medicare, shoring up American energy security and getting our fiscal house in order," Manchin said in a statement. "But make no mistake, I will win any race I enter."

Manchin's federal campaign filings show he already has more than \$9.7 million cash on hand. If Manchin seeks reelection, Justice's announcement means Manchin is likely in for his toughest test in his three decades in West Virginia politics.

Justice criticized both the domestic and foreign policies of Democratic President Joe Biden, but did not mention Manchin at the announcement.

"This nation needs us as Republicans to win," Justice said. "I'll ask you to run right with me and absolutely, as we have so many times, run to the finish line together."

The Senate bid by Justice sets up a matchup in the 2024 GOP primary with U.S. Rep. Alex Mooney. Mooney jumped into the Senate race less than two weeks after winning his fifth term in the House last November. State Attorney General Patrick Morrisey, who lost to Manchin in the 2018 general election, has announced he will run for governor next year.

Mooney's campaign already has started attacking Justice's record as governor in a 30-second political ad this week.

No Democrats have announced a challenge to Manchin. But Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, a progressive, has suggested he would support a primary opponent to the conservative Democrat, who was responsible for watering down much of Biden's social spending agenda.

As governor, Justice took advantage of Trump's popularity amid a red wave in West Virginia. Justice was first elected as a Democrat, then switched to the GOP seven months after taking office, taking the stage at an event with Trump to make the announcement in 2017.

Justice said he told Manchin about the party switch the day before his announcement, keeping it secret even from the governor's own staff. Manchin said the switch disappointed him.

Now foes, the pair have traded jabs ever since. In 2019, Justice in a news release called Manchin "one of those loud Washington liberals" who hadn't embraced Trump. He blamed Manchin, a former two-term governor, for the state's neglected road system. Manchin returned fire, saying "knowing Jim Justice's character, it's not a surprise for him to make a comment like this. He blames others for the work he hasn't done."

Justice is known for his exuberant and sometimes oddball method of delivery. He attends major events with his beloved English bulldog Babydog in tow, and Thursday's announcement was no different.

In January 2023, Justice reintroduced an often-made proposal to cut the state's personal income tax. Justice said legislative leaders told him to either give up trying or "make a big splash."

"And so here comes me cannonballing into the pool," the governor said at the time. "By God, I'll make



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 58 of 90

but said the bureau had found that deliberate misconduct by agents was rare. The official spoke on condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the bureau.

Members of both parties have also discussed moving to extend the terms of judges on the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, which holds classified proceedings and approves wiretaps as well as the intelligence community's Section 702 rules each year.

They also want the court to transcribe all hearings for appeals and to expand the use of outside advocates — known as amicus curiae — who can oppose FBI requests before the court, the people said.

Lawmakers may push for a short extension into next year so they can complete a package of long-term changes. But the future of the program at present is uncertain.

Rep. Jason Crow, a Colorado Democrat who also sits on the committee, said that while he supports changes to the law, it was critical for Congress to keep it in place.

"If we lose this program, we just go blind overnight in a lot of critical areas," he said.

## California passes 1st-in-nation emission rules for trains

By SOPHIE AUSTIN Associated Press/Report for America

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California approved Thursday a first-in-the-nation, ambitious rule limiting rail pollution to aggressively cut greenhouse gas emissions in the state's latest move to establish itself as a global leader in the fight against climate change.

The rule will ban locomotive engines more than 23 years old by 2030 and increase the use of zero-emissions technology to transport freight from ports and throughout railyards. It would also ban locomotives in the state from idling longer than 30 minutes if they are equipped with an automatic shutoff.

"It is time to kickstart the next step of transformation, with trains," said Davina Hurt, a California Air Resources Board member.

The standards would also reduce chemicals that contribute to smog. They could improve air quality near railyards and ports.

But some say it's too soon for the locomotive standards. Wayne Winegarden, a Pacific Research Institute senior fellow, said the rule would be expensive for rail companies, and increased costs will mean higher prices for many goods that move by rail.

The Association of American Railroads said in a statement "there is no clear path to zero emissions locomotives."

"Mandating that result ignores the complexity and interconnected nature of railroad operations and the reality of where zero emission locomotive technology and the supporting infrastructure stand," the group wrote.

Freight railways are an efficient means to transport the roughly 1.6 billion tons of goods nationwide across nearly 140,000 miles (225,308 kilometers), much cleaner than if those goods were trucked, it said.

The transportation sector contributed the largest share of greenhouse gas emissions nationwide in 2020, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. But rail only accounts for about 2% of those emissions.

Kristen South, a Union Pacific spokesperson, said in a statement the rail company is "deeply disappointed" by the vote, adding that the rule is too ambitious for the current technology and infrastructure.

Union Pacific is working to cut greenhouse gas emissions in part by spending \$1 billion to modernize locomotives and testing out engines powered by electric batteries, South wrote.

Cecilia Garibay, a project coordinator with the 50-member Moving Forward Network based at Occidental College, said California needs "the strongest, most protective in-use locomotive regulation" that sets an example for the nation.

The standards would need approval from the Biden administration to move forward. They follow rules approved by the EPA to cut emissions from heavy trucks.

Locomotives pull rail cars filled with food, lumber, oil and other products through railyards near neighborhoods in Oakland, Commerce, San Bernardino and other California cities.

They run on diesel, a more powerful fuel than gasoline, producing greenhouse gases and pollution that

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 59 of 90

is harmful for nearby residents.

Other states can sign on to try to adopt the California rule if it gets the OK from the Biden administration. The rule is the most ambitious of its kind in the country.

"The locomotive rule has the power to change the course of history for Californians who have suffered from train pollution for far too long, and it is my hope that our federal regulators follow California's lead," said Yasmine Agelidis, a lawyer with environmental nonprofit Earthjustice, in a statement.

Diesel exhaust is a health hazard. According to California regulators, diesel emissions are responsible for some 70% of Californians' cancer risk from toxic air pollution. The rule would curb emissions on a class of engines that annually release more than 640 tons of tiny pollutants that can enter deep into a person's lungs and worsen asthma, and release nearly 30,000 tons of smog-forming emissions known as nitrogen oxides. The rule would also drastically cut greenhouse gas emissions from locomotives, by an amount akin to removing all heavy-duty trucks from the state by 2030.

It's important to tackle emissions from a sector that often burdens low-income residents and communities of color, and that has plans to expand passenger rail, said Air Resources Board Chair Liane M. Randolph.

Rail companies can participate in incentive programs run by the state to ease the cost of transitioning to zero-emissions locomotives, the agency said.

California has already set out to make big emissions cuts in other areas. The state approved a transition to zero-emissions cars and a roadmap to achieve carbon neutrality, meaning it would remove as many carbon emissions as it releases, by 2045. The board is also considering a rule to electrify a group of heavy trucks that transports goods through ports.

For activists and residents who've lived in areas affected by heavy rail pollution, the fight for cleaner trains is decades in the making.

Jan Victor Andasan, an activist with East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice, grew up in West Long Beach and now organizes residents there. It's a neighborhood near the twin ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach that is "surrounded by pollution" from trains, trucks and industry.

"We support rail, but we support rail if they're doing all their best to mitigate their emissions," Andasan said.

Residents shared stories Thursday of children who live near railways having to share inhalers to ease asthma symptoms and families taking extreme measures to rid their homes of diesel fumes.

Some activists would like California to go further, for example, to limit locomotive idling to 15 minutes. They are also concerned that increased demand from online shopping is causing more rail traffic that burdens communities.

The EPA recently approved California rules requiring zero-emission trucks, depending on the type, to make up between 40% and 75% of sales by 2035.

Heidi Swillinger lives in a mobile home park in San Pablo, a small city in the San Francisco Bay Area, along the BNSF Railway. She estimates that her home is just 20 feet (6 meters) from the tracks. She said it's not uncommon for diesel fumes to fill her house, resulting in a "thick, acrid, dirty smell."

"Nobody wants to live next to a railroad track," Swillinger said. "You move next to a railroad track because you don't have other options."

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Sophie Austin is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues. Follow Austin on Twitter: @sophieadanna

## Hundreds stuck at Peru-Chile border in crackdown on migrants

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — A migration crisis at the border between Chile and Peru intensified Thursday as hundreds of people remained stranded, unable to cross into Peru in an effort to return to their home country of Venezuela.

The mostly Venezuelan migrants are seeking to cross into Peru to continue on to their home country

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 60 of 90

but Peru isn't allowing them to enter because they lack documents.

While stalled at the border of the two South American countries, the migrants face the inhospitable climate that characterizes the Atacama Desert, one of the driest on the planet, with extremely hot days and intensely cold nights. Some have improvised tents with blankets but they lack water and other basic services.

A group of migrants ran through the desert toward Peru, but they were turned back by Peruvian officers. Some women complained and demanded that the government of President Gabriel Boric provide a bus for them to travel to Venezuela.

Images showed migrants shoving Peruvian border patrol officers in an effort to enter the country.

Officials in Arica, the northern Chilean city that borders Peru and is around 2,000 kilometers (1,245 miles) from the capital of Santiago, declared a migration emergency Thursday.

A day earlier, the Peruvian president, Dina Boluarte, declared a state of emergency in Tacna, a town near the border with Chile, in order to "preserve domestic order" and contain the arrival of migrants. In announcing the measure, the president attributed "criminal acts" to migrants.

Boluarte said she would push for a constitutional reform to "authorize the intervention of the armed forces in the border area." Boric, for his part, already deployed troops to the border in late February to help stop the entry of migrants.

Amnesty International urged Peru and Chile to end what it called "the militarization" of the border. Leaders on both sides are "needlessly aggravating the situation, turning it into a humanitarian crisis that increases the risk to the lives and safety of these people," said Erika Guevara Rosas, director of Amnesty International for the Americas.

The Chilean government summoned Peruvian Ambassador Jaime Pomareda to express its displeasure over statements by Tacna Mayor Pascual Guisa, who called Chile's president "irresponsible" for what the envoy called an effort to transfer the country's migration woes to the border. Pomareda did not publicly comment on the meeting.

Arica's mayor, Gerardo Espíndola, vowed to "provide resources" to support those in need, particularly children and the elderly.

"We will act as quickly as this critical situation affecting the people stranded at the border requires," Espíndola said.

Amid the impasse, the head of Chile's lower house of Congress, Vlado Mirosevic, called for a humanitarian corridor involving all the countries in the region to resolve the crisis and allow migrants safe passage back to Venezuela.

Chile's foreign minister, Alberto van Klaveren, warned there was "a significant humanitarian problem in the area" and said Boluarte's decision "increases pressure" at the border.

The departure of migrants from Chile comes shortly after the National Prosecutor's Office on April 10 called on prosecutors to request preventive detention for anyone caught committing a crime who could not prove their identity.

In addition, a measure is set to be debated in the lower house of Congress that would classify irregular immigration as a crime and proposes jail sentences of as many as 541 days for anyone caught entering Chile through unofficial channels.

## UN urges Afghanistan's Taliban to reverse bans on women

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The U.N. Security Council unanimously approved a resolution Thursday calling on Afghanistan's Taliban rulers to swiftly reverse their increasingly harsh restrictions on women and girls, which range from very severely restricting education to banning women from most jobs, public spaces and gyms.

The council condemned the Taliban's ban on women working for the U.N., a decision the resolution calls "unprecedented in the history of the United Nations."

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 61 of 90

The unanimous 15-0 vote, with the United States, Russia and China all in favor, was a sign of the widespread global concerns over the Taliban's actions. It was a rare moment of unity on a high-profile issue at a time of steep international divisions over the Ukraine war, although both Russia and China criticized the United States after the vote for its past role in Afghanistan and for refusing to return all \$7 billion in frozen Afghan government funds.

The Security Council never considered sanctions against the Taliban but the strong rebuke by the U.N.'s most powerful body is a blow to the prestige of Afghanistan's rulers, who are trying get credibility on the global stage – including formal recognition by the United Nations as Afghanistan's legitimate government.

When the Taliban seized power in August 2021 as U.S. and NATO forces were pulling out of Afghanistan after two decades of war, they initially promised a more moderate rule than during their first stint in power from 1996 to 2001. But there has been a growing international outcry as Taliban leaders have gradually re-imposed their severe interpretation of Islamic law, or Sharia, on women and girls.

During the 20 years after the Taliban were ousted in 2001 for harboring al-Qaida and Osama bin Laden, who masterminded the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, schools and universities were opened for girls and women entered the workforce and politics, and became judges, ministers and professors.

U.S. deputy ambassador Robert Wood told the council after the vote, "Today, the Security Council has sent a clear, unanimous message to the Taliban and to the world: We will not stand for the Taliban's repression of women and girls."

The resolution, co-sponsored by the United Arab Emirates and Japan, expresses "deep concern at the increasing erosion of respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls in Afghanistan by the Taliban" and reaffirms their "indispensable role" in Afghan society.

It calls on the Taliban to swiftly restore their access to education, employment, freedom of movement and equal participation in public life. And it urges all other U.N. member nations to use their influence to promote "an urgent reversal" of the Taliban's policies and practices toward women and girls.

Under Taliban rule, girls have been barred from school beyond the sixth grade and women are now virtually confined to their homes, unable to go out and travel without a male guardian. In late December, the Taliban banned national and international aid groups from employing Afghan women and on April 4 they extended that ban to Afghan women working for the United Nations.

