

Groton Daily Independent

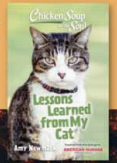
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"There are friends, there is family, and then there are friends that become family."

AUTHOR UNKNOWN



Groton Community Calendar

Saturday, April 29

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

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

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
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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The Bulletin

by Newsweek

JANUARY 24, 2023

World in Brief

- The Federal Reserve said its supervisors and Silicon Valley Bank's board are to blame for not identifying and addressing the bank's vulnerabilities before it collapsed last month. The Fed released a report revealing its concerns over SVB two years ago.
- At least 25 people, including five children, were killed when a Russian missile hit an apartment building in the Ukrainian city of Uman. Search efforts continue for survivors as officials warn the death toll will likely climb.
- Montana is now the latest state to ban gender-affirming medical care for transgender minors as Republican Gov. Greg Gianforte signed the bill into law. The legislation ultimately led to the censure of transgender lawmaker Zooey Zephyr, who told her colleagues it would leave "blood" on their hands.
- Colorado Governor Jared Polis has signed four gun control bills into law, pushed through by Democrats and filibustered by Republicans. The laws include raising the age to buy a firearm from 18 to 21 and enacting a three-day waiting period from purchase to receipt.
- The Environmental Protection Agency issued an emergency waiver allowing gas stations to sell gasoline blended with 15% ethanol during summer— a move that could mean lower gas prices. The blend is typically not sold during hot months but is being allowed due to "ongoing market supply issues" caused by the war in Ukraine.
- In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree allowing officials to deport Ukrainian residents who pose a "national security threat" from areas Russia has claimed to have annexed.

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 third round of the 2023 NFL Draft kicks 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 headline the event.

• The United Nations warned of a "serious risk" of escalating violence in West Darfur amid growing hostilities in Sudan. Meanwhile, about 300 U.S. citizens were evacuated from Khartoum by bus Friday, as calls for a ceasefire between Sudan's two warring factions again failed.

• The U.S. Army has grounded all aircraft not involved in "critical missions" after a collision between two helicopters in Alaska left three soldiers dead, marking the second mid-air crash in the past month. The order is in place until aviators complete training, army officials told CBS News.

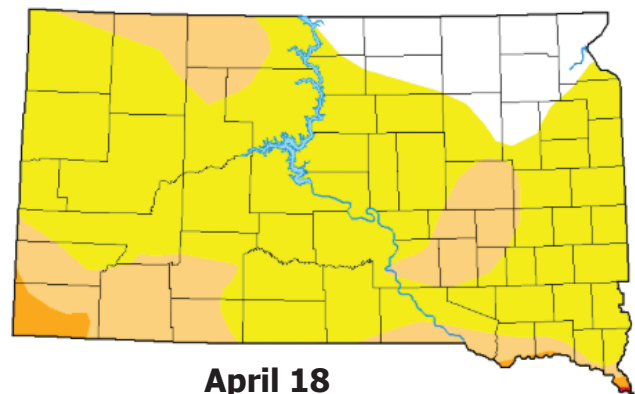
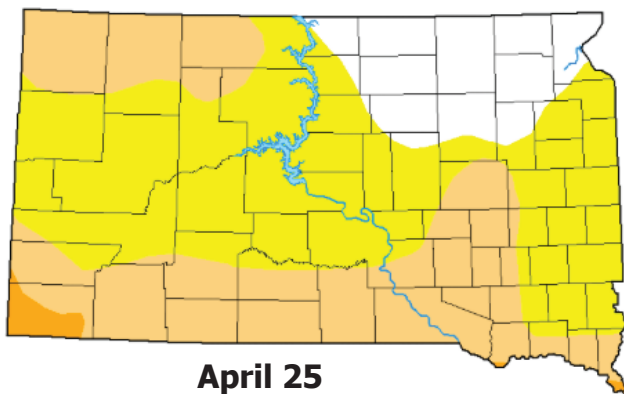
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Drought Classification



Drought Monitor



The general pattern observed during the past few weeks continued. Unusually deep snowpack was melting in the central and northern Dakotas, leading to some improvements there, including the removal of all moderate drought (D1) from northern North Dakota.

In the Great Plains from central and western South Dakota southward through Kansas, the continued lack of substantial rainfall led to intensification over a relatively large part of these areas. In particular, D3 expanded through most of central Nebraska, and lesser expansion of D3 and D4 reported in central Kansas. To the west, conditions remained generally unchanged in eastern parts of Wyoming and Colorado, with deterioration (to D2) limited to a small area in southeastern Wyoming. In the other area of extant dryness and drought in western Wyoming – adjacent to Utah and Idaho - some areas saw improved conditions, as did states to the north and west.

The Department of Agriculture reported 62 percent of Kansas winter wheat in poor or very poor condition, as was 42 percent of Nebraska winter wheat. Only 7 percent of Colorado winter wheat was in very poor condition, but almost one-third of the rest of the state's crop was in poor condition.

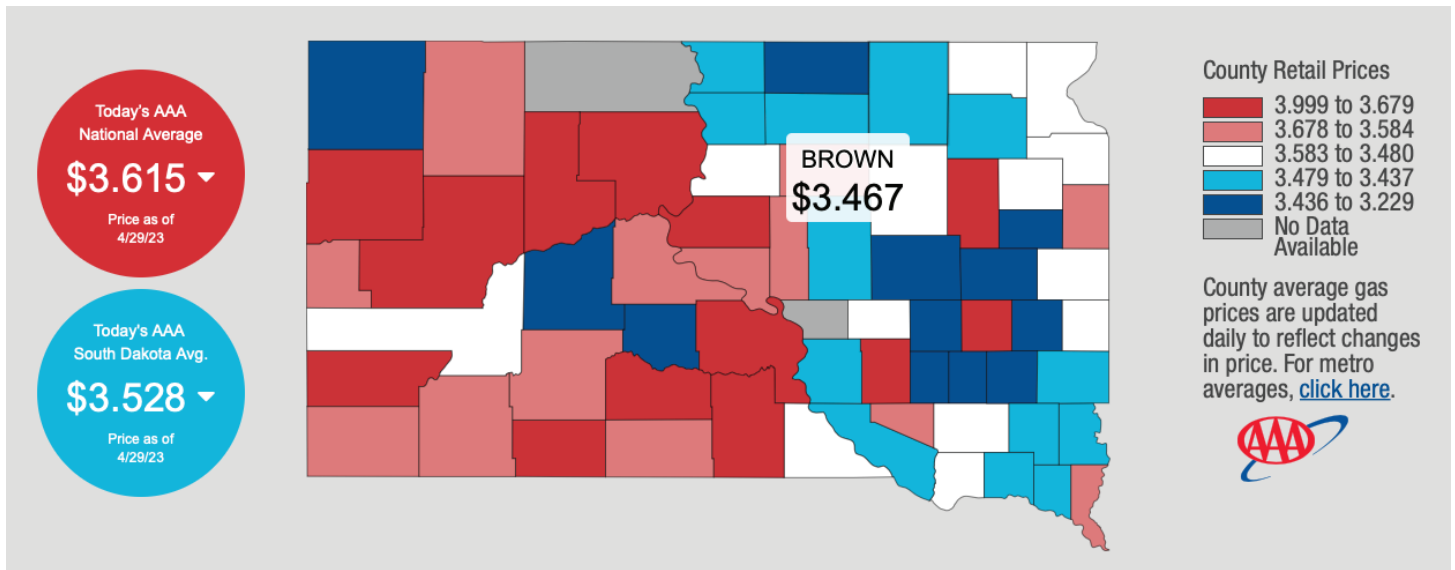
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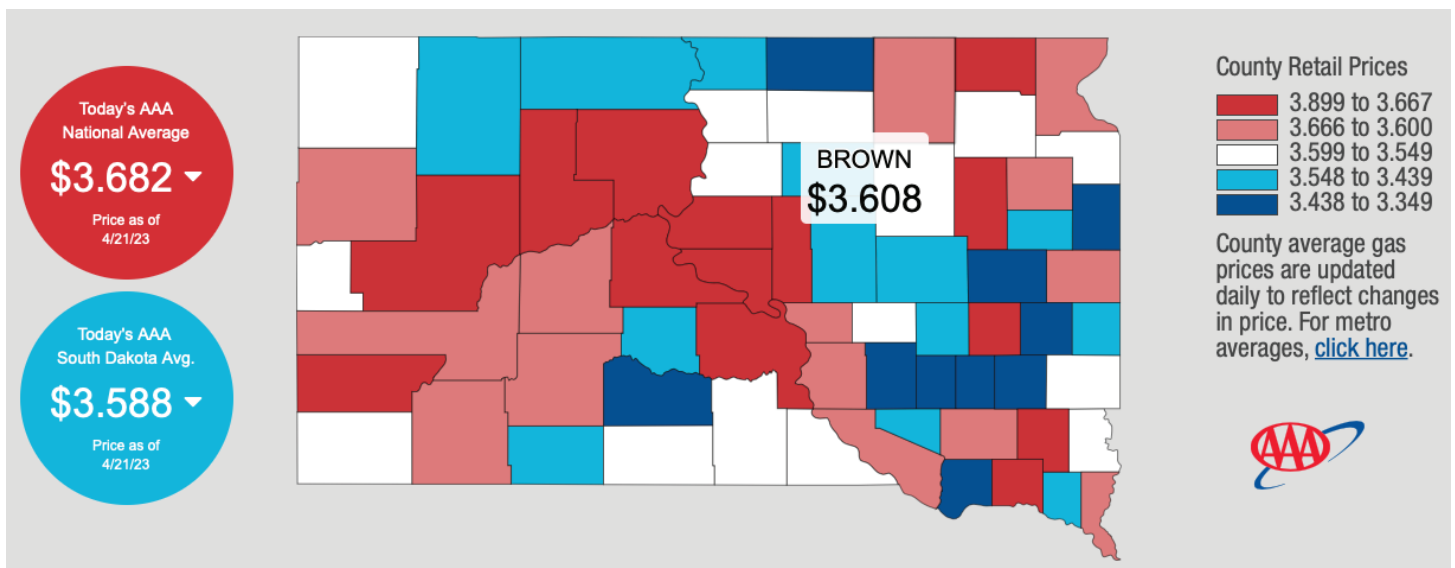
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.528	\$3.675	\$4.130	\$3.945
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.547	\$3.680	\$4.138	\$3.958
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.574	\$3.700	\$4.155	\$3.985
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.286	\$3.451	\$3.879	\$3.919
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.989	\$4.096	\$4.467	\$5.025