UAE Ambassador Lana Nusseibeh said over 90 countries from around the world co-sponsored the resolution including many Muslim nations and some from Afghanistan's neighborhood "which makes our fundamental message today even more significant: the world will not sit by silently as women in Afghanistan are erased from society."

Pressure mounted for a legally binding Security Council resolution addressing the Taliban's crackdown on women and girls after the U.N. ban.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres strongly condemned the U.N. ban, calling it "a violation of the inalienable fundamental human rights of women" and Afghanistan's obligations under international human rights law, his spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

Female staff members are essential to executing life-saving U.N. operations on the ground, Dujarric said, stressing that out of Afghanistan's population of about 40 million people, "we're trying to reach 23 million men, women and children with humanitarian aid."

The U.N. has warned that the ban could cripple desperately needed aid deliveries, and lead to a U.N. pullout from Afghanistan.

Since April 5, the 3,300 Afghans employed by the U.N. — 2,700 men and 600 women — have stayed home, but Dujarric has said they continue to work and will be paid. The U.N.'s 600-strong international staff, including 200 women, is not affected by the Taliban ban.

Roza Otunbayeva, a former president and foreign minister of the Kyrgyz Republic who heads the U.N. political mission in Afghanistan known as UNAMA, responded to the Taliban's ban on Afghan women working for the 193-nation world body by ordering an operational review of the U.N.'s presence in the country, which will last until May 5.

Before the review is completed, secretary-general Guterres will host an international meeting on Af-



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 62 of 90

Afghanistan in Doha, the capital of Qatar, on May 1-2. U.N. spokesman Dujarric said last week that the closed meeting will be attended by envoys on Afghanistan from various countries with the aim of seeking a "durable way forward" for the country.

His announcement followed an April 17 speech at Princeton University by Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, who led a high-ranking U.N. delegation to meetings with Taliban ministers in January, previewing the Doha meeting.

"Out of that, we hope that we'll find those baby steps to put us back on the pathway to recognition (of the Taliban), a principled recognition," Mohammed said. "Is it possible? I don't know. (But) that discussion has to happen. The Taliban clearly want recognition, and that's the leverage we have."

The UAE's Nusseibeh said the resolution sends a clear signal to the Doha meeting from the international community and the Security Council: Women and girls play an essential role in every society, including Afghanistan, humanitarian access must not be gender-based, and political engagement and dialogue are the only way forward.

While the resolution focuses on the Taliban crackdown on women and girls, it also underscores that it is critical for all Afghan parties, the region and the wider international community to hold talks to reach a political settlement and restore peace and stability "in the country, the region and beyond."

The resolution reaffirms the U.N.'s support for "a peaceful, stable, prosperous and inclusive Afghanistan" and for an "inclusive Afghan-led and Afghan-owned determination of the country's political future and development path."

It also recognizes the many challenges Afghanistan faces, stresses the urgent need to address "the dire economic and humanitarian situation" in the country, and reiterates that women are essential to the delivery of humanitarian aid.

The Taliban have ignored numerous appeals from the U.N. and many countries, including the 57-nation Organization of Islamic Cooperation, to restore the rights of girls and women. But Japan's U.N. Ambassador Kimihiro Ishikane said "we need to keep reaching out to them" so the message can start resonating.

Nusseibeh said at some point the Taliban will want to be part of the international community, and when they do "I think it's clear what the conditions and the requirements are."

## Trump, in New Hampshire speech, turns focus to Biden rematch

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

MANCHESTER, N.H. (AP) — Former President Donald Trump turned his attention to the general election on Thursday, using his first campaign appearance since President Joe Biden launched his own reelection bid to boast of his poll numbers and suggest that he has no need to debate his Republican rivals.

Trump's appearance in New Hampshire marked his first return to an early voting state since his legal troubles increased with an indictment in New York. He spoke on the same day that his former vice president, Mike Pence, testified before a federal grand jury investigating efforts by Trump and his allies to overturn the 2020 election. Meanwhile, writer E. Jean Carroll testified for a second day Thursday in a civil rape case against Trump over an encounter in the 1990s, an allegation he denies.

"We are a nation in serious decline, a nation that has lost its way," Trump said at a downtown Manchester hotel, a smaller venue than his typical, large-scale rallies. "We are led by a hopeless person, but we will win in 2024 and make America great again. We can do it. It's not too late."

In a nod toward his 2016 race, Trump said he's retiring the "crooked" nickname he used to define Democratic rival Hillary Clinton and will now instead apply it to Biden. He pledged to take back the White House and "settle our unfinished business" in a potential 2024 rematch with the current president.

A spokesperson for the Democratic National Committee, Ammar Moussa, pointed in response to persistent allegations that Trump's family profited off his presidency.

"Donald Trump may come up with a lot of nicknames for President Biden but we have a better one: winner," Moussa said.

Trump's New Hampshire appearance came two days after Biden kicked off his own long-expected reelec-

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 63 of 90

tion campaign, presenting himself as he did in 2020 as a buttress against Trump and his "Make America Great Again" movement. Biden's campaign launch video included snapshots of Trump and warned of "MAGA extremists" working to erode freedoms including voting rights and abortion rights.

Trump is considered a front-runner for the GOP nomination, though more Republicans are expected to jump into the race soon, including Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. Trump's campaign this week started airing its first television ad, which assails DeSantis. In the ad, Trump takes credit for DeSantis' political rise and shows the governor yoking himself to the former president, including clips from a 2018 gubernatorial campaign ad in which he uses some of Trump's catchphrases like "Build the wall" and "You're fired."

Trump, who has mused about skipping primary debates, pointed Thursday to his sizable polling lead and questioned why he should bother participating in the debates. "Why would you do that?" he asked the crowd.

Two weeks ago, Trump appeared with several other announced and potential presidential candidates at the National Rifle Association convention in Indianapolis. Last weekend, he spoke by video to a gathering of evangelicals in Iowa that marked the unofficial start of the state's 2024 caucus campaign.

"It doesn't feel good to have Republicans that are so conservative and great fighting each other," said Kathy Holmes, a 69-year-old retired teacher from Chichester who attended Trump's event Thursday. Holmes, who said she plans to vote for Trump in the state's leadoff primary, wore homemade buttons of Trump's face with fuzzy blond hair glued onto it.

Holmes said she'd like to see DeSantis wait and run for president in 2028 instead.

Maureen Anderson, a 43-year-old from the Boston area who said she follows the QAnon conspiracy theory, said Thursday's event was the first time she would be seeing Trump in person. The longtime Trump supporter wore a red "MAGA" hat and said she would be supporting Trump in the primary, regardless of his legal troubles.

"I feel like they've got nothing on him, and they just keep trying to find some other avenue to get him," she said of the legal cases. "But they're not gonna get him."

Trump stopped at a downtown diner after his event, where he posed for photographs and signed autographs. Someone in the crowd tried to draw Trump's attention to one woman, shouting, "She's a J-6er," referring to people who were at the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021.

"Where is she?" Trump asked, turning his head and beckoning her to come through the packed crowd. He leaned in between members of his security detail to say, "You just hang in," and something else inaudible and then repeated, "You just hang in."

The woman passed up a backpack from the crowd to have him sign, shouting, "I took it with me Jan. 6." He signed it.

New Hampshire is a political swing state, though voters in the state rejected Trump in the 2016 and 2020 general elections. It was, however, the first state Trump won in the 2016 Republican presidential primary contest, propelling him into GOP dominance that he maintains to this day.

The former president made one other visit to New Hampshire earlier this year, stopping in Salem as part of his first appearances on his latest White House campaign.

Cooper reported from Phoenix.

## West Virginia Gov. Justice running for Manchin's Senate seat

By JOHN RABY Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — West Virginia Republican Gov. Jim Justice announced Thursday that he is running for Democrat Joe Manchin's U.S. Senate seat in 2024, setting up what could be a hard-fought campaign between two of the state's most prominent politicians.

Justice, an ultrawealthy businessman who is barred from running for a third consecutive term as governor, ended months of speculation with the announcement at a posh resort he owns in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. It came on Justice's 72nd birthday.

a big splash.”

After lawmakers agreed to a compromise tax cut of 21.25%, Justice signed it in early March.

Before going into politics, Justice bought the 6,500-acre (2,630-hectare) Greenbrier resort in White Sulphur Springs out of bankruptcy for \$20.1 million. Within a year he constructed a bunker casino beneath the resort's 721-room hotel and established a PGA Tour golf event that was held on the Old White TPC for 10 years.

Justice reached billionaire status through family-owned farms and coal mines. His worth peaked at \$1.7 billion, but he was taken off Forbes' prestigious list of billionaires in 2021.

Justice's businesses faced several other woes, including millions of dollars in penalties from the federal government and court fights over claims his companies failed to deliver coal, pay tax debts owed to counties or contribute toward monthly premiums on employee benefit plans.

During his first years as governor, he didn't spend a lot of time at the seat of government in Charleston, instead choosing to commute from his home in Lewisburg, West Virginia. That prompted a lawsuit by a lawmaker who called him a "part-time governor." The case concluded in 2021 when Justice agreed to live in Charleston.

## **Biden's student loan help would be 'annihilated' by GOP bill**

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's student loan agenda would be all but obliterated by the U.S. debt legislation passed by House Republicans, dooming his mass cancellations, scrapping a more generous loan repayment option and permanently barring future regulation around student debt.

Republicans see it as a victory for taxpayers. Democrats say it would hurt the economy and block college students who need financial aid.

The GOP bill would cancel both of Biden's marquee student debt proposals: a one-time cancellation of up to \$20,000 for more than 40 million Americans, and an updated loan repayment plan that could slash monthly payments for millions.

It would also lift a pause on federal student loan payments, forcing borrowers into repayment sooner than planned.

On the House floor Wednesday, Republican Rep. Virginia Foxx, chairwoman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, said Biden's plan for student debt was an obvious target as the government reins in spending.

With an estimated cost of more than \$500 billion, Biden's student debt plan is a "backdoor" attempt to provide free college on "the backs of blue-collar Americans," said Foxx, of North Carolina.

Biden has threatened to veto the legislation, and his student debt cancellation plan is seen as untouchable by some Senate Democrats who may well kill the bill. Some of the strongest champions of cancellation have included Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee.

Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle generally agree that the student loan system is broken, but they have differing approaches to fixing it. The issue has become a lightning rod in recent years amid rising college costs and a national student debt total that now surpasses \$1.6 trillion.

For Republicans, the fight offers a fresh opportunity to strike at Biden's student debt policies, which they view as an overreach. Conservative opponents have already gotten his cancellation temporarily halted in court, and it's now being reviewed by a conservative-leaning Supreme Court.

Unlike the GOP lawsuits, however, the new legislation takes aim at the full suite of Biden's student debt plans, including a proposed repayment plan that has mostly avoided the type of scrutiny that mass cancellation has seen.

Biden's payment option would mostly replace four existing "income-driven repayment" plans with much more generous terms.

It would cap monthly payments at 5% of a borrower's income, for example, down from 10% now. And

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 65 of 90

it would charge nothing for those with yearly incomes of less than \$30,000 (\$24,000 now). No interest would be charged as long as payments were made on time.

The plan was formally proposed in January but has yet to be finalized. Under the Republican bill, it would be revoked.

Going a step further, the Republican plan would permanently bar the Education Department from issuing any future regulation that raises costs for the federal student aid program. That would amount to a dramatic shift in the way the agency does business.

Administrations from both parties have used their regulatory power to update the loan program without going through Congress. The Trump administration used that authority to erase debt for disabled military veterans in 2019, and Biden used it to overhaul a debt forgiveness program for public servants.

Borrower advocates assail the GOP bill, saying it would worsen the student debt crisis.

Blocking the new repayment plan would "make permanent the debt trap for any borrower who does not earn enough money to afford their monthly loan bills," said Mike Pierce, executive director of the Student Borrower Protection Center.

The impact of the bill could go far beyond student debt. The Education Department estimates it would require a 22% budget cut across some of its biggest programs.

The department estimates it would need to cut federal Pell Grants — grants to students with significant financial need — for 80,000 college students, and the maximum grant amount would be reduced by \$1,000 for all other borrowers. It would also bring a \$4 billion reduction in federal money for the nation's poorest schools, and cut other money for student mental health.

The Pell reduction "annihilates the educational dreams of millions of Americans," said Justin Draeger, president and CEO of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.

Foxx disputed the department's accounting of reductions, however, saying the bill "doesn't mention a single word about Pell Grants."

"If Democrats spent half the amount of time working with Republicans as they do fearmongering, we wouldn't be in this situation in the first place," Foxx said in a statement.

Education Secretary Miguel Cardona slammed Republicans for "staggering recklessness," saying the bill would be "taking us backward" and undercut efforts to help students recover from the pandemic.

Rep. Bobby Scott, the top Democrat on the House education panel, rejected the bill as "a terrible deal for the American people."

"I get tired of being lectured by the Republicans when it comes to fiscal responsibility, because we know that every Republican presidential administration since Nixon has left office with a worse deficit situation than they inherited," Scott said on the House floor Wednesday.

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## Ed Sheeran, on guitar, gets musical with a New York jury

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — In a packed New York courtroom, Ed Sheeran picked up his guitar Thursday and launched into a tune that has him locked in a copyright dispute over Marvin Gaye's soul classic "Let's Get it On" as the only audience that mattered — a jury — looked on.

Sheeran was an hour into testimony in Manhattan federal court when his lawyer, Ilene Farkas, pressed him to tell how he came to write "Thinking Out Loud" a decade ago.

He reached back, grabbed his guitar from a rack behind the witness stand and explained that writing a song was second nature to him. He said he used his own version of phonetics to create songs so quickly that he could write up to nine in a day. Even last weekend, Sheeran claimed, he wrote 10 songs.

Then he sang just a few words of the pivotal tune, bringing smiles to the faces of some of the spectators in the courtroom of Judge Louis L. Stanton.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 66 of 90

"I'm singing out loud," he sang, loud enough to be heard but not raising decibels in the court.

After he finished singing those words, he spoke a few too, saying "and then words fall in" as he tried to teach the jury his method of creating music. He said he collaborated on the song with a co-writer, Amy Wadge, who wrote the opening chords.

Though he's performed with some of the world's great artists and become a regular at music award shows by age 32, he said from the witness stand with his chair tilted toward the jury: "I'm not the world's most talented guitar player."

And when he bumped his hand against the witness stand microphone, he said a quick "sorry."

Then he launched into the song that heirs of Ed Townsend, Gaye's co-writer on "Let's Get It On," say has "striking similarities" and "over common elements" to the famed 1973 Gaye musical treasure.

"When your legs don't work like they used to," he sang earnestly, like he might go deeper into the song. Then, after just a few bars, he abruptly placed the guitar back in the rack behind him as his lawyer told the judge it was an appropriate spot to adjourn for the week.

Two days earlier, he had been called to testify by attorneys for the plaintiffs and was adamant in telling jurors that he and Wadge came up with the song without copying anyone else's music.

He had also said a video that showed he had segued on stage between "Thinking Out Loud" and "Let's Get It On" was not unusual, adding it was "quite simple to weave in and out of songs" that are in the same key.

On Thursday, his lawyer posed friendly questions, eliciting from Sheeran how he became interested in music after joining a church choir with his mother when he was 4.

Sheeran appeared self deprecating as he told his story, saying: "I can't read music. I'm not classically trained in anything."

He said he quit school at 17 so he could perform up to three times a night, playing anywhere that would have him, from bingo halls to restaurants to "anywhere nobody was."

Within a decade, he was performing with some of the biggest names in music, from Taylor Swift to the Rolling Stones, 50 Cent to Eric Clapton.

Before long, he said, he was writing eight or nine songs a day, explaining: "When inspiration hits, you get excited and it just comes out."

Near the end of his testimony, Sheeran was asked by his lawyer why an expert called by the plaintiffs had tried to show how chords in "Thinking Out Loud" resemble "Let's Get It On."

"He was saying that because it helps his argument," Sheeran said.

The trial resumes Monday.

## **Punishment or prevention: California debates fentanyl crisis**

By TRÂN NGUYỄN Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Pamela Smith remembers vividly the last time she saw her only son alive.

It was 3:18 a.m. on July 3, 2016, in Fresno, California, and 22-year-old Jackson Smith was lying motionless on a table in an emergency room while a nurse performed chest compressions. Earlier that night, he had taken an oxycodone pill laced with fentanyl, and then he stopped breathing. Within seconds of his mother entering the emergency room, he died.

Since then, Smith has dedicated her life to fighting the fentanyl crisis. This year, that has meant advocating for some of the more than 30 bills introduced in the California Legislature to address the issue.

But a number of those bills have since stalled, caught in a philosophical dispute between lawmakers about the best way to address a crisis that is killing roughly 110 people in the state each week. About half of the proposals focus on public safety measures, such as punishing drug dealers with longer prison sentences, while the others aim to increase accessibility to fentanyl overdose treatments and to create education and prevention programs.

The bills focusing on public safety measures were at risk of getting lost until Smith and dozens of other protesters converged on the state Capitol last week demanding they be heard. At a special hearing Thurs-

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 67 of 90

day, the Assembly public safety committee finally made some progress: They advanced four bills including one that would increase penalties for dealers with at least one kilogram of fentanyl products and another that would prohibit people from carrying a gun while also being in possession of fentanyl.

The committee also voted down two bills that would lengthen prison sentences for fentanyl-related crimes, and another bill to toughen penalties for sales of fentanyl on social media was shelved.

Smith, who testified Thursday, said she was disappointed that a bill she supported did not advance, "But I hope to believe them when they say they're willing to have discussions about it and try to work with us and get something done."

Imposing tougher sentences on fentanyl dealers has been the common strategy for lawmakers across the U.S., including in Democratic-controlled legislatures such as California, Oregon and Nevada. The tactic has drawn fierce opposition from harm reduction advocates, who say criminalization has historically backfired and worsened the crisis.

In California it has divided Democratic lawmakers, who hold majorities in both chambers. Republicans and moderate Democrats are pushing for stronger prison sentences for fentanyl dealers, while others are wary of policies that stand to lengthen criminal sentences and incarcerate more people.

"It's good for politics and publicity, but it really doesn't get to the root of the problem of drug addiction," said Assemblymember Reggie Jones-Sawyer, a Democrat and chair of the Assembly Public Safety Committee, who called bills that increase prison sentences "a Republican playbook."

Democratic Assemblymember Cottie Petrie-Norris, of Orange County, whose bill did not advance Thursday but will be taken up again during a mid-May study session, said the fentanyl crisis goes beyond party lines.

"This is not a red state crisis or a blue state crisis. This is an American crisis, and it's certainly a California crisis," she said.

That tension boiled over last week. In March, Jones-Sawyer announced he was delaying hearings of at least seven fentanyl-related bills that would increase prison sentences, calling them a "Band-Aid approach." But after members of law enforcement, prosecutors and families of fentanyl overdose victims protested, Democratic leadership in the Assembly ordered a special hearing for seven of them.

The issue is personal for Jones-Sawyer, who lost his uncle to heroin and a cousin to crack cocaine. He witnessed how public policies during the 1980s crack epidemic resulted in the mass incarceration of people of color, without solving drug problems.

"We really do need to get to the root of that (by) cutting off the supply and then reducing, if not eliminating, the demand. We got to do both," Jones-Sawyer said.

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times more potent than morphine. Fentanyl overdoses accounted for one in five deaths among people ages 15 to 24 in California last year. Drug overdoses nationwide have claimed more than 100,000 lives annually since 2020, with about two-thirds of them fentanyl-related.

The current crisis is deadlier than any the U.S. has seen, and in California, Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom proposed more than \$90 million in new spending to combat it. Last week he directed the California Highway Patrol and National Guard to help San Francisco tackle fentanyl.

Newsom has not publicly supported any fentanyl-related legislation.

Fentanyl public safety measures may face an uphill battle in California's Senate. This week the body's Public Safety Committee shelved a bipartisan bill by Democratic Sen. Tom Umberg that would require courts to warn people convicted of dealing fentanyl that they could be charged with murder if someone they sold to dies in an overdose. The bill, modeled after the state's DUI advisory, could make it easier for prosecutors to convict repeat offenders, as the warning would serve as evidence of awareness of the overdose risk.

Public health experts are calling on lawmakers to reject harsher sentences for fentanyl convictions. Ricky Bluthenthal, a professor of preventive medicine at the University of Southern California's Keck School of Medicine, said they could deter people from calling 911 for help for fear of arrest.

"Increasing penalties will likely result in more deaths," he said at a Tuesday news briefing ahead of the hearing, adding that stronger prison sentences have had little impact on drug use historically.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 68 of 90

Republican Assemblymember Jim Patterson, of Fresno, who authored a bill increasing fentanyl penalties that did not pass Thursday, said not lawmakers failed to make progress on the issue.

"They aren't interested in justice, and as a result we will continue to have injustice for victims of fentanyl poisoning," Patterson said.

Other measures that would make overdose reversal medication more accessible and increase education on fentanyl have received early support in committee hearings, including one authored by Democratic Sen. Dave Cortese requiring K-12 schools to create a protocol for student opioid overdoses. The bill is named "Melanie's Law" after 15-year-old Melanie Ramos, who died from a suspected fentanyl overdose at a Hollywood school.

The Assembly public safety committee also passed bills Thursday to create a statewide task force to study the issue and increase coordination among law enforcement agencies.

Smith, who plans to return to the Capitol in May for the study session, remains hopeful the Legislature will work together on the fentanyl crisis.

"I'm never going to stop (speaking out), because I speak for not just myself because of my son Jackson, but I also speak for all mothers that have lost their children to fentanyl," she said. "We've got to do something now."

## **New Orleans student's scholarship offers surpass \$9 million**

By KEVIN MCGILL Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — He is a senior at 16. His grade point average is 4.98. Even before graduating from high school, he has earned 27 college credits and, perhaps the most impressive numbers of all, he has scholarship offers from around 130 colleges and universities that, as of Thursday, totaled more than \$9 million.

Dennis Maliq Barnes' achievements at the International High School of New Orleans are a source of pride for school administrators who are looking into whether Barnes has set a record for scholarship offers. But it wasn't a record he was looking for as he piled up around 200 applications to colleges around the nation. It was about making sure he had plenty of options.

"I just kept going forward, kept applying, kept applying to different schools that I thought would even remotely interest me," he said in an interview — occasionally interrupted by the rumble of streetcars rolling by outside as he sat in the urban charter school's computer room.

His plan is to major in computer science as an undergraduate. But he also said he has done work as an intern at the Louisiana State Bar Association — the offices are a short walk from the high school campus — and that has him thinking about law school.

He credits a strong Christian religious faith as part of his success. He also gives a lot of credit to Denise James, the school's college admissions counselor.

James and Head of School Adierah Berger both describe Barnes as a leader and an example to other students — including the school's English language learners.

"He's a great translator," James says of Barnes, who is fluent in Spanish. "They do not have to ask him. If he sees that they need assistance, he will offer assistance and just take over."

Barnes, born and raised in New Orleans, hasn't determined how far from home his college journey will take him. If, after weighing his offers, he finds that something close to home will fit his needs, he will stay in the area.

But Barnes is intrigued by the idea of going farther away. "I would love to see something new," he said.

## **Fox ratings tumble in Tucker Carlson slot after his firing**

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Hundreds of thousands of Fox News viewers are reacting to Tucker Carlson's firing by abandoning the network in his old time slot — at least temporarily.

Fox drew 1.33 million viewers for substitute host Brian Kilmeade in the 8 p.m. Eastern hour on Wednesday

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 69 of 90

night, putting the network second to MSNBC's Chris Hayes in a competition Carlson used to dominate, the Nielsen company said.

That's down 56% from the 3.05 million viewers Carlson reached last Wednesday, Nielsen said. For all of 2022, Carlson averaged 3.03 million viewers, second only to Fox's "The Five" as the most popular program on cable television.

Carlson offered his own alternative to Kilmeade on Wednesday, posting a two-minute monologue on Twitter at 8 p.m. By Thursday afternoon, that video had been viewed 62.7 million times, according to Twitter.

Kilmeade had 1.7 million viewers on Tuesday and 2.59 million on Monday, when he told people who hadn't already heard the news that Carlson would no longer be there.

Carlson had 2.65 million viewers on Friday for what he didn't know at the time would be his last show on Fox. He was fired on Monday with no explanation given publicly, although there are no shortage of theories — including a former employee's lawsuit that cited a toxic work atmosphere at his show, offensive statements by Carlson that came out as part of the Dominion Voting Systems lawsuit against Fox and his embrace of political conspiracy theories about the Jan. 6 insurrection.

The ratings slump echoes what happened at Fox following the 2020 election, when many viewers angered by the network's crucial election night declaration that Joe Biden had won Arizona followed then-President Donald Trump's advice to seek alternatives. That caused tremendous angst behind the scenes at Fox, which was illustrated in documents released as part of the Dominion case.

Asked for comment, Fox responded with a statement noting that Fox has been cable news' most-watched network for 21 years with its team "trusted more by viewers than any other news source."

In the wake of Carlson's firing, viewing at the conservative network Newsmax has shot up for Eric Bolling, who hosts a show in the same 8 p.m. Eastern slot.

For example, Bolling had 510,000 viewers Wednesday night, compared to 168,000 on Wednesday a week ago, Nielsen said. On Tuesday, Bolling had 562,000 viewers, up from 122,000 the same day a week earlier.

The challenge for Newsmax will be making it last. Fox surged again following Biden's inauguration as president, and Newsmax couldn't keep up the momentum.

## 'Blood on your hands': Montana lawmaker's words not unusual

By PAUL J. WEBER and AMY BETH HANSON Associated Press

HELENA, Mont. (AP) — The swift punishment brought down on Zooey Zephyr, a transgender lawmaker in Montana, began over words that others in American politics have used without hesitation or consequence: saying opponents have "blood" on their hands.

The governor of Texas. A GOP congressman in Florida. A city councilwoman in Denver. Just in the past few years, they are among the elected officials who have chastised colleagues in government with the same pointed rhetoric almost word for word — accusing them of bearing responsibility for deaths — over everything from immigration policy to gun laws.

None faced blowback, let alone retribution. But not Zephyr, who on Thursday began legislative exile after Montana Republicans barred her from the state House floor a week after saying those who voted to support a ban on gender-affirming care would have blood on their hands.

"I don't remember until now that there's been a controversy over that cliché," said Republican Lou Barletta, a former Pennsylvania congressman who used the same words to attack the state's Democratic governor in 2021 over nursing homes. "I've never had anyone make a huge issue out of it."