This Week



Two Weeks Ago



The Life of John "Bud" Knecht

Houghton, SD: The funeral service for John "Bud" Knecht will be 11:00 a.m. Wednesday, May 3, 2023 at St. John's Lutheran Church of Hecla, SD. Rev. Sara Sorensen will officiate the service. Spring interment will be in the Houghton Cemetery.

Visitation will be Tuesday, May 2, 2023 from 4-6:00 p.m. at the church, concluding with a 6:00 p.m. prayer service.

John "Bud" Raymond Knecht was born March 19, 1923 to John and Ellanora "Ella" (Bartholome) Knecht on the family farm near Houghton. He grew up and attended his early schooling in the Houghton area and graduated from Hecla High School in 1941.

Following graduation John began farming on the family farm with his dad and brother. The two generations worked together until their father's passing, then John and his brother, Lloyd, maintained their shares of the farm. John was a member and worked for the National Farmers Organization in Columbia and helped load and sort cows. He retired from farming in 1986.

On April 20, 1946 he married Ilene M. Olson in Houghton and they raised three daughters together. John was a clerk for the Shelby Township and he was a member of the First Congregational Church in Houghton until its closing.

Ilene passed away on April 2, 1991 and John remained living on the farm. As his health began to decline he went to Nano Nagle Village in Aberdeen in January 2017. In March 2023 he moved to Mother Joseph Manor in Aberdeen and remained there until the time of his death.

John enjoyed the many adventures that life brought him. The camping trips to Canada, the bus trips from coast to coast, and the fishing all year around at the local lakes, were some of his fondest times. He was a talented woodworker and could make anything imagined, whether it was a monkey swinging in the tree or a friendly farmer waving from the roadside. Those many projects earned their farm corner the name "Plywood Corner." After retiring from farming John would come into the local Houghton Café and would shake dice for coffee while visiting with friends. Throughout the years he looked forward to attending the Brown County Fair each summer. As he got older, he loved going for rides along the country roads.

John "Bud" passed away Tuesday, April 25, 2023 at Mother Joseph Manor in Aberdeen, at the age of 100. He is survived by his daughters, Vicki (Robert L.) Hehn, Linda (David) Elsen and Debra Knecht, all of Aberdeen; 8 grandchildren, 3 step-grandchildren, 15 great-grandchildren, 7 step-great-grandchildren, 3 great-great-grandchildren (with one on the way) and 4 step-great-great-grandchildren.

Preceding him in death were his wife, Ilene; his parents, John and Ella Knecht; 6 sisters and 3 brothers. Condolences may be directed to the family in care of Vicki Hehn – 37961 133rd St. – Aberdeen, SD 57401. An online guestbook and obituary is available at www.pricefuneralchapel.net.



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 29th.

Please place items in the appropriate pile.

RESIDENTIAL ONLY!!

Keep Metal, Tires, Paint, Batteries & Chemicals Separate

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



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

'Children are political targets': A family's struggle with SD's trans health care ban

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - FRIDAY APRIL 28, 2023 4:26 PM

Joey enjoys playing basketball and baseball. He's a sixth grader, and he wants to be an exotic animal vet when he grows up.

He likes to build with Legos and he loves science, but he's not a fan of math. He's teaching himself how to play the guitar, he plays trombone in the school band and he'll spend summer afternoons riding his bike around his small town and swimming at the pool with his friends.

To many, the 12-year-old is living the quintessential South Dakota childhood.

But Joey is one of the South Dakota children feeling targeted and attacked each year by the South Dakota Legislature. He's transgender.

Joey is surprisingly politically aware and conscious for a sixth grader. Although he "passes" as a typical pre-teen boy, he is not publicly out as a transgender person, and South Dakota Searchlight is not using his real name. Still, he and his family members are outspoken advocates for LGBTQ issues. He makes calls to state legislators, he writes cards, he attends rallies; but that's because he doesn't have a choice.

At least one bill a year has been introduced at the state level since 2015 – when he was 4 years old – targeting his rights and the rights of people who are like him.

The latest bill, which will become law on July 1, is a ban on gender-affirming health care for South Dakota minors. A provision in the bill allows children already receiving care to receive systematically reduced treatment until 2024.

It's frustrating for him, he says. He doesn't understand why he can't continue doing something that's helped him, and he feels powerless at times. Because even though he understands what's happening, he still had to attend class during the legislative session, waiting until the end of the school day to ask his mom, "What happened?"

After 13 years in the state – Joey's entire life – his family is planning to leave, said his mother, who requested anonymity to protect her job and her family's safety.

"This town has been an amazing, supportive place and community, and we always felt we could look past what was happening in Pierre – the partisan politics, the culture wars – because people were accepting here," she said. "But it's gotten worse at all levels."

Legislator: This is 'why we were sent to Pierre'

Those who oppose gender-affirming care say it's not appropriate for minors. Sen. Al Novstrup, R-Aberdeen, was a prime sponsor of the bill that banned such care. He said minors are not capable of making informed decisions about their own medical care and that treatments can have permanent physical and psychological effects.

He cited a lack of research on the impacts of treatment, specifically brain development, and the example of western countries such as Sweden, which has pulled back on gender-affirming care.

"The side of common sense says doing a transgender at age 12 is a trainwreck," Novstrup said. "It's a very, very bad decision. Probably the worst they'll make in their lifetime."

Rep. Bethany Soye, R-Sioux Falls, said she introduced the bill to protect children from "harmful and irreversible medical practices," which include puberty blockers, hormone therapy and surgery for minors.

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But medical experts say gender-affirming surgeries for minors are rare, and that drugs are only administered after years of therapy to analyze the condition of the child.

Once it's safe for the child, puberty blockers can be used to delay puberty, and hormone treatments can be used later on for teenagers. Both are more common than surgery, said Amanda Diehl, a physician for the Iris Clinic in Rapid City, which serves LGBTQ youth.