In retaliating against Zephyr, Montana Republicans accused her of crossing a line that is faint at best in political debate that happens daily in the U.S., particularly in statehouses where it is not uncommon for legislators wading into heated issues like abortion or gun rights to be scolded about "blood on your hands" by protesters or even fellow representatives.

The case that Zephyr went too far in her remarks is a stretch, said one scholar who studies American political speech, even though the Republican majority in Montana had the power to impose discipline. The confrontation is the latest example of lawmakers punishing dissent, an increasingly prevalent move.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 70 of 90

"The phrase 'there's blood on your hands' is not necessarily that controversial," said Jennifer Mercieca, a professor at Texas A&M University who studies political rhetoric. "It's not necessarily an insult. It doesn't cross the line. In fact, it's a polite way of saying that there are consequences to these decisions."

The fallout began April 18, when Zephyr made a reference to the body's opening prayer while speaking against what is part of a wave of Republican efforts to roll back LGBTQ+ rights across the country this year.

"I hope the next time there's an invocation, when you bow your heads in prayer, you see the blood on your hands," she said. The remark provoked outrage from Republicans who said the language was belittling and an affront to civil discourse.

In an interview with The Associated Press after losing her access to the House floor on Wednesday, Zephyr said she expected the House's majority leader to object in the moment but did not think the pushback would escalate. By that point, she said opponents had "closed their ears" to the harms posed by the bill.

Multiple studies have shown that transgender youth are more likely to consider or attempt suicide in general but are less at risk for depression and suicidal behaviors when able to access gender-affirming care.

"So you say what is on your heart, which is this bill is going to kill people, and if you vote for it, you are complicit in that," she said.

Zephyr, a first-term Democrat, has plenty of company among both parties in her choice of words.

When Texas Democrats broke quorum in 2021 in protest of new voting laws, Republican Gov. Greg Abbott fumed that their absence was also stopping passage of a crime bill. "The Democrats have blood on their hands for failing to step up and do their job," he said.

When Alabama last year moved toward ending state permits to carry concealed handguns, then-state Rep. Merika Coleman, a Democrat, spoke to her colleagues directly. "And I tell you, some of you are going to have blood on your hands because this piece of legislation passes," she said.

The comment doesn't always slide. When Grant Cramer, a Colorado high school freshman whose schoolmate was killed in a shooting, spoke in support of a sweeping ban on semiautomatic firearms earlier this month, he addressed four Democrats on the committee who would help decide the bill's fate: "Our blood is on your hands," Cramer said.

The chairman gently admonished the teenager.

"I thought you were going to call out all 13 of us, which I would have allowed," Rep. Mike Weissman said, referring to the rest of the committee. "I want people to have their say, and that kind of testimony is on the line of what I feel is appropriate."

In Florida, state Sen. Jason Pizzo, a Democrat, said he has heard remarks about blood on hands many times in debate, sometimes more than once a day. He said language is often ignored, including once when he cursed at a state agency head giving testimony.

Florida Republican Senate President Kathleen Passidomo said she didn't know whether Zephyr's comment was inappropriate to use in floor debate.

"It's probably not senatorial," she said. "I've heard it from different people, but we just move on."

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Weber reported from Austin, Texas. Associated Press writers Brendan Farrington in Tallahassee, Florida; Kim Chandler in Montgomery, Alabama; Marc Levy in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; and Jesse Bedayn in Denver contributed to this report.

## Rep. Zooney Zephyr's town feels divide from rest of Montana

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

MISSOULA, Montana (AP) — In the college town of Missoula, pride flags are as common a sight as the peaks of Montana's Rattlesnake Mountains. Even a downtown crosswalk is rainbow-colored.

Often described as a blue island in a vast red state, Missoula sent the first openly transgender female legislator in Montana history to the state capital. Its voters, fully aware that they are vastly outnumbered by conservatives statewide, were still shocked at what happened next.

Their new representative, Zooney Zephyr, was barred last week from speaking on the floor of the Leg-

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 71 of 90

islature by the Republican majority, which accused her of violating decorum by saying they had "blood on your hands" for approving a bill barring gender-affirming care for minors. On Wednesday, Republicans voted to bar Zephyr from the House floor for the remainder of the legislative session, scheduled to end next month.

Zephyr was elected with 80% of the vote in November in her heavily liberal district, which runs through the oddly-aligned section of central Missoula known as the Slant Streets and stretches to the doorstep of the University of Montana, the 7,000-student school that has long fueled the town's liberal sensibility.

Nestled in a narrow valley at the northwestern edge of the state, Missoula is proud of its funky, countercultural style. This week, the hot ticket was the International Wildlife Film Festival, featuring a parade in which people dressed in animal costumes marched through downtown.

Zephyr's constituents were both shocked and reminded of the growing distance between them and the rest of their state.

"When she first ran I thought, 'They're going to do something to limit her power,'" said Erin Flint, 28, a native who plans to enroll in the university for a graduate degree in art education. But she didn't expect a step as dramatic as gagging the new lawmaker, or barring her from the floor.

Montana has long leaned to the right, but with more of a libertarian bent than a zest for culture wars. That allowed Democrats to win the governorship regularly over the decades, and occasionally to win control of one or more houses of the Legislature.

Andy Nelson grew up in a town of 750 in eastern Montana, and only felt comfortable coming out as gay as a senior at the University of Montana, when he volunteered at The Center, a LGBTQ+ community group in Missoula where he is now executive director. He remembered long discussions about whether such a group was still necessary after same-sex marriage was legalized nationally in 2015. But that all changed in 2016, with the presidential candidacy of Donald Trump.

Trump handily won the state that year and in 2020. Republicans now hold both congressional seats and all statewide offices, although one of the state's two U.S. Senate seats is held by Democrat Jon Tester, a top GOP target in 2024. Last year, as Zephyr was elected in her Missoula district of about 11,000 residents, Republicans rode a surge in popular support to win a supermajority in both chambers of the Legislature.

Zeke Cork, 62, one of The Center's board members, recalled the 1970s as a great time to come out in Missoula, though he acknowledged he still had to follow certain rules to be safe. A railroad dispatcher, Cork has lived all over the United States but came back to Montana in 2015. He felt safe enough to transition fully two years ago.

But today, Cork said, the state's "live and let live" sensibility seems to be ebbing. Conservative protesters, often armed, disrupt pride events. "Now, you don't know who's going to be the one who unloads on you and your community," he said.

Cork has been traveling up to the Capitol in Helena to speak against the legislation affecting transgender people since it was first introduced. After Zephyr was silenced, he joined dozens of others from Missoula at the Capitol this week, where they began crying, "Let her speak!" after she was gagged yet again. Seven demonstrators were arrested.

"We would much rather be living quiet lives, out of the spotlight, living under the radar, living our best lives," Cork said. "I don't want to be having this battle."

But, "she speaks for me, and I sent her to that house," said Cork, who lives in Zephyr's district. "We're fighting for democracy right now."

Legislative Republicans contend they're the ones preserving democracy by following their chamber's rules and gagging Zephyr for maligning her colleagues. "We will uphold the people's will that sent 68 Republicans to Helena," several said in a statement Monday evening, after activists — including dozens from Missoula — jeered them from the House gallery.

In the minds of many other Montanans, it's Missoula that has changed, not them.

"Missoula used to be a wonderful place," said Ken Sayler, 64, who grew up in the town when its primary industry was saw mills. Those all closed, and the town began to look a lot more like the university, driving him in disgust to a remote house in the mountains, where he manufactures boat parts.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 72 of 90

"If you're transgender, I don't care," Saylor said, adding he had little sympathy for Zephyr. "She stepped out of bounds."

Saylor was drinking a beer in a bar about 20 miles south of Missoula, where plenty of patrons jeered the idea of a transgender lawmaker. The bar sits in a small town in the district of state Sen. Theresa Manzella, the chair of a group of conservative state lawmakers called the Montana Freedom Caucus who pushed for the measure silencing Zephyr with a statement that intentionally misgendered her.

Jim McConnell, a 69-year-old machinist, was dubious of the idea of someone like Zephyr serving in the statehouse. But he didn't like the idea of muzzling her.

"They have a right to speak," said Jim McConnell. "But in Montana, they're barking up the wrong tree."

Experts say intense cultural battles are out of character for Montana politics.

"This is a conservative, libertarian state, as opposed to a conservative, authoritarian one," said Paul Pope, a political scientist at Montana State University in Billings, noting that a far less liberal town's zoo received an influx of support after conservative activists attacked its drag story hour recently. "Even if they have some short-term success here," he added of the GOP, "long term, this is going to hurt them."

But for now, many in Missoula are simply stunned.

"They've stripped 11,000 Montanans of their voice," said Ignatius Fitzgerald, a University of Montana freshman who grew up in the district. "Republicans have left us without a voice and without recourse."

Even some who disagreed politically with Zephyr said they didn't think the Legislature should silence her.

"Even if I don't agree with her policies, I feel she has the right to speak," Addie Glidewell, a 19-year-old journalism student who supports banning gender-affirming care for minors, said of Zephyr. "I don't believe she should be shut down."

Danny Wainwright, a 56-year-old middle school teacher in Zephyr's district, said he doesn't always back aggressive protests or bombastic political rhetoric. But he felt Zephyr's actions were appropriate.

"When you're the minority and Republicans have a supermajority, you've got to be heard somehow, that's your job," Wainwright said.

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This story has been updated to correct that Zephyr is the state's first openly transgender female lawmaker, not the first openly transgender lawmaker.

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This story has been updated to correct the spelling of Sen. Tester's first name to Jon, instead of John.

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## **Pandemic sent high school sex to new low, survey finds**

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The first years of the pandemic saw a huge decline in high school students having sex, according to a government survey.

Teen sex was already becoming less and less common before COVID-19.

About three decades ago, more than half of teens said they'd had sex, according to a large government survey conducted every two years. By 2019, the share was 38%. In 2021, 30% of teens said they had ever had sex. That was the sharpest drop ever recorded by the survey.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Thursday released reports analyzing the latest findings from the survey that looks into risky youth behaviors, including smoking, drinking, having sex and carrying guns.

More than 17,000 students at 152 public and private high schools responded to the 2021 survey. Participation was voluntary and required parental permission, but responses were anonymous.

The CDC also noted declines in students who said they were currently having sex or who'd had at least

four sex partners.

The declines clearly had a lot to do with the pandemic that kept kids isolated at home for long stretches and, often, under extended adult supervision, experts said.

Health officials generally like to see trends that result in fewer teen pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, but the decline in teen sex coincided with increased reports of social isolation and poor mental health.

"I think these together paint a picture of high school students building fewer strong interpersonal connections that can be protective of good mental health," said Laura Lindberg, a Rutgers University researcher who studies adolescent sexual behavior.

"This is an opportunity to say maybe teens are having too little sex," said Lindberg, who was not involved in the reports.

The CDC's Kathleen Ethier said the decline may be a good thing if it reflects more young people making healthy decisions to delay sex and reduce their number of partners.

"But what concerns me is this is potentially a reflection of social isolation," said Ethier, director of the CDC's division of adolescent and school health.

The 2023 survey, which will show if the decline was temporary, is currently underway.

Another finding: The proportion of high school kids who identify as heterosexual dropped to about 75%, down from about 89% as recently as 2015. Meanwhile, the share who identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual rose to 15%, up from 8% in 2015, when the survey began asking about sexual orientation.

There were also increases in the proportion who said "other" or that they were questioning or uncertain, the CDC found. The changes may be at least partly related to social changes that have reduced the stigma about identifying as not heterosexual, Lindberg said.

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## **DEA chief grilled over probe into no-bid contracts, hiring**

By JOSHUA GOODMAN and JIM MUSTIAN Associated Press

Lawmakers grilled U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration chief Anne Milgram on Thursday over millions of dollars in no-bid contracts that are the subject of a watchdog probe into whether the agency improperly hired some of her past associates.

Milgram faced a barrage of criticisms from mostly Republican members of the House Appropriations Committee over an Associated Press investigation that the DEA spent \$4.7 million on "strategic planning and communication" and other no-bid contracts to hire people Milgram knew from her days as New Jersey's attorney general and as a New York University law professor — at costs far exceeding pay for government officials.

"Everyone is afforded the presumption of innocence until proven guilty. But these reports are pretty strong," said Rep. Andrew Clyde of Georgia.

Added Rep. Mike Garcia of California: "To make the assertion that you're doing this job well, or getting the job done, is frankly flagrant and offensive. I don't think you're doing a good job."

Milgram said she welcomes the scrutiny from the Justice Department's Office of Inspector General on some sole-source contracts signed since she took over the DEA nearly two years ago. But she refused to address the allegations in the AP report, or whether she was a target of the watchdog probe.

"The inspector general is conducting an administrative review into some DEA contracts, which I welcome, and I'm not going to step in front of the inspector general or speak more about it while that review is continuing," she said.

"Does that mean you're taking the Fifth?" replied Clyde.

"No sir," she answered.

Among the contracts being scrutinized by the Inspector General is \$1.4 million to a Washington law firm for a recent review of the DEA's scandal-plagued foreign operations that was widely criticized for giving



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 74 of 90

short shrift to agent misconduct and how to prevent it. That review was co-authored by Boyd Johnson, former right-hand man to one of Milgram's closest friends, Preet Bharara, when he was U.S. Attorney in Manhattan. Bharara himself landed at the firm, WilmerHale, even as the review was being conducted.

Milgram, questioned by Clyde about "very disturbing" allegations that run counter to the DEA's mission, said she only met Johnson after being nominated by the White House to lead the DEA.