Such medications have been available in the United States for more than a decade and are backed by major organizations including the American Medical Association and the American Association of Pediatrics.

"When a patient starts puberty blockers, they're more at risk of being kicked out of the home, being beaten up at school or being fired from work," Diehl said. "We're making sure this is a safe and correct time for them. We're very, very meticulous that this is safe for them mentally and in their social, emotional and educational lives."

But Soye said the treatment can be damaging, especially if children choose to detransition in the future. She said one of the "chief responsibilities" of the government is to "protect the weak and vulnerable."

Novstrup calls the treatment child abuse, saying that "if doctors and parents can't make the right decision," the Legislature will.

"That's why we were sent to Pierre, to make those types of decisions," he said. "The Legislature can say no, you don't have that authority. We think it's a bad idea."

'He's a boy through and through'

On the western side of the state, Diehl estimates she has about 12 patients affected by the gender-affirming care ban. Joey's family said they know about 20 families on the east side of the state who are affected.

Multiple studies have shown that transgender youth are more likely to consider or attempt suicide than other children their age. However, they are less at risk for depression and suicidal behaviors when they're able to access gender-affirming care.

Diehl said one of her patients expressed suicidal thoughts the day after the ban was passed. Other patients have become more anxious and depressed since it was signed by Gov. Kristi Noem in February.

"You can't even quantify what it's like to be a parent with a child who says they want to kill themselves," said Diehl. "It might not be today, but you worry that it's tomorrow or next month or next year. You're always worried. It's unbelievable anticipatory grief. You're always wondering, are they OK today? Or are they just pretending?"

Although Joey's sex at birth was assigned as female, he's known since he could express himself that his gender is male. His parents thought he would simply be a tomboy, so they told him that "there are no boy or girl things, you can play with whatever you like."

"For a while he was like 'uh huh,' but then he was clear: 'That's not me. I am a boy and you're just not hearing me,'" his mother recalled.

Joey has identified as male since age 4, fully transitioned to male pronouns at 5 and began puberty blockers at 9, when he began showing signs of puberty. Now he's waiting to receive another implant of slow-release hormone blockers to further prevent the effects of female puberty. He plans to begin hormone therapy in the next few years and currently has no interest in surgery, though that'll be a decision he'll make as an adult, his mother said.

His friends and their parents accepted the transition in preschool. Since then, they've forgotten and see him as he is, his mother said. His grandparents also had questions, but have since supported him. After researching and working with medical professionals, both his mother and father were supportive.

"He hasn't really been targeted by his peers or classmates – just adults," she said. "You'd never know. If you just met him, he's a boy through and through."

Seeking care can cost over \$14,000 for one treatment

The new law has families across South Dakota scrambling to secure care for their children. Some Minnesota clinics have a year-long waiting list, and Colorado clinics are filled as well.

It's not just South Dakotans seeking care. Several other states, including North Dakota and Iowa, have

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banned the care as well. Nebraska is waiting for the governor's signature on the ban, and Montana and Wyoming are also considering a ban. That means "refuge" states like Minnesota and Colorado don't have enough doctors to meet demand.

Children seeking care have already gone through months, often years of counseling to determine if the treatment is needed. The process is slow, patient and careful, Joey's mother said. Receiving treatment earlier through medication means less invasive treatment later.

"If you have to wait until you're 18 to receive treatment, you're probably going to need surgical intervention, really invasive procedures – things you probably wouldn't need if you just had access to puberty blockers," she said.

The puberty blockers target sex hormones, including testosterone and estrogen, to ward off physical changes such as development of breasts or a more defined adam's apple. Essentially, Joey's mother describes blockers as a "pause button." If he stopped taking the medication, puberty would resume.

According to the Mayo Clinic, use of puberty blockers provides "time to determine if a child's gender identity is long lasting." If Joey continues with his transition, he would continue using hormone blockers and replacements for the rest of his life. If he doesn't have access to puberty blockers until he's 18, his likelihood of receiving surgery as an adult increases.

Joey's family is able to get into a clinic in Kansas City, which is two states away, since he was a patient there during his prior implant, when the care he needed wasn't available in South Dakota. Last month, they drove to Kansas City and back in one day for an appointment, fitting in appointments with the endocrinologist, nurses and counselors. They made it back in time for Joey's band concert that night.

But Kansas City is out-of-network. The implant cost \$14,000 out-of-pocket in 2019. Out-of-pocket costs for bloodwork and other appointments cost over \$400 each. The family is saving up to ensure they have enough money. The next puberty blocker will likely be the last one needed before Joey can start supplementing with testosterone with a new physician wherever the family moves.

And they're up against the clock. The Missouri Legislature is also considering a gender-affirming care ban for minors. Meanwhile, the state's attorney general put forward temporary emergency rules to ban the practice in the state. The rules do not apply to Joey, his mother said, because there are some exemptions for people already receiving care.

"When your kid is going through puberty, you don't have time to wait," she said. "It's a complicated and frustrating process."

She equates treatment to other instances of medical treatment for children, such as pediatric cancer. While gender dysphoria doesn't kill the same way cancer does, it can contribute to life-threatening mental illness.

"In making that decision with physicians, I won't have 100% of the information I want in order to make that decision. Some treatments can come with potential negative side effects," Joey's mother said. "But you look at the research, and you make the decision that's best for your kid. Why would they think parents would do anything else when it comes to trans kids?"

Regarding the possibility of Joey detransitioning when he's older, his mother said she'd rather have a son who changes his mind than not have one. And she wants to make sure he feels supported by his parents.

"These children are political targets," she said. "Our families are being used to score political points."

Even though the family invested over a decade into their community – including promotions at work and volunteering for local organizations – it's time to leave, Joey's mother said.

"Our votes feel like a waste. Legislators don't listen to us when we call," she said. "We're looking at leaving, but not because that's what we really want to do. We won't belong here with the way things are going, and we want to end up in a place where our kids will want to stay or come back to someday."

That's how things are going to go, Soye and Novstrup said. Soye added that she anticipated other families will move to South Dakota because of the ban. Novstrup said he'd "love everybody to stay in South Dakota."

"These are children of God, they're my brothers and sisters," he said. "But I can't change all of my rules to make South Dakota fit what you want to fit. I have to try to do what's best for the children of South Dakota."

Finding support: Transformation Project raises \$5,000

The Transformation Project, an advocacy group based in Sioux Falls, offers support for travel expenses, lodging or other costs associated with out-of-state travel through its South Dakota Trans Resilience Fund.

The group has already raised \$5,000. Susan Williams, executive director of the organization, hopes to raise \$50,000. Joey's family has not received support from the fund yet. There are also grants available to pay for care, Joey's mother said.

In Minnesota, the phone has been ringing for months from out-of-state people at OutFront Minnesota, an advocacy group based in Minneapolis. While its work has focused primarily on Minnesota state and local policy, its mission has extended beyond its border to support the "continuity of care," said Kat Rohn, executive director.

"Folks are weaponizing these policies against good science and medicine," she said. "This is new for people in terms of familiarity, but it isn't new in terms of medicine."

The organization's goal is to support people in states with bans to organize, live, work and build community in those states.

"The choice between access to care and living in the state that you know and love is heartbreaking, and we can't just sit by as folks are forced to make those choices," Rohn said. "LGBTQ+ folks will continue to be in those states; trans kids will be born in South Dakota who need support. The answer can't just be 'move to another state.'"

Joey's mother recognizes that. Every ally who shows up at a rally or parade or writes in to legislators has helped support Joey, boost his spirit and helped his family make it through, she said. Even if Pierre "isn't listening," those children notice when people show up for them.

But that's not enough to convince Joey's family to stay.

"I worry about those we leave behind. We definitely realize that South Dakota only gets worse if people don't stay and fight," Joey's mother said. "But fighting the good fight sometimes feels like you're slamming your head against the wall, and we just don't have time to wait."

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

Sioux Falls, like the state, turns down climate funding after Rapid City applies

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - APRIL 28, 2023 3:28 PM

Sioux Falls has decided not to seek federal grant money to reduce greenhouse gases and other air pollution, following Rapid City's decision to apply for the funding.

Meanwhile, South Dakota is one of four state governments that declined to participate in the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant program.

The program would have provided the state with \$3 million for planning and access to a \$4.6 billion fund for implementation. The other states that did not apply by the March 31 deadline are Florida, Iowa and Kentucky.

The program also includes \$1 million in planning grants for each of the nation's largest cities – including Rapid City and Sioux Falls – and access to the \$4.6 billion grant pool for implementation if municipalities applied by April 28.

Sioux Falls declines

"After much consideration on a short timeline, we have determined these federal dollars have numerous requirements that would ultimately take away the focus from the city's current and planned sustainability efforts," said Holly Meier, sustainability coordinator for the city of Sioux Falls, in a written statement.

That plan includes riparian buffers along the Big Sioux River watershed, electric vehicle implementation, and an LED street light conversion plan.

Environmental activists recently protested that plan outside of City Hall on Earth Day, pointing out that

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the latest draft shared on Feb. 23 walked back a number of its initially proclaimed goals.

Sioux Falls Mayor Paul TenHaken said in an opinion piece for The Dakota Scout, "While it's accurate that \$4.6 billion in additional federal money is expected to eventually be available for implementation grants across the country, we have no guarantee of what we may receive due to the competitive federal grant process. This would prevent us from being able to adequately plan for ongoing projects and programs."

Climate group reacts

Kara Hoving is a climate equity policy researcher and serves as communications coordinator at SoDak 350, a nonpartisan grassroots organization mobilizing South Dakotans for climate action. She said, "It goes without saying that we're pretty disappointed."

"What the mayor does not mention is that the city would have received technical assistance from the EPA for accessing other sources of funding beyond the \$4.6 billion pool," Hoving said. "I'm not certain what they are referencing when talking about 'requirements.' There were strong requirements for community engagement, but as far as I understand, those were the strongest requirements. And of course, reporting requirements after the fact."

Hoving said the grant program would have provided the resources to conduct analysis and understand the trade-offs of implementing different climate mitigation efforts.

"To complain about the cost of action and then not accept the millions of dollars being offered to implementing a solution makes us think the city isn't serious about tackling the challenge of climate change," Hoving said.

Rapid City applies

The decision by Sioux Falls not to apply for the grant is in contrast to Rapid City, which decided to apply for the funding. A summary sheet prepared for the Rapid City Council says the funds could be used for "staffing, contractors, planning meetings, collaboration among governments, assessments, supplies, stakeholder convenings, outreach and education for the public, studies, training, incidental costs," and more.

Jamie Toennies, grants division manager for the city of Rapid City, said in a written statement, "If awarded, the city will use the planning grant to work with community partners on determining the extent of our greenhouse gas emissions in the community and work on strategies to reduce those emissions. The city would use a corresponding implementation grant to fund those strategies. The city is already working closely with key community partners including the city's Sustainability Committee and South Dakota Mines."

The Climate Pollution Reduction Grant program is part of the Biden administration's efforts to combat climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The program is aimed at supporting state and local governments in their efforts to reduce air pollution and address climate change.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Since its original publication, this story has been updated with an additional comment from a Rapid City official.

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

Congressional Roundup: Applauding Biden for summertime E15

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - APRIL 28, 2023 3:27 PM

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the latest installment in a series of periodic updates on the activities of South Dakota's congressional delegation.

Sen. John Thune, R-South Dakota, applauded the Biden administration's Friday decision to allow the summertime sale of E15 fuel, which is gasoline blended with up to 15% ethanol.

"As I have repeatedly made clear to the Biden administration, biofuels are a common-sense, readily available energy solution that should be utilized to their full potential," Thune said in a written statement. "I'm glad the president listened to my repeated calls to extend E15 fuel sales through the summer."

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Gasoline sold in the U.S. is already blended with 10% ethanol. E15 has been prohibited in the summer due to concerns it could make smog worse.

The EPA said Friday, "As a result of the ongoing war in Ukraine" the agency "determined that extreme and unusual fuel supply circumstances exist and has granted a temporary waiver to help ensure that an adequate supply of gasoline is available." EPA added that its research "has shown no significant impact on evaporative emissions."

Broadband, IRS

Thune requested that the Government Accountability Office review the effectiveness of federal, state and local broadband programs following a recent report that found overlapping and fragmented federal efforts.

He also reintroduced a bill that would prevent the Internal Revenue Service from hiring new enforcement employees until some taxpayer service targets are met.

"The IRS has an abysmal track record when it comes to providing customer service to taxpayers," Thune said in a statement.

The legislation seeks to improve customer service and reduce backlogs by requiring the agency to focus on improving phone services and more efficient tax return processing. It would also prohibit the IRS from using enforcement funds from the Inflation Reduction Act to audit taxpayers with incomes less than \$400,000 at a greater rate than at the time of the act's passage.

Additionally, the bill requires quarterly reports on the status of taxpayer service metrics and targets.

Unions

Thune also introduced a bill alongside Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, which aims to limit the influence of labor unions in the workplace.

"Washington Democrats have long bowed to the demands of union bosses by prioritizing radical labor policies that harm small businesses and workers," Thune said in a statement.

Among other things, the bill would ensure workers' rights to secret-ballot union elections and require unions to obtain permission from each member to use their union dues for purposes other than collective bargaining.

Rounds shares IRS concerns

Sen. Mike Rounds, R-South Dakota, introduced the Securing Our Border Act, a bill that would redirect \$15 billion of funding passed by Democrats from the IRS to bolster security measures along the southern U.S. border.

Rounds said President Biden's administration will hire 87,000 new IRS agents who will conduct over a million audits per year.

"President Biden's priorities are out of whack," Rounds said in a statement.

The legislation aims to fund border inspections, border wall construction, and other technologies to enhance enforcement efforts, and provide retention bonuses for Border Patrol agents.

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

Biden proposal on transgender student athletes met with praise but also questions

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - APRIL 28, 2023 4:18 PM

WASHINGTON — Transgender legal scholars and advocates say they were relieved to see the Biden administration extend some protections for transgender students' sports participation at a time when bans are being enacted by multiple states.

But they say they remain cautious about the effect on high school and college sports.

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For two years, the U.S. Department of Education has held listening sessions and gone through tens of thousands of public comments that gave input on how to amend Title IX regulations on transgender athletes' competition in sports, from primary school to college.

The long-awaited — but complex — rule that the Biden administration announced on April 6 made it clear that states could not issue blanket bans on transgender students in sports without violating Title IX. The law, which applies to essentially all public schools, prohibits discrimination based on sex in any educational program.

That ban would invalidate the 21 state laws that bar transgender students from participating in sports that align with their gender identity. The most recent attempt is in Alabama, where the House passed a bill banning transgender athletes from competing in college sports.

But some trans advocates are concerned that for students in high school and at the college level, the proposed rule also would allow some restrictions to be levied, as long as those restrictions are not due to a student identifying as transgender. Schools could limit trans athletes from taking part in particular sports and at specific grade levels, if the school can show it has a particular need to do so and takes steps to minimize harms caused to anyone excluded.

Others argue that the language provides a legal framework for transgender students if they need to challenge a restriction on their participation, and that any type of restriction on a transgender student's participation must meet a "high bar."

"Any kind of limitations have to be pretty narrow in scope," said Rodrigo Heng-Lehtinen, the executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality.

He said that any restriction would have to be "separate from just the fact that they happen to be transgender." It would also have to "minimize harm," which is a term that the Department of Education has not clearly defined in the proposed rule as it stands.

"That's one of the things we're going to be researching," Heng-Lehtinen said. "The Biden administration will hopefully clarify what are these measures that states could take (to 'minimize harm')."

Attacks on trans people

The proposed rule comes amid an unprecedented, coordinated attack on transgender community members and their families since 2020 in Republican-dominated states, including the sports bans.

In Congress, House Republicans in mid-April passed legislation that amends Title IX and specifically bans transgender girls from competing in girls sports.

The House bill is likely dead on arrival in the Senate, where Democrats hold a slim majority.

The Biden administration also said if the bill made it to the president's desk, he would veto it. In a statement, the administration said the bill "targets people for who they are and therefore is discriminatory."