She also acknowledged working in New Jersey with Jose Cordero, who within three weeks of Milgram's confirmation by the Senate was awarded with what has become a nearly \$400,000 no-bid contract to conduct data analysis of crime stats.

"Mr. Cordero worked with me previously on violence reduction," she said.

Milgram came to Capitol Hill seeking congressional support for a nearly 4% budget increase to tackle a worsening fentanyl crisis that led to more than 107,000 overdose deaths last year.

She faced criticism over the Biden administration's refusal to confront China and Mexico over their role in the fentanyl crisis, as well as how she is handling a string of scandals by agents in the field.

Among the highest profile is the arrest of José Irizarry, a disgraced agent now serving a 12-year federal prison sentence after confessing to laundering money for Colombian drug cartels and skimming millions from asset seizures and informants to fund an international joyride of fine dining, parties and prostitutes.

Milgram said she has overseen a series of changes in the DEA's internal disciplinary process — a departure from past administrations.

"What I'm most interested in is, how do we build the correct piping moving forward?" she said. "How do we go from a system where we used to be tracking the use of money that we do for our money laundering investigations ... to now where we have a real-time system that our entire inspections division can see every day?" \_\_\_\_\_

Goodman reported from Miami, Mustian reported from New York

## Zoonomia: Genetic research reveals all we share with animals

By LAURA UNGAR AP Science Writer

By comparing the genetic blueprints of an array of animals, scientists are gaining new insights into our own species and all we share with other creatures.

One of the most striking revelations is that certain passages in the instructions for life have persisted across evolutionary time, representing a through line that binds all mammals — including us.

The findings come from the Zoonomia Project, an international effort that offers clues about human traits and diseases, animal abilities like hibernation and even the genetics behind a sled dog named Balto who helped save lives a century ago.

Researchers shared some of their discoveries in 11 papers published Thursday in the journal Science.

David O'Connor, who studies primate genetics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, said the studies tackle deep questions.

"It's just the wonder of biology, how we are so similar and dissimilar to all the things around us," said O'Connor, who wasn't involved in the research. "It's the sort of thing that reminds me why it's cool to be a biologist."

The Zoonomia team, led by Elinor Karlsson and Kerstin Lindblad-Toh at the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, looked at 240 species of mammals, from bats to bison. They sequenced and compared their genomes — the instructions organisms need to develop and grow.

They found that certain regions of these genomes have stayed the same across all mammal species over millions of years of evolution.

One study found that at least 10% of the human genome is largely unchanged across species. Many of these regions occur outside the 1% of genes that give rise to proteins that control the activity of cells, the main purpose of DNA.

Researchers theorized that long-preserved regions probably serve a purpose and are likely what they call "regulatory elements" containing instructions about where, when and how much protein is produced.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 75 of 90

Scientists identified more than 3 million of these in the human genome, about half of which were previously unknown.

Scientists also focused on change within the animal kingdom. When they aligned genetic sequences for species and compared them with their ancestors, Karlsson said, they discovered that some species saw a lot of changes in relatively short periods of time. This showed how they were adapting to their environments.

"One of the really cool things about mammals is that at this point in time, they've basically adapted to survive in nearly every single ecosystem on Earth," Karlsson said.

One group of scientists looked for genes that humans don't have but other mammals do.

Instead of focusing on new genes that might create uniquely human traits, "we kind of flipped that on its head," said Steven Reilly, a genetics researcher at Yale University.

"Losing pieces of DNA can actually generate new features," Reilly said.

For example, he said, a tiny DNA deletion between chimps and humans caused a cascade of changes in gene expression that may be one of the causes of prolonged brain development in humans.

Another study focused on the fitness of one well-known animal: Balto.

Scientists sequenced the genome of the sled dog, who led a team of dogs carrying a lifesaving diphtheria serum to Nome, Alaska, in 1925. His story was made into a 1995 animated feature film and a statue of the pup stands in New York's Central Park.

By comparing Balto's genes to those of other dogs, researchers found he was more genetically diverse than modern breeds and may have carried genetic variants that helped him survive harsh conditions. One of the authors, researcher Katherine Moon of the University of California, Santa Cruz, said Balto "gives us this guide through comparative genomics," showing how genetics can shape individuals.

O'Connor said he expects Zoonomia to yield even more insights in the future.

"To have these tools and to have the sort of audacity to ask these big questions" helps scientists and others "learn more about life around us," he said.

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## World powers pull their citizens as violence roils Sudan

By SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Leila Oulkebous' research for her doctorate from one of France's top universities was going well when the explosions started.

Oulkebous had decided to focus her field work on Sudan when the country exploded into violence.

The chiefs of the country's army and its rival Rapid Support Forces rose to power after a popular uprising in 2019 prompted them to remove longtime autocratic ruler Omar al-Bashir. They started fighting this month amid tensions over a new plan to re-introduce civilian rule.

The bombing shook the house where Oulkebous was living in the capital, Khartoum, investigating the effects of dams on rivers that cross borders.

"We were hiding all the time under the bed," she said Wednesday at Paris' Charles de Gaulle airport as hundreds of people arrived in harrowing evacuations. World powers were rescuing people from Sudan on planes and warships in operations prompted by the eruption of the fighting that sent thousands of foreigners and many more Sudanese people fleeing for safety.

A French frigate carrying hundreds of evacuees docked Wednesday morning in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia as part of broader efforts involving several warships, in addition to airlifts.

French military spokesman Col. Pierre Gaudilliere said France evacuated more than 500 civilians from 40 nations by plane over the weekend after securing the airbase north of Khartoum Saturday, using its airbase in neighbouring Djibouti for the airlift.

Gaudilliere said the French military was the first to land, and organized the flow of its own and other nations' planes.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 76 of 90

"You still had airstrikes as the operation was going on, crossfire in the streets, artillery fire, so it was and still is very intense fighting," Gaudilliere said. The French military had personnel on the ground to assess the situation during the operation, he said.

Several nations, including Japan, thanked France for rescuing their citizens.

Some other countries quickly joined evacuation efforts.

Czech Foreign Minister Jan Lipavsky said Wednesday three nationals have been evacuated with help from Germany, and his country is now working with Turkey to help evacuate two other citizens.

Greek national Christos Dedes, who was in Sudan for work, said he and his colleagues managed to leave their Khartoum hotel Tuesday via the Portuguese embassy, which sent a car to drive them to the airbase where there were Italian, French and German soldiers.

"We just happened to leave with the Italians, on a transport plane," he said on Greek TV channel Mega Wednesday, after he arrived in Athens.

From their Khartoum hotel, he said, they could see that "every day the battles were heavier. Both (sides) were using heavy weapons." He said they would hear explosions at night, and see bodies in the street.

More than 1,000 people from 58 countries were to arrive Wednesday by ship to the port of Jeddah in Saudi Arabia on Wednesday, including many on the French warship Lorraine.

Saudi Arabia on Saturday organized the first evacuation convoy by land, via cars and buses bringing people to Port Sudan, where a navy ship took them to Jeddah.

The French foreign affairs ministry said a flight carrying 184 French nationals and their families and about 20 other nationals returned from Djibouti and landed in Paris Wednesday morning.

Among them was Oulkebous, a Moroccan PhD student at Bordeaux Montaigne University.

"The feeling I had since the first day of fighting was I felt really paralysed, I didn't know what to do, I didn't know how to get out, the airport was closed, we could not leave," she said, describing "the explosions, the smoke, so really, I didn't have the time to fully realise what was going on."

A Royal Air Maroc plane arrived at Casablanca's Mohammed V airport on Wednesday, carrying 136 Moroccan nationals evacuated from Sudan.

In contrast with France and some other nations, the U.S. and Britain didn't evacuate non-diplomats at first.

The British government has come under growing criticism for its failure to airlift civilians. On Tuesday, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak defended the government's approach, saying diplomats had been evacuated first "because they were being targeted."

The British government since said that 301 people have been evacuated on four U.K. flights from Sudan over the past 24 hours, and four more are scheduled Wednesday. Britain intends to keep running the flights for as long as possible. In addition, "rapid deployment teams" of U.K. officials are in Port Sudan assessing potential for a seaborne evacuation.

The Foreign Office says U.K. passport-holders are eligible, "and priority is given to family groups with children and/or the elderly or individuals with medical conditions."

Officials have said there are as many as 4,000 British citizens in Sudan, 2,000 of whom have registered for potential evacuation.

The White House said Monday the U.S. is helping from afar as thousands of Americans left behind in Sudan seek to escape fighting in the east African nation, after the U.S. Embassy evacuated all of its diplomatic personnel over the weekend and shut down.

The Biden administration is considering several options for assisting private American citizens in getting out of Sudan.

Two U.S. officials said one option being considered would be to send U.S. Navy vessels in, or en route to, the Red Sea to dock at Port Sudan and take Americans to Jeddah or another location. The officials said this would depend on the security situation and whether it was deemed safe for the ships to dock.

A U.S. official said the military has developed other options for getting Americans, including using an airfield that some European countries have used to fly out citizens. To date, it has not been told to do that, the official said.

The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity in order to discuss sensitive matters.

Karel Janicek in Prague, Jill Lawless in London, Elena Becatoros in Athens, Tarik El-Barakah in Rabat, Matt Lee and Tara Copp in Washington contributed to the story.

This story was first published on April 26, 2023. It was updated on April 27, 2023 to make clear that Oulkebous' decision to focus her research on Sudan was not related to the civil war in Ethiopia.

## Earth in hot water? Worries over sudden ocean warming spike

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

The world's oceans have suddenly spiked much hotter and well above record levels in the last few weeks, with scientists trying to figure out what it means and whether it forecasts a surge in atmospheric warming.

Some researchers think the jump in sea surface temperatures stems from a brewing and possibly strong natural El Nino warming weather condition plus a rebound from three years of a cooling La Nina, all on top of steady global warming that is heating deeper water below. If that's the case, they said, record-breaking ocean temperatures this month could be the first in many heat records to shatter.

From early March to this week, the global average ocean sea surface temperature jumped nearly two-tenths of a degree Celsius (0.36 degree Fahrenheit), according to the University of Maine's Climate Re-analyzer, which climate scientists use and trust. That may sound small, but for the average of the world's oceans — which is 71% of Earth's area — to rise so much in that short a time, "that's huge," said University of Colorado climate scientist Kris Karnauskas. "That's an incredible departure from what was already a warm state to begin with."

Climate scientists have been talking about the warming on social media and amongst themselves. Some, like University of Pennsylvania's Michael Mann, quickly dismiss concerns by saying it is merely a growing El Nino on top of a steady human-caused warming increase.

It has warmed especially off the coast of Peru and Ecuador, where before the 1980s most El Ninos began. El Nino is the natural warming of parts of the equatorial Pacific that changes weather worldwide and spikes global temperatures. Until last month, the world has been in the flip side, a cooling called La Nina, that has been unusually strong and long, lasting three years and causing extreme weather.

Other climate scientists, including National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration oceanographer Gregory C. Johnson, say it doesn't appear to be just El Nino. There are several marine heat waves or ocean warming spots that don't fit an El Nino pattern, such as those in the northern Pacific near Alaska and off the coast of Spain, he said.

"This is an unusual pattern. This is an extreme event at a global scale" in areas that don't fit with merely an El Nino, said Princeton University climate scientist Gabe Vecchi. "That is a huge, huge signal. I think it's going to take some level of effort to understand it."

The University of Colorado's Karnauskas took global sea surface temperature anomalies over the past several weeks and subtracted the average temperature anomalies from earlier in the year to see where the sudden burst of warming is highest. He found a long stretch across the equator from South America to Africa, including both the Pacific and Indian oceans, responsible for much of the global temperature spike.

That area warmed four-tenths of a degree Celsius in just 10 to 14 days, which is highly unusual, Karnauskas said.

Part of that area is clearly a brewing El Nino, which scientists may confirm in the next couple months and they can see it gathering strength, Karnauskas said. But the area in the Indian Ocean is different and could be a coincidental independent increase or somehow connected to what may be a big El Nino, he said.

"We're already starting at such an elevated background state, a baseline of really warm global ocean temperatures, including in the tropical Pacific and Indian Ocean. And suddenly you add on a developing El Nino and now we're like off the chart," Karnauskas said.

It's been about seven years since the last El Nino, and it was a whopper. The world has warmed in that seven years, especially the deeper ocean, which absorbs by far most of the heat energy from greenhouse



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 78 of 90

gases, said Sarah Purkey, an oceanographer at the Scripps Institution for Oceanography. The ocean heat content, which measures the energy stored by the deep ocean, each year sets new record highs regardless of what's happening on the surface.

Since that last El Nino, the global heat ocean content has increased .04 degrees Celsius (.07 degrees Fahrenheit), which may not sound like a lot but "it's actually a tremendous amount of energy," Purkey said. It's about 30 to 40 zettajoules of heat, which is the energy equivalent of hundreds of millions of atomic bombs the size that leveled Hiroshima, she said.

On top of that warming deep ocean, the world had unusual cooling on the surface from La Nina for three years that sort of acted like a lid on a warming pot, scientists said. That lid is off.

"La Nina's temporary grip on rising global temperatures has been released," NOAA oceanographer Mike McPhaden said in an email. "One result is that March 2023 was the second highest March on record for global mean surface temperatures."

If El Nino makes its heavily forecasted appearance later this year "what we are seeing now is just a prelude to more records that are in the pipeline," McPhaden wrote.