In the states, some of the trans sports bans have not gone into effect yet and are on hold due to temporary injunctions, including in Idaho, West Virginia, Indiana and Utah. In Montana, the injunction applies only to bans in higher education and not K-12.

But with the increase in legislation nationwide targeting the transgender community, a dozen trans and nonbinary state lawmakers criticized the proposed Biden rule and sent a letter to the White House.

"When it comes to policy addressing trans athletes, our stance is this: Trans athletes belong in sports. Full stop," according to the letter.

But the letter did not specifically detail issues those state lawmakers had with the proposed rule.

Shannon Minter, the legal director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, said the way the Department of Education wrote the Biden administration rule reflects actions taken in courts that have considered state bans.

For example, the U.S. Supreme Court recently rejected a West Virginia court's request to reinstate the state's blanket ban on transgender student's participation in school sports. That decision came the same day as the proposed Biden rule.

"It makes sense that the Department of Education is going to be looking to how courts have been analyzing this issue, including the Supreme Court and lower courts, and there's a very consistent, well-established body of case law now, that applies exactly the standard that the Department of Education's

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proposed rule sets out," he said.

Minter is currently representing several transgender students in Utah after the state passed a ban on transgender students from competing in their sports. The courts placed an injunction, or hold, on the state ban and the students for now can compete in their sports.

"The courts have recognized, and fairly consistently been holding, striking down these (state) bans because they are a classic example of impermissible sex discrimination," he said.

Discrimination concerns

However, others expressed worries that the Biden proposal won't go far enough.

Sasha Buchert, Lambda Legal senior attorney and director of Lambda Legal's Nonbinary and Transgender Rights Project, said in a statement that there is concern over "whether the proposed rule can properly eliminate the discrimination that transgender students experience due to the pervasive bias and ignorance about who they are."

"Given the importance of the opportunity to participate in athletics to students' educational experience, we look forward to submitting comments and working with the administration to further remove those remaining bigotry-based barriers to full and equal participation by transgender youth," Buchert said.

The chair of the U.S. House Equality Caucus, Rep. Mark Pocan, a Wisconsin Democrat, echoed those remarks.

"In the coming days, we will continue to further analyze this rule and what restrictions may or may not be permitted," Pocan said in a statement. "We will be providing our feedback to the Department of Education to ensure trans students are afforded their full civil rights protections under Title IX."

But Minter is confident that the rule provides a legal framework to challenge any bans based on a student's identity as transgender because there is "a very well-established constitutional framework for analyzing sex discrimination."

Minter said that while the rule allows schools to set requirements based on age or the type of sport, it's still not a ban, and those restrictions would need to be justified.

They would have to "further some important educational objective and cannot rely on stereotypes or over broad generalizations," Minter said.

"You can't just ban students because they're transgender," he said. "I believe people are missing that."

Minter added that the rule also helps provide a standard to test whether any requirement for a transgender athlete is legal or not, pointing to rules that the NCAA has implemented. The NCAA gives each sport the discretion to regulate transgender athletes.

Minter said that patchwork of rules could lead to bans based on the fact that an athlete is transgender, and therefore would be a ban based on sex, which the proposed rule specifically bars.

"This will be a very useful tool ... challenging those NCAA-level bans," Minter said.

State athletic associations

The Department of Education noted in its proposed rule that state athletic associations would review the regulation and set the agency's policies.

The agency said that 20% of state athletic associations currently allow students to participate in the sport that aligns with their gender identity.

About 25% generally allow students to participate in the sport that aligns with their gender identity, but have established criteria or eligibility requirements for participation. And about 20% require students who wish to participate in a sport aligning with their gender identity to meet additional criteria in order to participate.

The remaining state athletic associations have "adopted a range of policies imposing criteria that severely limit most or all transgender students from participating on male or female athletic teams consistent with their gender identity," according to the proposed rule.

Participation in sports that align with a transgender student's gender identity is important for trans youth mental health, according to research by The Trevor Project, which focuses on suicide prevention and provides crisis support to LGBTQ+ youth.

"Being told that you cannot participate in an activity, or even enter a space because of who you are can be incredibly damaging to a young person's mental health and sense of self," Kasey Suffredini, the vice president of advocacy and government affairs at The Trevor Project, said in a statement about the Title IX proposed rule.

The Trevor Project published results from a poll by Morning Consult that surveyed 716 LGBTQ+ youth ages 13 to 24 about anti-trans legislation. It found that 86% of transgender and nonbinary youth reported that the laws in state legislatures to restrict their rights had a negative impact on their mental health.

The poll asked about policies that would ban transgender youth from competing on sports teams that align with their gender identity. Of those respondents, 64% of trans and nonbinary youth said it made them angry and 1 in 4 felt scared.

Kel O'Hara, a staff attorney at the Equal Rights Advocates, said in an interview that the regulation should define some of the language that pertains to limiting participation for trans athletes in high school and in college.

"I think the concern that I'm hearing from advocates, and that I share, is that the doors that are left open in this new rule are going to be ones that the anti-trans folks can continue to take advantage of and continue to use to exclude trans students," they said.

Public comment on the proposed rule ends May 15.

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

Community paramedics don't wait for an emergency to visit rural patients at home

Community paramedicine is expanding nationwide, including in rural areas, with potential to improve health and save money

BY: ARIELLE ZIONTS - APRIL 28, 2023 2:22 PM

GILLETTE, Wyo. — Sandra Lane said she has been to the emergency room about eight times this year. The 62-year-old has had multiple falls, struggled with balance and tremors, and experienced severe swelling in her legs.

A paramedic recently arrived at her doorstep again, but this time it wasn't for an emergency. Jason Frye was there for a home visit as part of a new community paramedicine program.

Frye showed up in an SUV, not an ambulance. He carried a large black medical bag into Lane's mobile home, which is on the eastern edge of the city, across from open fields and train tracks that snake between the region's massive open-pit coal mines. Lane sat in an armchair as Frye took her blood pressure, measured her pulse, and hooked her up to a heart-monitoring machine.

"What matters to you in terms of health, goals?" Frye said.

Lane said she wants to become healthy enough to work, garden, and ride her motorcycle again.

Frye, a 44-year-old Navy veteran and former oil field worker, promised to help Lane sign up for physical therapy and offered to find an anti-slip grab bar for her shower.

Community paramedicine allows paramedics to use their skills outside of emergency settings. The goal is to help patients access care, maintain or improve their health, and reduce their dependence on costly ambulance rides and ER visits.

Such programs are expanding across the country, including in rural areas, as health care providers, insurers, and state governments recognize the potential benefits to patients, ambulance services, and hospitals.

Gary Wingrove, a Florida-based leader in community paramedicine, said the concept took off in the early 2000s and now includes hundreds of sites. A 2017 survey of 129 programs found that 55% operated in "rural" or "super rural" areas.

Community medicine can be helpful in rural areas where people have less access to health care, said Wingrove, chair of the International Roundtable on Community Paramedicine. "If we can get a community

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paramedic to their house," he said, "then we can keep them connected to primary health care and all of the other services that they need."

Frye works at Campbell County Health, a health care system based in Gillette, a city of about 33,000 in northeastern Wyoming. Leaders of the community paramedicine program plan to expand it into two adjacent, largely rural counties dotted with ranches and coal mines on the rolling prairie that stretches more than 100 miles from the Black Hills to the Bighorn Mountains.

Gillette serves as a medical hub for the region but has shortages of primary care doctors, specialists, and mental health services, according to a community needs assessment. People who live outside the city face additional barriers.

"A lot of them, especially older people, don't want to come into town. And basically, those tiny communities don't usually have health care," Lane said. "I think it's just kind of a pain for them to drive all the way into town, and unless they have a serious problem, I think they tend to just figure, 'Well, it'll work itself out.'"

Community paramedicine programs are customized to the needs and resources of each community.

"It's not just a cookie-cutter-type operation. It's like you can really mold it to wherever you need to mold it to," Frye said.

Most community paramedicine programs rely on paramedics, but some also use emergency medicine technicians, nurses, social workers, and other professionals, according to the 2017 survey. Programs can offer home visits, phone check-ins, or transportation to non-emergency destinations, such as urgent care clinics and mental health centers.

Many programs support people with chronic illnesses, patients recovering from surgeries or hospital stays, or frequent users of 911 and the ER. Other programs focus on public health, behavioral health, hospice care, or post-overdose response.

Community paramedics can provide in-home vaccinations, wound care, ultrasounds, and blood tests.

They can offer exercise and nutrition tips, teach patients how to monitor their symptoms, and help with housing, economic, and social needs that can affect people's health. For example, paramedics might inspect homes for safety hazards, provide a list of food banks, or connect lonely patients with a senior center.

Paramedics and patients said that some rural residents struggle to access health care due to long distances, cost, lack of transportation, or dangerous weather. Some hesitate to seek help out of pride or because they don't want to be a burden to others. Some limit trips to town during ranching and farming crunch times, such as calving and harvesting seasons.

Delayed care can let health problems fester until they become an emergency.

Advocates say providing in-home care, resources, and education can help patients reduce such crises and associated costs. Fewer emergencies mean fewer ambulance runs and hospital patients. That could help ambulance services and hospitals reduce costs and the time patients wait for help.

A 2022 scholarly review found that more studies are needed but that data so far suggest these programs reduce costs. It also found links to improved health outcomes and decreased use of ambulances and hospitals.

For example, a pilot program in Fort Worth, Texas, saw a 61% reduction in ambulance rides, according to an academic study of 64 patients. MedStar, the operator, made the effort permanent and says that its 904 participants needed 48% fewer ambulance trips, saving an estimated \$8.5 million over eight years.

But rural ambulance services, especially volunteer ones, can struggle to staff and fund community paramedicine programs.

Kesa Copps, a co-worker of Frye's, previously worked as an emergency medical technician in Powder River County, Montana, which has fewer than 2,000 residents. Some people there must drive more than an hour to reach the nearest hospital. The area's volunteer ambulance service started a community paramedicine program in 2019.

Copps said the program reduced hospital readmissions and extended some elderly patients' ability to live at home before being admitted to a nursing facility. She visited patients between ambulance runs and had to leave early when a 911 call came in. That's different from the Campbell County Health model, in which community paramedicine is a full-time position, not split with emergency work.

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Adam Johnson, director of the Powder River ambulance service, said the community paramedicine program shut down in 2021 after everyone with the necessary training left the area. Johnson said paramedics are signing up for training to restart the program.

States are increasingly recognizing and regulating community paramedicine, and some require licensed paramedics to obtain extra training to work in the field.

Some ambulance services and health care organizations have piloted community paramedicine programs with the help of state or federal grants. If they find the service saves money, they may decide to continue the program and fund it themselves.

Private insurance companies are increasingly covering community paramedicine, Wingrove said. Wyoming and several other states allow operators to bill Medicaid for the services.

Advocates are now pushing Medicare to expand its limited coverage of community paramedicine, Wingrove said. That would benefit Medicare patients and could spur more private insurers to offer coverage.

The Campbell County Health program's home visits cost up to \$240 per hour and are billed to Medicaid or Medicare, said Frye. That compares with more than \$1,300 for an ambulance ride and thousands of dollars for a visit to a hospital ER.

Community paramedicine may soon be expanding in neighboring South Dakota, another largely rural state.

South Dakota ambulance services have experimented with community paramedicine and lawmakers recently voted to authorize and regulate it.

Eric Emery, the state representative who introduced the bill, plans to start a program on the sprawling, rural Rosebud Indian Reservation, where he works as a paramedic. He said the operation will focus on diabetes and mental health care.

Emery, a Democrat, said some people struggle to pick up their medication and attend appointments because they lack vehicles or gas money and there's no public transportation to the hospital. He said some parents and grandparents raising children also struggle to find time to drive to appointments.

"They're putting the needs of the younger generation or their grandkids before their own," Emery said.

Back in Gillette, Frye also checked in on Linda Gwitt, a 78-year-old facing diabetes, depression, and a lack of social support after her husband was hospitalized with dementia. Gwitt said her husband was her walking buddy and helped care for her.

"I had him to wait on me, and now I have nobody," Gwitt said.

Frye said he would see if he could help start a senior walking group that Gwitt could join. He told her that socializing can improve health.

"You're not alone," Frye told Gwitt.

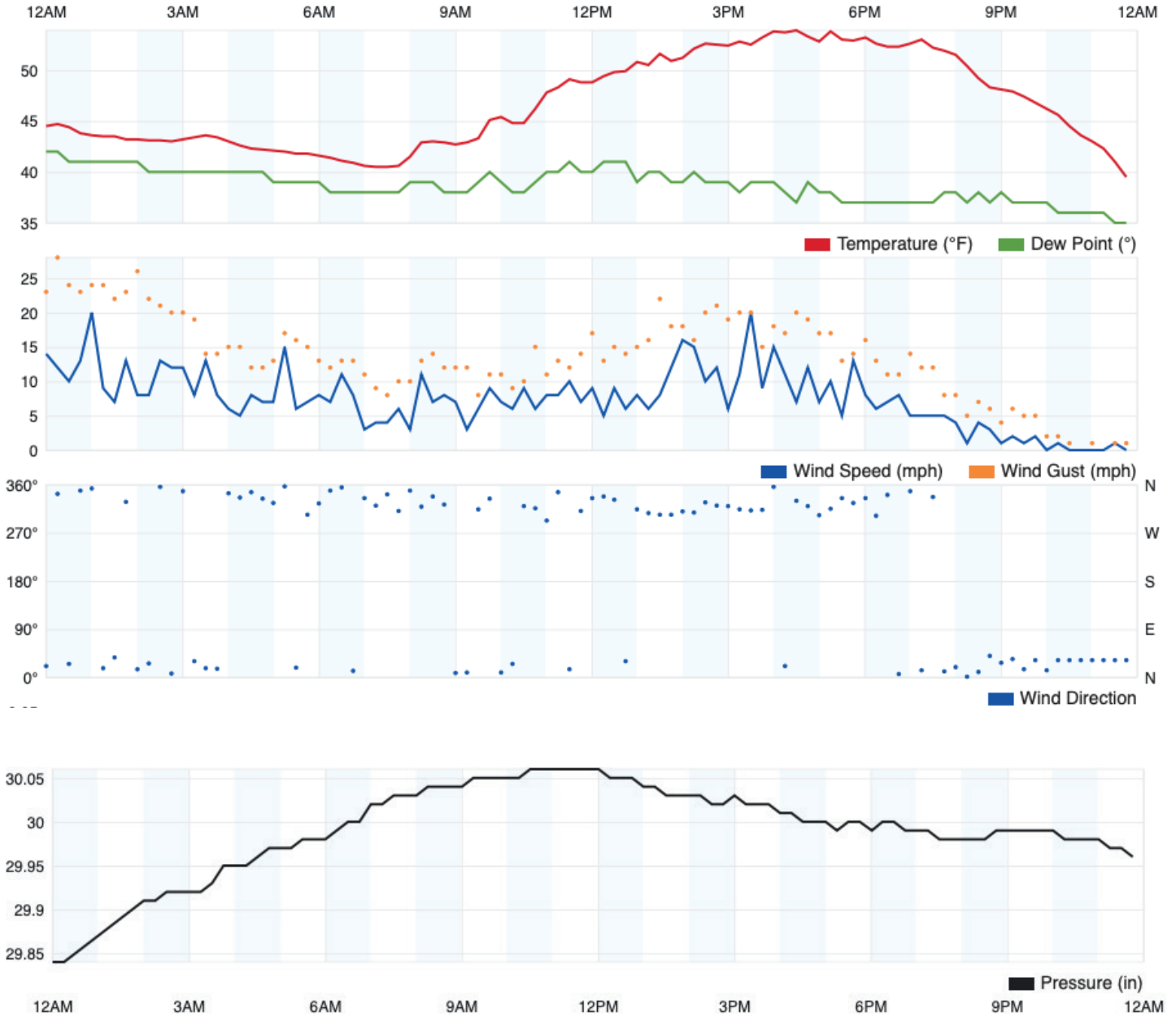
KFF Health News, formerly known as Kaiser Health News (KHN), is a national newsroom that produces in-depth journalism about health issues and is one of the core operating programs at KFF — the independent source for health policy research, polling, and journalism.