Karnauskas said what's likely to happen will be an "acceleration" of warming after the heat has been hidden for a few years.

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Follow Seth Borenstein on Twitter at @borenbears

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## Tucker Carlson speaks out for 1st time after Fox News firing

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Tucker Carlson emerged Wednesday, two days after Fox News fired him, with a two-minute, campaign-style monologue that didn't address why he suddenly became unemployed.

He posted a video on Twitter shortly after 8 p.m. Eastern, the time his Fox show used to begin, that talked about a lack of honest political debate in the media.

Carlson said one of the things he noticed, "when you step away from the noise for a few days," is how nice some people are, and how hilarious some are.

"The other thing you notice when you take a little time off is how unbelievably stupid most of the debates you see on television are," he said. "They're completely irrelevant. They mean nothing. In five years we won't even remember we heard them. Trust me, as somebody who participated."

Fox fired its most popular personality on Monday without explanation, less than a week after settling a lawsuit concerning the spread of lies about the 2020 presidential election.

The mystery about why Fox Corp. leadership, Rupert Murdoch and his son Lachlan, decided to suddenly dismiss Carlson lingered. The company has not explained it, although some media reports Wednesday centered on material uncovered during Dominion Voting Systems' lawsuit but redacted from court papers.

Private messages sent by Carlson with "highly offensive and crude remarks" were a "catalyst" in Fox's decision to cut him loose, according to The New York Times.

Both The Wall Street Journal and The Washington Post said one redacted message included a slur against a senior Fox executive. Each of the reports relied on sources that were not identified.

Some of the Dominion evidence that was publicly revealed showed some offensive remarks by Carlson, including use of a vulgarity to refer to Sidney Powell, the Trump supporter who was pushing bogus election conspiracy theories on Fox and elsewhere.

A Fox News representative did not comment on the reports or Carlson's reemergence, instead referring to Monday's statement where the company said, "we thank him for his service."

Carlson dressed in a suit and tie for his Twitter message. While he didn't mention Fox, it was reminiscent of the monologues he delivered on the network for the last six years, talking about "the people in charge" hurting the country. Debates on big topics like war, civil liberties, emerging science, demographic change and corporate power are not permitted by corporate media or political parties, he said.

"Where can you still find Americans saying true things?" he said. "There aren't many places left but there are some and that's enough. As long as you can hear the words, there is hope. See you soon."

## Turkey's Erdogan appears via video link after health scare

By SUZAN FRASER and FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan inaugurated a nuclear power plant via video Thursday in his first public appearance since falling ill on live TV and canceling campaign stops, as he sought to dispel concerns about his health weeks before a crucial election.

The 69-year-old leader looked pale sitting behind a desk surrounded by Cabinet members, aides and political allies to preside at the event marking the delivery of the first fuel to the Russian-built Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant in southern Turkey.

Erdogan, who has ruled Turkey for two decades, canceled election rallies Wednesday and Thursday after suffering what the health minister described as a gastrointestinal infection during a TV interview on Tuesday.

Turkish officials denied online rumors that Erdogan, who underwent intestinal surgery in 2011, had suffered a serious illness and was hospitalized. "We categorically reject such baseless claims regarding President (Erdogan's) health," his communications director, Fahrettin Altun tweeted.

Dr. Fahrettin Koca, the health minister, said Erdogan was improving.

"I was with him this morning. His health is fine," Koca said Thursday. "The effect of his gastrointestinal infection has decreased. He will continue his schedule."

Erdogan, seeking a third term as president, has been campaigning hard as he faces an especially strong challenge in the May 14 election, attending several events per day. The latest opinion polls showed a slight lead for Erdogan's main challenger, center-left opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu, who is backed by the Nation Alliance, a grouping of six political parties.

Kilicdaroglu and other members of the Alliance have expressed their wishes for Erdogan's speedy recovery.

In the video, Erdogan boasted that he was "proud to be making the move that will place Turkey among the nuclear power countries of the world."

Russian President Vladimir Putin also participated by video at the ceremony. He described the plant the "biggest project in the history of Turkish-Russian ties."

With Thursday's events, the Akkuyu plant officially became Turkey's first nuclear power facility even though construction is continuing. It is expected to produce about 10% of Turkey's electricity needs once completed.

The plant, which is being built by Russia's state nuclear energy company, Rosatom, is located 338 kilometers (about 210 miles) west of the epicenter of February's devastating earthquake that killed more than 50,000 people.

The facility was not damaged and is being designed to endure powerful quakes. Still, its location, on the edge of a major seismic fault line, has raised concerns, especially in the nearby island nation of Cyprus.

"We don't forget the thousands of victims from the 7.8 magnitude earthquake on Feb. 6, 2023," said a statement from the Cyprus Anti-Nuclear Platform, a group of dozens of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot organizations. "For years we have stood against this project which can result in grave consequences to the environment and to the security of the entire eastern Mediterranean."

The ceremony was the latest in a series of infrastructure and defense projects that Erdogan has undertaken to try to boost support in the election. Last week, he marked the first delivery of natural gas discovered in the Black Sea and announced plans to provide free natural gas for households for a month.

Erdogan was prime minister from 2003 to 2014 and has been president since then. He has been criticized for his increasingly authoritarian rule and handling of the economy and rampant inflation in recent years,

as well as the earthquake.

Also on Thursday, about 3.4 million Turkish citizens living abroad began voting for president and seats in parliament. The biggest contingents include 400,000 Turks in France and 1.5 million in Germany who can cast ballots until May 9. If no candidate wins outright and a runoff is needed on May 28, overseas balloting would take place May 20-24.

In Berlin, one voter who identified herself only as Fatma said, "Erdogan is strong. We are behind him."

Those comments were echoed by 39-year-old Ozlem Dinc in Paris, where up to 300 people lined up to vote outside the Turkish General Consulate in the suburb of Boulogne-Billancourt.

"We hope from the bottom of our hearts that he will come to power again and that he will conquer the whole world," she said.

Others in Paris were critical of Erdogan and the changes he has made.

"We have to change the president first and then the system," said Sema Jude. "The presidential system in Turkey is not democratic and it is like a dictatorship."

Cinar Negatir agreed, though for other reasons. "Yes for a change of president, because economy is at 0%," he said. "That's why we vote to change the president."

The atmosphere outside the consulate was calm, with Erdogan supporters and opponents discussing their views in line.

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Jordans reported from Berlin. Kerstin Sopke in Berlin, Nicolas Garriga in Paris and Menelaos Hadjicostis in Nicosia, Cyprus, contributed.

## Louisville shooter's parents recount mental health struggle

NEW YORK (AP) — A man who opened fire at a Louisville bank, killing five co-workers, had confronted mental health problems over the last year but the situation appeared to be managed until just days before the shooting, his mother said.

In an interview with NBC's "Today" show that aired Thursday, Lisa Sturgeon said her 25-year-old son, Connor, called her April 4, six days before the shooting at the Old National Bank in the city's downtown. He said a panic attack forced him to leave work, and he thought he should take time off for a while.

Lisa and Todd Sturgeon said their son's mental health struggle began a year earlier with panic attacks, anxiety and a suicide attempt, but he was seeing a psychiatrist and taking medication, TODAY reported.

Lisa Sturgeon said they had lunch the day after he called, and she set up an psychiatrist appointment and joined him there.

"We thought he was coming out of the crisis," Lisa Sturgeon said.

When the Sturgeons saw their son for the last time at a family gathering on Easter Sunday, a day before the attack, he was helping people find the last eggs in the egg hunt and joking, Todd Sturgeon said.

The next morning, Lisa Sturgeon said her son's roommate called saying Connor told him by phone: "I'm going to go in and shoot up Old National." She called 911 but her son was already at the bank.

Police said Connor Sturgeon bought the AR-15 assault-style rifle used in the attack at a local dealership on April 4, the same day that Lisa Sturgeon said he told her about the panic attack. He killed five coworkers while livestreaming before police fatally shot him.

The five bank employees killed in the shooting were Joshua Barrick, 40, a senior vice president; Deana Eckert, 57, an executive administrative officer; Tommy Elliott, 63, also a senior vice president; Juliana Farmer, 45, a loan analyst; and Jim Tutt Jr., 64, a commercial real estate market executive.

Eight others were injured, including a police officer who was shot in the head.

The Sturgeons expressed their sorrow.

"We are so sorry. We are heartbroken," she said. "We wish we could undo it, but we know we can't."

The Sturgeons said their son shouldn't have been able to buy the rifle because of his mental state. They have been told that their son, who was seeing two mental health professionals, was able to walk into the store and walk out with the weapon and ammunition in 40 minutes, Todd Sturgeon said.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 81 of 90

"If there had been a delay or something of that nature, that would have been helpful," Lisa Sturgeon said. Todd Sturgeon acknowledged that the issue is complicated, balancing protecting against the threat while being conscious of individual rights and liberties.

"We have really smart people in this country and there's no reason why we can't find a solution to this problem," he said.

While the families of four of the victims declined to comment, Barrick's family said in a statement to TODAY that the shooting "didn't have to happen."

"The fact that anyone can walk in and buy a semiautomatic weapon, its only purpose being to kill many in seconds, is simply wrong. Enough is enough. Inaction is not an option," the statement read. "We deserve to be safe in our communities — whether that be at the bank, the grocery store, our schools, or anywhere else."

## Florida Gov. DeSantis says Disney lawsuit is political

By MOSHE EDRI and TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis on Thursday shrugged off Disney's lawsuit against him as politically motivated, and said that it was time for the iconic company to stop enjoying favorable treatment in his state.

Disney sued DeSantis on Wednesday over the Republican's appointment of a board of supervisors in its self-governed theme park district, alleging the governor waged a "targeted campaign of government retaliation" after the company opposed a law critics call, "Don't Say Gay."

The legal filing is the latest salvo in a more than year-old feud between Disney and DeSantis that has engulfed the governor in criticism as he prepares to launch an expected 2024 presidential bid.

"They're upset because they're having to live by the same rules as everybody else. They don't want to pay the same taxes as everybody else and they want to be able to control things without proper oversight," DeSantis said during a visit to Israel. "The days of putting one company on a pedestal with no accountability are over in the state of Florida."

DeSantis was speaking on the third leg of an international trip meant to burnish his foreign policy credentials ahead of a potential campaign for the Republican presidential nomination as a key rival to former President Donald Trump.

DeSantis has dived headlong into the fray with Disney, a major driver of tourism and a font for employment in Florida, as business leaders and White House rivals have bashed his stance as a rejection of the small-government tenets of conservatism.

The fight began last year after Disney, in the face of significant pressure, publicly opposed a state law that bans classroom lessons on sexual orientation and gender identity in early grades, a policy critics call "Don't Say Gay."

DeSantis then took over Disney World's self-governing district and appointed a new board of supervisors to oversee municipal services in the sprawling theme parks. But before the new board came in, the company pushed through an 11th-hour agreement that stripped the new supervisors of much of their authority.

The Disney lawsuit asks a federal judge to void the governor's takeover of the theme park district, as well as the DeSantis oversight board's actions, on the grounds that they were violations of the company's free speech rights.

In a speech to a conference at Jerusalem's Museum of Tolerance, DeSantis also spelled out his Middle East policy, speaking of the importance of the U.S.-Israel alliance. He said Israel was the only authority that could protect freedom of worship for all in combustible Jerusalem and that the U.S. embassy was rightfully moved to the city by the Trump administration, despite opposition from Palestinians.

He repeated his opposition to the deal that aimed to rein in Iran's nuclear program, saying it empowered that country's rulers rather than held them back. The Iran nuclear deal passed under former President Barack Obama. His successor, Trump, revoked the U.S. agreement to it.

In a critique of President Joe Biden, DeSantis also said that the U.S. shouldn't interfere in the way that



Israel chooses to be governed. Biden voiced concerns last month about a contentious Israeli government plan to overhaul the country's judiciary.

DeSantis began his multi-country trip in Japan and then traveled to South Korea. After Israel, he heads to Britain.

Goldenberg reported from Tel Aviv, Israel.

## Foundation prints 3D prosthetics, gives them free in Uruguay

By NAUSÍCAA PALOMEQUE Associated Press

MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay (AP) — The first thing 11-year-old Mia Rodríguez says she did with her new prosthetic hands was draw a picture of a kitten.

The Uruguayan girl, whose fingers never fully developed, put on the prosthetic hands and demonstrated the grasping movement she can now make.

"Now I can hold the pencil with one hand. Before, I had to do it with both hands because my fist wouldn't close," she said, while her mother Ana Van López watched excitedly.

Rodríguez received the prostheses from the Uruguayan Manos de Héroes foundation, which designs and prints hands and arms with 3D technology for children and adults across the South American country.

Since 2020, the foundation has provided more than 100 free prostheses, most of them for families in vulnerable situations.

Van López, 28, lives with her partner and their four children in an abandoned factory in Salinas, about 40 kilometers (25 miles) from Montevideo, and her income comes from informal work, such as selling firewood or pineapples. The family has a monthly income of about 8,000 pesos, or US\$200.

"I am very grateful, I thought my daughter was the only one with this problem. She had never come across someone like her in the hospital or on the street. It's very difficult for us," said Van López, who is trying to obtain a state disability benefit for the girl equivalent to a little more than 15,000 pesos a month, or \$380. In addition, they receive a similar amount of state support, she said.

Almost 16% of the Uruguayan population registers some level of disability, the majority mild, according to a 2011 census by the National Statistics Institute.

Rodríguez's prosthetic hands move with threads that are taut from the motion of her wrists. They are violet with pink, colors she says she chose because they go well together, and are decorated with unicorn decals. Other children prefer the colors of their favorite soccer club or superhero.

The prostheses can be mechanical or electronic. They are placed on the hands, forearm, elbow or shoulder, according to the needs of each person.

Designing a hand, printing it, and putting it together takes a couple of weeks, said Andrea Cukerman, an electrical engineer and founder of Manos de Héroes, or Hands of Heroes.

The prostheses are free and the foundation is financed with contributions from private companies and donations. In Europe, a prosthetic hand with much more advanced technology can cost as much as \$100,000, the foundation said.

On one of the walls of the foundation's office there are photos of children and adults who have received prostheses. The images show children striking poses with hands and arms in vibrant colors - orange, green - or like those of Spiderman.

"The idea is that they don't feel alone," Cukerman said.

The photos of adults are more subdued; most of their prostheses imitate the color and details of the skin.

Cukerman shows the prostheses she is currently printing: the arm of an adult who had an accident.

The day of the test, Rodríguez kept looking at everything in front of her, Cukerman recalled.

"When we showed her her hands, her face lit up, her big eyes, she hardly spoke," she said.

They explained how the prosthetic hands worked, what movement she had to make to open and close her fist, and warned that some adjustments might have to be made.

Rodríguez put her hands on and began to try movements.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 83 of 90

"It took a few seconds, they were perfect," said her mother.

## It's Met Gala time again — here's what we know so far

By JOCELYN NOVECK AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Last year, it took 275,000 bright pink roses to adorn the Metropolitan Museum of Art for the Met Gala, the biggest night in fashion and one of the biggest concentrations of star power anywhere.

It remains to be seen how the museum's Great Hall will be decorated come the first Monday in May, but one thing is not in question: those entering it will look spectacular. The theme centers on the late designer Karl Lagerfeld, who made an indelible mark on luxury fashion in his long career at Chanel, Fendi and elsewhere. It is a theme not without controversy — Lagerfeld was known for contentious remarks about everything from #MeToo to curvy bodies.

Want to know what to expect as the big day approaches? Not to worry. We've dusted off our annual guide for you here, with some key updates.

WHAT IS THE MET GALA ANYWAY?

It started in 1948 as a society midnight supper, and wasn't even at the Met.

Fast forward 70-plus years, and the Met Gala is something totally different, one of the most photographed events in the world for its head-spinning red carpet — though the carpet isn't always red.

We're talking Rihanna as a bejeweled pope. Zendaya as Cinderella with a light-up gown. Katy Perry as a chandelier morphing into a hamburger. Also: Beyoncé in her "naked dress." Billy Porter as an Egyptian sun god, carried on a litter by six shirtless men. Lady Gaga's 16-minute striptease. And, last year, host Blake Lively's Versace dress — a tribute to iconic New York architecture — that changed colors in front of our eyes.

Then there's Kim Kardashian, bringing commitment to a whole other level. One year, she wore a dress so tight, she admitted she had to take breathing lessons beforehand. Two years ago, she wore a dark bodysuit that covered even her face. And last year she truly stole the carpet, showing up in Marilyn Monroe's actual, rhinestone-studded "Happy Birthday, Mr. President" dress (borrowed from Ripley's Believe It or Not! museum), changing the minute she got inside to protect it. There was controversy later over suspicions, denied by Ripley's, that she'd caused some damage. But still — that was an entrance. (And, folks, she's coming back — she posted a photo from Paris with Lagerfeld's famous cat, Choupette, noting she was in the French capital scoping out possibilities for this year's attire.)

It's important to note that the party has a purpose — last year, the evening earned \$17.4 million for the Met's Costume Institute, a self-funding department. Yes, that's a heckuva lot for a gala. It also launches the annual spring exhibit that brings hundreds of thousands of visitors to the museum.

But it's the carpet itself that draws the world's eyes, with the guest list — strategically withheld until the last minute — featuring a collection of notables from movies, music, fashion, sports, politics and social media that arguably makes for the highest celebrity wattage-per-square-foot of any party in the world.

WHO'S HOSTING THIS YEAR?

This year's five hosts are drawn from television (Emmy-winning writer, actor and producer Michaela Coel); the movies (Oscar-winning actor Penélope Cruz, who has worked with Chanel for more than 20 years); sports (recently retired tennis superstar Roger Federer); and music (Grammy-winning songstress Dua Lipa). Finally there is Vogue's Anna Wintour (do we need to tell you she's in fashion?) running the whole thing as usual.

IS THERE ALWAYS A THEME?

Yes. As mentioned above, the theme is Karl Lagerfeld, and the exhibit, "Karl Lagerfeld: A Line of Beauty," looks at "the designer's stylistic vocabulary as expressed in aesthetic themes that appear time and again in his fashions from the 1950s to his final collection in 2019." Once again, it has been created by the Met's star curator, Andrew Bolton.

DOES EVERYONE FOLLOW THE THEME?

Not really. Some eschew it and just go for big and crazy. But expect some guests to carefully research the theme and come in perfect sync. It was hard to beat the carpet, for example, when the theme was

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 84 of 90

ried to “Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and the Catholic Imagination” and Rihanna came as the pope, Zendaya channeled Joan of Arc, and Perry navigated the crowd with a set of enormous angel wings. For Lagerfeld, the clothes may be a bit more, er, down to earth.

HOW MUCH DO I HAVE TO PAY FOR A MET GALA TICKET?

Wrong question. You cannot just buy a ticket. The right question is: If I were famous or powerful and got invited, how much would it cost?

OK, IF I WERE FAMOUS OR POWERFUL AND GOT INVITED, HOW MUCH WOULD IT COST?

Well, you might not pay yourself. Generally companies buy tables. A fashion label would then host its desired celebrities. This year, the cost has gone up, as it does every few years due to rising expenses: It’s now \$50,000 for an individual ticket, and tables start at \$300,000.

SO WHO GETS INVITED?

This year, there will be roughly 400 guests — similar to recent years but still lower than pre-pandemic highs of 500-600. Wintour and her team still get to approve every guest.

Trying to predict? Take out your pen and jot down some of your favorite names, the buzzier the better. Newly minted Oscar winners, for example, are a good bet. Broadway is a special favorite of Wintour’s. She also loves tennis — this is not fashionable Federer’s first Met Gala. Now, cross everyone off your list except the very top. At this gala, everybody’s A-list.

THAT MUST BE AN EXAGGERATION.

Not really. Ask Tina Fey. She went in 2010 and later described walking around trying to find somebody “normal” to sit and talk with. That ended up being Barbara Walters.

HOW CAN I WATCH?

You can watch the whole carpet unfold on a Vogue livestream. If you’re in New York, you can also join fans across the street, behind barricades, on Fifth Avenue or even further east on Madison. Timothée Chalamet has been known to greet fans.

DO WE KNOW WHO’S COMING? AND WHO ISN’T?

It’s secret. But reports slip out, often about who is not coming and why. You can count on various celebrity Chanel ambassadors showing up.

WHAT HAPPENS INSIDE?

Entering the museum, guests walk past what is usually an impossibly enormous flower arrangement in the lobby, with perhaps an orchestra playing nearby, and over to cocktails. Or, they head to view the exhibit. Cocktails are 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., but the most famous — or those who plan to make the biggest entrance — sometimes come (fashionably) later.

Around 8 p.m., guests are summoned to dinner — perhaps by a team of buglers (“Are they going to do that between every course?” actor Gary Oldman asked aloud one year).

IS IT FUN FOR EVERYONE?

Occasionally, someone says no. Fey, in a comic rant to David Letterman in 2015, described the gala as a “jerk parade” and said it included everyone you’d ever want to punch, if you had millions of arms. Amy Schumer left early in 2016 and said later she felt awkward and like it was “a punishment.”

SO THEY NEVER CAME BACK, RIGHT?

Wrong. Schumer was back in 2017. And then last year again.

Hey, this is the Met Gala.

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For more coverage of the 2023 Met Gala, visit <https://apnews.com/hub/met-gala>

## Take Our Kids to Work Day retools at 30 as work has changed

By THALIA BEATY Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — At Michigan State University, children of employees can spend Thursday seeing what it’s like to staff a dairy farm, work in sports or plant a tree at the school’s first in-person Take Our Kids to Work Day since the pandemic began.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 85 of 90

Some 1,500 employees and kids have registered and the university has invited staff to bring any child in their life to explore the campus.

"This is a way that people can see each other and meet their families, show off MSU, which is designated a family friendly university," said Jaimie Hutchison, director of the university's WorkLife Office. "It also allows people to see what others do across campus and have more pride in the institution that they work for."

MSU's plans recall the roots of Take Our Kids to Work Day, which celebrates its 30th anniversary on Thursday. This year, Take Our Daughters And Sons To Work Foundation, the nonprofit that promotes the day, hopes more organizations remind people of the importance of showing kids where their parents work. The foundation also hopes to get some help to ensure its survival.

The idea of Take Our Kids to Work Day, which the foundation marks annually on the third Thursday in April, seemed like part of a bygone era in recent years because, due to the pandemic, there weren't a lot of workplaces to take them.

Many parents were always taking their kids to work — or taking their work to wherever the kids were — in the dawn of the work-from-home era caused by COVID-19. And for parents who needed to head to a workplace, precautions over limiting the spread of the disease generally kept their kids away.

The foundation has had challenges of its own. It was led for years by Carolyn McKecuen, an entrepreneur, artist and MacArthur Fellow, who Dave Oliveria, the foundation's interim executive director, called the linchpin of the organization. She died in November.

"The board is trying to pick up the pieces to just keep it going," Oliveria said. The foundation lost money last year and currently has no employees.

This year, it is partnering with Junior Achievement USA to host a virtual event that will include a game-show format where panelists will answer questions about their careers.

In the coastal town of Brigantine, New Jersey, school superintendent Glenn Robbins is encouraging his staff to bring their children to school and for students to accompany their parents to their workplaces Thursday. He estimates that around 30% of students will participate.

"It makes them appreciate things that they might not see when they're stuck in a school building every day for five days a week," he said.

Over the years, educators and schools have complained that having some students taken out of class is more disruptive than helpful.

Thirty years ago, the head of the Ms. Foundation for Women, Marie Wilson, was inspired by research into the flagging self-esteem of girls when they reached adolescence to suggest that parents bring their daughters to work to expand their sense of possibility.

The foundation's cofounder, Gloria Steinem, mentioned the idea in an interview and in the spring of 1993, "Take Our Daughters to Work" day exploded into reality.

"It challenged the workplace to be responsive to the family needs in some ways, even making people aware that many people had children at home," said Teresa Younger, president and CEO of the Ms. Foundation for Women.

Women's participation in the work force has been largely flat since 2000, after picking up in the 1990s. About three-quarters of women aged 25 through 54, a group that filters out students and retirees, were in the workforce in 1993, a figure that reached nearly 78% this year, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The pandemic disproportionately drove women out of the workforce and they returned more slowly even after lockdown measures ended and available jobs again increased.

The name and date of the day has changed since it started, including boys officially in 2003, though many workplaces have used "kid" or "child" for years. Also, companies and workplaces are free to organize a day for employees to bring their children to work whenever and however they like, said Oliveria.

Around 1,000 kids have registered for this year's livestream, Junior Achievement US said. But it has always been difficult to measure participation, Oliveria said, but this year's participation likely represents a sharp decline from the 18 million kids that the organization said participated between 2005 and 2009.

"I don't see evidence of a million people, but I think that many companies can do their own thing and we wouldn't know," Oliveria said. "That's just a tough thing to put your arms around."



Younger said she understands the difficulty of continuing to meet the needs of the current moment. "That's the challenge of every legacy organization, is: how do we respond to the challenges of now and continue to integrate the work as it needs to be?" she asked.

Bringing a child to work is still a meaningful way to create a more economically and socially equitable society, she said. "It holds industry accountable for the opportunities that they provide for the next generation and the exposure they provide."

Associated Press coverage of philanthropy and nonprofits receives support through the AP's collaboration with The Conversation US, with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. The AP is solely responsible for this content. For all of AP's philanthropy coverage, visit <https://apnews.com/hub/philanthropy>.

## China welcomes Ya Ya the panda home after 20 years abroad

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Ya Ya the giant panda landed Thursday in Shanghai after departing from the Memphis Zoo in Tennessee, where she spent the past 20 years on loan.

The popular panda's trip was closely followed online.

People shared screenshots tracking Ya Ya's flight path into Shanghai. "Finally back at home!" cheered one user in response to the news. Others asked for a live broadcast of the arrival, which was reported by Chinese state media and claimed four of the top 10 trending topics on the social media platform Weibo. An image from Chinese broadcaster Phoenix News was particularly popular among Chinese social media users. It showed Ya Ya relieving herself before the trip and leaving the poop as a present for the zoo.

The zoo held a farewell party for Ya Ya earlier in April and said it would miss the panda. Her departure marks the end of a 20-year loan agreement with the Chinese Association of Zoological Gardens.

Ya Ya was born Aug. 3, 2000, in Beijing. She lived at the Memphis Zoo along with Le Le, a male panda who was born July 18, 1998. Le Le died in February.

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.

Earlier in 2023, after the 20-year loan agreement ended without renewal, allegations of neglect and abuse circulated on Chinese social media alongside pictures of Ya Ya with her fur discolored and patchy.