Arielle Zions, Rural Health Care Correspondent for Kaiser Health News, is based in South Dakota. She primarily covers South Dakota and its neighboring states and tribal nations. Arielle previously worked at South Dakota Public Broadcasting, where she reported on business and economic development. Before that, she was the criminal justice reporter at the Rapid City Journal and a general assignment reporter at the Nogales International, on the border of Arizona and Mexico. She graduated from Pitzer College in Claremont, California. Arielle lives in Rapid City with her cat, Sully.

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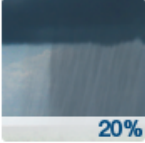






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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
						
Slight Chance Showers and Breezy	Partly Cloudy and Breezy	Decreasing Clouds and Breezy	Mostly Clear and Blustery	Sunny and Breezy	Clear and Blustery then Mostly Clear	Sunny
High: 55 °F	Low: 34 °F	High: 51 °F	Low: 31 °F	High: 56 °F	Low: 29 °F	High: 64 °F

Windy Weekend, Fire Danger Today

Windy conditions (wind gusts of 30 to around 45 mph) will occur across the area this weekend. A **Red Flag Warning** is in effect this afternoon and evening across portions of central South Dakota due to potential critical fire weather conditions.



	Maximum Wind Gust Forecast									Maximum		
	4/29 Sat			4/30 Sun			5/1 Mon					
	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	12am	6am	12pm	6pm	
Aberdeen	25	38	38	31	35	37	38	31	36	37	37	38
Britton	18	36	35	32	38	40	38	36	38	40	36	40
Brookings	17	29	31	33	35	38	36	28	31	31	30	38
Chamberlain	29	36	32	20	26	28	25	13	18	20	20	36
Eagle Butte	41	41	39	23	26	26	26	16	16	22	22	41
Eureka	33	44	41	28	31	33	32	18	30	35	31	44
Gettysburg	33	45	41	26	30	31	30	20	29	31	29	45
Huron	25	35	33	30	31	32	30	21	25	26	24	35
Kennebec	40	43	39	23	29	31	31	16	25	29	26	43
McIntosh	41	45	43	24	25	26	26	15	16	22	21	45
Milbank	17	29	31	32	40	44	40	38	40	44	40	44
Miller	29	40	40	26	30	33	32	22	29	31	30	40
Mobridge	33	40	36	22	25	28	28	15	22	28	24	40
Murdo	43	43	37	21	28	28	28	17	17	20	20	43
Pierre	35	37	38	18	24	26	26	13	16	22	22	38
Redfield	26	40	38	30	32	37	38	28	32	35	36	40
Sisseton	18	31	32	35	39	41	40	38	39	43	38	43
Watertown	17	32	35	31	38	43	40	33	41	43	38	43
Webster	20	37	38	35	40	45	44	37	43	46	41	46
Wheaton	18	29	29	31	39	43	39	33	39	41	37	43

National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD
Updated: April 29, 2023 4:13 AM

Windy conditions will lead to increased fire danger across central South Dakota this afternoon. The windy conditions will continue through the weekend.

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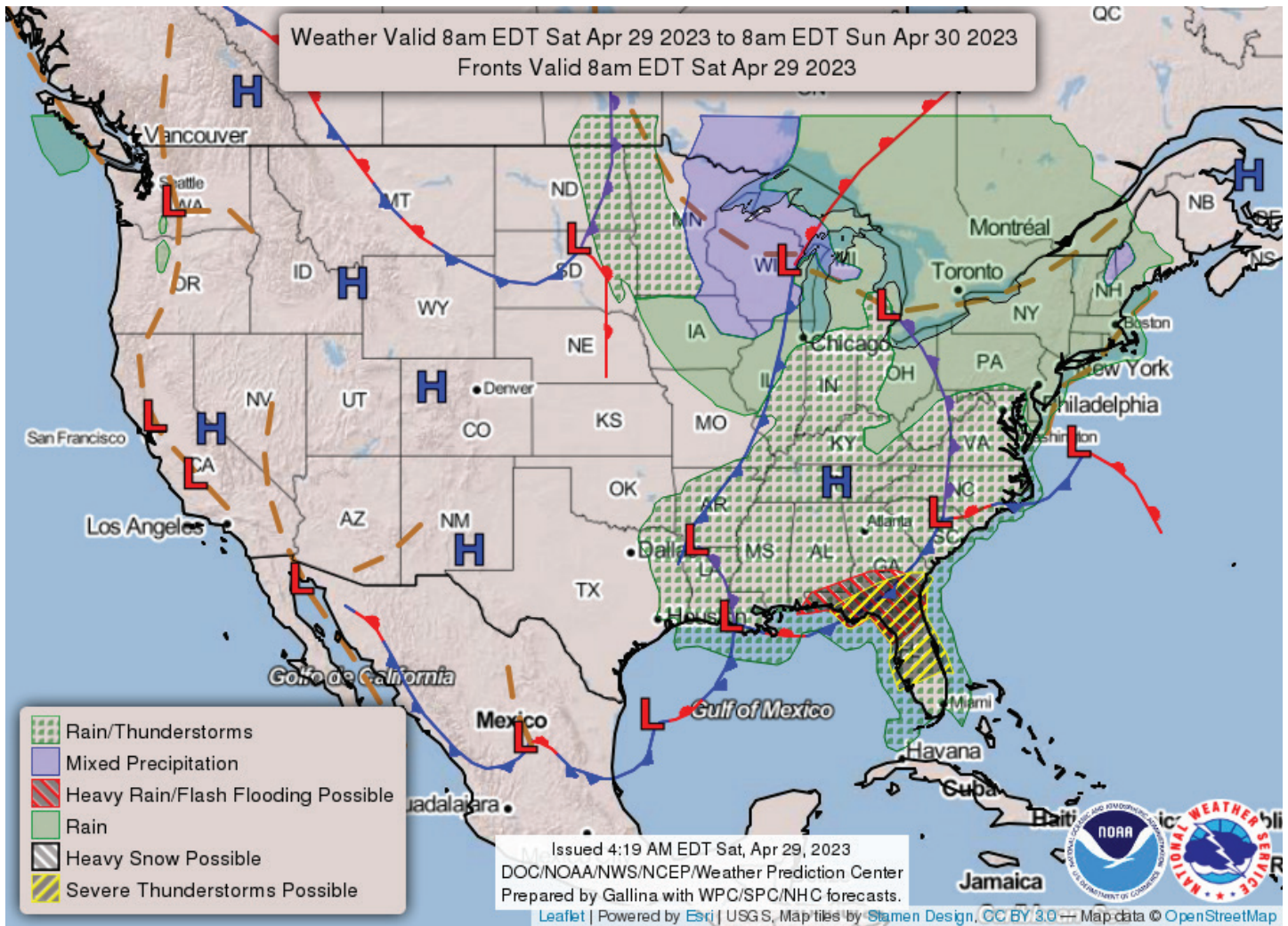
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 54 °F at 5:19 PM
Low Temp: 40 °F at 7:18 AM
Wind: 28 mph at 12:11 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 14 hours, 15 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 92 in 1934
Record Low: 16 in 1966
Average High: 64
Average Low: 37
Average Precip in April.: 1.82
Precip to date in April.: 1.79
Average Precip to date: 3.88
Precip Year to Date: 5.72
Sunset Tonight: 8:37:39 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:20:18 AM



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Today in Weather History

April 29, 1942: An estimated F3 tornado moved east through Marshall County, destroying almost every building on a farm northeast of Kidder. Barns were heavily damaged on two other farms. One person was reported killed, with five others injured.