The Memphis Zoo said in a statement the panda's quality of life was not affected by her fur condition, noting that they reported monthly to the Chinese Association of Zoological Gardens about the panda's health. According to the statement, "Ya Ya also lives with a chronic skin and fur condition which is inherently related to her immune system and directly impacted by hormonal fluctuations."

A veterinarian accompanied Ya Ya to care for her health needs on the way to Shanghai, the zoo said.

## US adult cigarette smoking rate hits new all-time low

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. cigarette smoking dropped to another all-time low last year, with 1 in 9 adults saying they were current smokers, according to government survey data released Thursday. Meanwhile, electronic cigarette use rose, to about 1 in 17 adults.

The preliminary findings from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are based on survey responses from more than 27,000 adults.

Cigarette smoking is a risk factor for lung cancer, heart disease and stroke, and it's long been considered the leading cause of preventable death.

In the mid-1960s, 42% of U.S. adults were smokers. The rate has been gradually dropping for decades, due to cigarette taxes, tobacco product price hikes, smoking bans and changes in the social acceptability of lighting up in public.

Last year, the percentage of adult smokers dropped to about 11%, down from about 12.5% in 2020 and

2021. The survey findings sometimes are revised after further analysis, and CDC is expected to release final 2021 data soon.

E-cigarette use rose to nearly 6% last year, from about 4.5% the year before, according to survey data.

The rise in e-cigarette use concerns Dr. Jonathan Samet, dean of the Colorado School of Public Health. Nicotine addiction has its own health implications, including risk of high blood pressure and a narrowing of the arteries, according to the American Heart Association.

"I think that smoking will continue to ebb downwards, but whether the prevalence of nicotine addiction will drop, given the rise of electronic products, is not clear," said Samet, who has been a contributing author to U.S. Surgeon General reports on smoking and health for almost four decades.

Smoking and vaping rates are almost reversed for teens. Only about 2% of high school students were smoking traditional cigarettes last year, but about 14% were using e-cigarettes, according to other CDC data.

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## How will we know if the US economy is in a recession?

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The government's report Thursday that the economy grew at a 1.1% annual rate last quarter signaled that one of the most-anticipated recessions in recent U.S. history has yet to arrive. Many economists, though, still expect a recession to hit as soon as the current April-June quarter — or soon thereafter.

The economy's expansion in the first three months of the year was driven mostly by healthy consumer spending, yet shoppers turned more cautious toward the end of the quarter. Businesses also cut their spending on equipment, a trend that has continued.

The list of obstacles the economy faces keeps growing. The Federal Reserve has raised its benchmark interest rate nine times in the past year to the highest level in 17 years, thereby elevating the cost of borrowing for consumers and businesses. Inflation has eased slowly but steadily in response. Yet price increases are still persistently high.

And last month the collapse of two large banks resulted in a whole new threat: A pullback in lending by the financial system that could weaken growth even further. A report on business conditions by the Fed this month found that banks were tightening credit to preserve capital, which makes it harder for companies to borrow and expand. Fed economists are forecasting a "mild recession" for later this year.

Still, there are reasons to expect that a recession, if it does come, will prove to be a comparatively mild one. Many employers, having struggled to hire after huge layoffs during the pandemic, may decide to retain most of their workforces even in a shrinking economy.

Six months of economic decline are a long-held informal definition of a recession. Yet nothing is simple in a post-pandemic economy in which growth was negative in the first half of last year but the job market remained robust, with ultra-low unemployment and healthy levels of hiring.

The economy's direction has confounded the Fed's policymakers and many private economists ever since growth screeched to a halt in March 2020, when COVID-19 struck and 22 million Americans were suddenly thrown out of work.

Fed officials have made clear they're willing to tip the economy into a recession if necessary to defeat high inflation, and most economists believe them.

So what is the likelihood of a recession? Here are some questions and answers:

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### WHY DO MANY ECONOMISTS FORESEE A RECESSION?

They expect the Fed's aggressive rate hikes and high inflation to overwhelm consumers and businesses, forcing them to significantly slow their spending and investment. Businesses will likely also have to cut jobs, causing spending to fall further.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 88 of 90

Consumers have so far proved resilient in the face of higher rates and rising prices. Still, there are signs that their sturdiness is starting to crack.

Retail sales have dropped for two straight months. The Fed's so-called beige book, a collection of anecdotal reports from businesses around the country, shows that retailers are increasingly seeing consumers resist higher prices.

Credit card debt is also rising, evidence that Americans are having to borrow more to maintain their spending levels, a trend that probably isn't sustainable.

## WHAT WOULD BE SOME SIGNS THAT A RECESSION MIGHT HAVE BEGUN?

The clearest signal would be a steady rise in job losses and a surge in unemployment. Claudia Sahm, an economist and former Fed staff member, has noted that since World War II, an increase in the unemployment rate of a half-percentage point over several months has always signaled the start of a recession.

Many economists monitor the number of people who seek unemployment benefits each week, a gauge that indicates whether layoffs are worsening. Weekly applications for jobless aid have been creeping higher as a range of companies, from Facebook's parent company Meta to the industrial conglomerate 3M to the ride-hailing company Lyft, have announced layoffs.

Still, employers added a solid 236,000 jobs in March, and the unemployment rate slipped to 3.5%, near a half-century low, from 3.6%.

## ANY OTHER SIGNALS TO WATCH FOR?

Economists monitor changes in the interest payments, or yields, on different bonds for a recession signal known as an "inverted yield curve." This occurs when the yield on the 10-year Treasury falls below the yield on a short-term Treasury, like the three-month T-bill. That is unusual. Normally, longer-term bonds pay investors a richer yield in exchange for tying up their money for a longer period.

Inverted yield curves generally mean that investors foresee a recession that will compel the Fed to slash rates. Inverted curves often predate recessions. Still, it can take 18 to 24 months for a downturn to arrive after the yield curve inverts.

Ever since last July, the yield on the two-year Treasury note has exceeded the 10-year yield, suggesting that markets expect a recession soon. And the three-month yield has also risen far above the 10-year, an inversion that has an even better track record at predicting recessions.

## WHO DECIDES WHEN A RECESSION HAS STARTED?

Recessions are officially declared by the obscure-sounding National Bureau of Economic Research, a group of economists whose Business Cycle Dating Committee defines a recession as "a significant decline in economic activity that is spread across the economy and lasts more than a few months."

The committee considers trends in hiring. It also assesses many other data points, including gauges of income, employment, inflation-adjusted spending, retail sales and factory output. It assigns heavy weight to a measure of inflation-adjusted income that excludes government support payments like Social Security.

Yet the NBER typically doesn't declare a recession until well after one has begun, sometimes for up to a year.

## DOES HIGH INFLATION TYPICALLY LEAD TO A RECESSION?

Not always. Inflation reached 4.7% in 2006 — at that point the highest level in 15 years — without causing a downturn. (The 2008-2009 recession that followed was caused by the bursting of the housing bubble).

But when inflation gets as high as it did last year — it reached a 40-year peak of 9.1% in June — a recession becomes increasingly likely.

That's for two reasons: First, the Fed will sharply raise borrowing costs when inflation gets that high. Higher rates then drag down the economy as consumers become less able to afford homes, cars and other major purchases.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 89 of 90

High inflation also distorts the economy on its own. Consumer spending, adjusted for inflation, weakens. And businesses grow uncertain about the economic outlook. Many of them pull back on their expansion plans and stop hiring. This can lead to higher unemployment as some people choose to leave jobs and aren't replaced.

## Jobless claims fall again with labor market churning along

By MATT OTT AP Business Writer

Applications for unemployment benefits in the U.S. fell last week as the labor market continues to show strength despite some weakness in other parts of the economy.

The number of Americans filing for jobless claims for the week ending April 22 fell by 16,000 to 230,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday.

The four-week moving average of claims, which flattens some of the week-to-week volatility, fell by 6,000 to 236,000. At the start of the year, weekly claims were running around 200,000 and they have gradually moved higher.

Overall, 1.86 million people were collecting unemployment benefits the week that ended April 15, 3,000 fewer than the previous week.

The weekly claims numbers are a proxy for layoffs, and continue to show that American workers are enjoying unusual job security despite rising interest rates, economic uncertainty and fears of a looming recession.

The U.S. job market has remained healthy in spite of other weak spots in the broader economy. The unemployment rate came in at 3.5% last month, a tick above January's half-century low 3.4%. Employers added 236,000 jobs in March, down from 472,000 in January and 326,000 in February, but still strong by historic standards.

Federal Reserve policymakers worry that a tight job market puts upward pressure on wages — and on overall prices. They've raised their benchmark interest rate nine times in just over a year. Inflation has edged lower since hitting four-decade highs last year. But March's 5% year-over-year inflation rate remained well above the Fed's 2% target.

The Fed is hoping to achieve a so-called soft landing — lowering growth just enough to bring inflation under control without causing a recession. Economists are skeptical, with many expecting the U.S. to enter a recession later this year.

On Thursday, the Commerce Department reported that U.S. economy slowed sharply from January through March, decelerating to just a 1.1% annual pace as higher interest rates hammered the housing market and businesses reduced inventories.

## Today in History: April 28, Mussolini is executed

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, April 28, the 118th day of 2023. There are 247 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 28, 1994, former CIA official Aldrich Ames, who had passed U.S. secrets to the Soviet Union and then Russia, pleaded guilty to espionage and tax evasion, and was sentenced to life in prison without parole.

On this date:

In 1788, Maryland became the seventh state to ratify the Constitution of the United States.

In 1945, Italian dictator Benito Mussolini and his mistress, Clara Petacci, were executed by Italian partisans as they attempted to flee the country.

In 1947, a six-man expedition set out from Peru aboard a balsa wood raft named the Kon-Tiki on a 101-day journey across the Pacific Ocean to the Polynesian Islands.



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, April 28, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 294 ~ 90 of 90

In 1952, war with Japan officially ended as a treaty signed in San Francisco the year before took effect. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower resigned as Supreme Allied commander in Europe; he was succeeded by Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway.

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson ordered U.S. Marines to the Dominican Republic to protect American citizens and interests in the face of a civil war.

In 1967, heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali was stripped of his title after he refused to be inducted into the armed forces.

In 1980, President Jimmy Carter accepted the resignation of Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance, who had opposed the failed rescue mission aimed at freeing American hostages in Iran. (Vance was succeeded by Edmund Muskie.)

In 1986, the Soviet Union informed the world of the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl.

In 1990, the musical "A Chorus Line" closed after 6,137 performances on Broadway.

In 2001, a Russian rocket lifted off from Central Asia bearing the first space tourist, California businessman Dennis Tito, and two cosmonauts on a journey to the international space station.

In 2011, convicted sex offender Phillip Garrido and his wife, Nancy, pleaded guilty to kidnapping and raping a California girl, Jaycee Dugard, who was abducted in 1991 at the age of 11 and rescued 18 years later. (Phillip Garrido was sentenced to 431 years to life in prison; Nancy Garrido was sentenced to 36 years to life in prison.)

In 2015, urging Americans to "do some soul-searching," President Barack Obama expressed deep frustration over recurring Black deaths at the hands of police, rioters who responded with senseless violence and a society that would only "feign concern" without addressing the root causes.

Ten years ago: Mohammed Sohel Rana, the fugitive owner of an illegally constructed building in Bangladesh that collapsed and killed more than 1,100 people, was captured by a commando force as he tried to flee into India. A suspected gas explosion ripped off the side of a five-story residential building in France's Champagne country, killing three people and injuring more than a dozen others.

Five years ago: Alfie Evans, the 23-month-old terminally-ill British toddler who was at the center of a legal battle over his treatment, died at a British hospital; doctors had said further treatment for his degenerative brain condition was futile and that he should be allowed to die, but his parents fought for months to take him to the Vatican's children's hospital so he could be kept on life support. Jacob Cartwright, a trucker who was missing in a snow-covered area of Oregon for four days after his GPS device sent him up the wrong road, emerged from the remote and rugged region after walking 36 miles to safety. One year ago: Russia pounded targets from one end of Ukraine to the other, including Kyiv, bombarding the city while the head of the United Nations was visiting in the boldest attack on the capital since Moscow's forces retreated weeks earlier. The Jacksonville Jaguars took Georgia Pass rusher Travon Walker with the first pick in the NFL draft. Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Trevor Bauer was suspended for two full seasons without pay by Major League Baseball for violating the league's domestic violence and sexual assault policy, which he denied doing.

Today's Birthdays: Former Secretary of State James A. Baker III is 93. Actor-singer Ann-Margret is 82. Actor Paul Guilfoyle is 74. Former "Tonight Show" host Jay Leno is 73. Rock musician Chuck Leavell is 71. Actor Mary McDonnell is 71. Rock singer-musician Kim Gordon (Sonic Youth) is 70. Actor Nancy Lee Grahn is 67. Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan is 63. Rapper Too Short is 57. Actor Bridget Moynahan is 52. Actor Chris Young is 52. Rapper Big Gipp is 51. Actor Jorge Garcia is 50. Actor Elisabeth Rohm is 50. Actor Penelope Cruz is 49. Actor Nate Richert is 45. TV personalities Drew and Jonathan Scott are 45. Actor Jessica Alba is 42. Actor Harry Shum Jr. is 41. Actor Jenna Ushkowitz is 37. Actor Aleisha Allen is 32.