1905 - The town of Taylor, in southeastern Texas, was deluged with 2.4 inches of rain in fifteen minutes. (The Weather Channel)

1910 - The temperature at Kansas City, MO, soared to 95 degrees to establish a record for the month of April. Four days earlier the afternoon high in Kansas City was 44 degrees, following a record cold morning low of 34 degrees. (The Weather Channel) (The Kansas City Weather Almanac)

1963 - A tornado, as much as 100 yards in width, touched down south of Shannon, MS. The tornado destroyed twenty-seven homes along its eighteen mile path, killing three persons. Asphalt was torn from Highway 45 and thrown hundreds of yards away. Little rain or snow accompanied the tornado, so it was visible for miles. (The Weather Channel)

1973 - The Mississippi River reached a crest of 43.4 feet, breaking the previous record of 42 feet established in 1785. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A storm off the southeast coast of Massachusetts blanketed southern New England with heavy snow. Totals of three inches at Boston MA, 11 inches at Milton MA, and 17 inches at Worcester MA, were records for so late in the season. Princeton MA was buried under 25 inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced large hail and high winds in central Texas. Baseball size hail was reported at Nixon, and wind gusts to 70 mph were reported at Cotulla. Heavy rain in Maine caused flooding along the Pemigewasset and Ammonoosuc Rivers. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in Arkansas, Louisiana and eastern Texas, with more than 70 reports of large hail and damaging winds. Softball size hail was reported at Palestine TX. Hail as large as tennis balls caused ten million dollars damage around Pine Bluff AR. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - A storm system crossing northern New Mexico blanketed parts of the Rocky Mountain Region and the Northern High Plains with heavy snow, and produced blizzard conditions in central Montana. Much of southern Colorado was buried under one to three feet of snow. Pueblo tied an April record with 16.8 inches of snow in 24 hours. Strong canyon winds in New Mexico, enhanced by local showers, gusted to 65 mph at Albuquerque. Afternoon temperatures across the Great Plains Region ranged from the 20s in North Dakota to 107 degrees at Laredo TX. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1991: Southeast Bangladesh was devastated by a tropical cyclone with sustained winds of approximately 155 mph in the during the late night hours. A 20-foot storm surge inundated the offshore islands south of Chittagong and pushed water from the Bay of Bengal inland for miles. Best estimated put the loss of life from this cyclone between 135,000 and 145,000 people.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

GO ON OR GIVE UP?

During the Olympics in Mexico City some years ago, a runner received a standing ovation - not for winning - but, of all things, for finishing last.

In the heat of the race, he tripped, fell and severely damaged one of his knees. He was in great pain and bleeding profusely. But he refused to give up and finally stumbled across the finish line.

"Why didn't you quit?" asked a reporter.

"My country did not send me 7,000 miles to start the race," he answered. "They sent me 7,000 miles to finish the race!"

What courage he displayed. Had he quit, everyone would have understood his problem and pain. Everyone except the runner. He knew what was important. He had a quality of character and a state of mind that enabled and empowered him to endure great suffering for the joy that would be his by completing the race.

When we face trying times, if we turn to and trust in the Lord, we can complete the race He has set before us. "Be courageous. Be strong," said Paul. In other words - "Never give up. You are running a great race for the glory of God. Don't give up!"

Prayer: Help us, Lord, to keep our eyes on You, our faith in You and find courage through You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. 1 Corinthians 16:13



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

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2023 Community Events

- 01/29/2023 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 01/29/2023 85th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
- 01/31/2023-02/03/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Drop Off 6-9pm, Community Center
- 02/04/2023-02/05/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Sale 1-5pm, Community Center
- 02/25/2023 Littles and Me, Art Making 10-11:30am, Wage Memorial Library
- 03/25/2023 Spring Vendor Fair, 10am-3pm, Community Center
- 04/01/2023 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
- 04/06/2023 Groton Career Development Event
- 04/08/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
- 04/22/2023 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 04/23/2023 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
- 05/06/2023 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/29/2023 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
- 06/16/2023 SDSU Alumni and Friends Golf Tournament
- 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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
04.28.23

18 38 53 62 64 20

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$52,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[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 DRAW: 16 Hrs 1 Mins 2 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
04.28.23

9 31 32 34 47 15

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 31 Mins 1 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
04.26.23

1 7 13 27 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$40,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 1 Mins 1 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
04.26.23

18 26 31 49 51 18

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 1 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 DRAW: 16 Hrs 1 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Packers get QB Love more playmakers in 2nd day of NFL draft

By STEVE MEGARGEE AP Sports Writer

GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP) — Jordan Love may have been the biggest winner on the second day of the Green Bay Packers' draft

The Packers got a few weapons for their new starting quarterback in the NFL draft on Friday night: They selected Oregon State tight end Luke Musgrave and Michigan State wide receiver Jayden Reed in the second round and South Dakota State tight end Tucker Kraft in the third round.

"Now I think we have a good nucleus of guys, pass catchers to be able to grow with a quarterback," general manager Brian Gutekunst said. "I think that's important. We'll see how it goes."

Green Bay chose Musgrave with the 42nd overall selection, a pick they acquired in the trade that sent four-time MVP quarterback Aaron Rodgers to the New York Jets. Rodgers' exit hands the starting quarterback job to Love, who has made just one start since the Packers selected him out of Utah State in the first round of the 2020 draft.

The Packers also entered the night with the No. 45 overall selection, but they sent that to Detroit in a trade that brought them the No. 48 choice and a fifth-round pick. They then moved down two more spots and got a sixth-round pick from the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

They used the No. 50 spot on Reed, who turned 23 on Friday and considered the call from the Packers the ideal birthday gift.

"Well, my girlfriend gave me some glasses," Reed said. "I got an Apple watch. But nothing tops this. I mean this is all I could ever ask for. This is all I ever wanted forever in my life."

The Packers capitalized on the depth of this year's tight end class by drafting two players at that position for the first time since 2011. Green Bay's top tight ends under contract are Josiah Deguara and Tyler Davis, who combined to catch 17 passes for 140 yards last season.

Musgrave played just two games last year before undergoing season-ending knee surgery. Kraft played just nine of South Dakota State's 15 games last season.

Gutekunst said he wasn't overly concerned about their injury histories and suggested that might have explained why Musgrave and Kraft were both available when the Packers took them.

"They're both all-around tight ends that can kind of do everything," Gutekunst said. "They're not pigeon-holed into only being able to be a receiving tight end or a blocking tight end. They can do it all."

Green Bay is taking a chance on the upside of the 6-foot-6 Musgrave, who totaled just 20 games in four seasons at Oregon State due to injuries. He had 11 catches for 169 yards and a touchdown in Oregon State's first two games last year before undergoing season-ending surgery on his medial collateral ligament.

Musgrave impressed scouts at the Senior Bowl and at the combine. The Packers like his ability to stretch the field.

"I really was trying to press to get to the Senior Bowl," said Musgrave, the nephew of former NFL quarterback and offensive coordinator Bill Musgrave. "It really was my goal. I got cleared really kind of reluctantly two weeks before it, and I was able to go to the Senior Bowl."

Kraft played well enough at South Dakota State in 2021 to attract the attention of bigger programs that wanted him to enter the transfer portal. He instead helped South Dakota State win a Football Championship Subdivision title before entering the draft.

He already knew the exact message to give Packers fans.

"Being able to score my first touchdown at Lambeau Field and take the Lambeau leap, that's something every single Bears fan in the nation will hate, and something that I'll be able to do on my own favor," Kraft said.

Although Green Bay drafted three wideouts last year — North Dakota State's Christian Watson in the second, Nevada's Romeo Doubs in the fourth and Nebraska's Samori Toure in the seventh — the position

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still ranks as one of the Packers' biggest needs. Watson and Doubs are the only wideouts under contract who had at least 100 yards receiving last season.

Reed caught 59 passes for 1,026 yards and 10 touchdowns in 2021. Last season, he had 55 catches for 636 yards and five touchdowns, including a game-winning score in an overtime victory over Wisconsin.

Although Reed is only 5-11, the Packers believe he can line up on the outside as well as in the slot. Reed also is a quality punt returner.

The Packers haven't drafted a receiver in the first round since taking Florida State's Javon Walker at No. 20 in 2002, but they've had success finding wideouts in the second round. Examples include Greg Jennings (2006), Jordy Nelson (2008), Cobb (2011), Davante Adams (2014) and Watson (2022).

The Packers' three picks Friday followed their first-round selection of Iowa edge rusher Lukas Van Ness on Thursday. They have nine more picks Saturday, with safety arguably their biggest remaining need.

AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/hub/nfl> and https://twitter.com/AP_NFL

Largest powwow draws Indigenous dancers to New Mexico

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — Tens of thousands of people gathered in New Mexico on Friday for what organizers bill as the largest powwow in North America.

The annual Gathering of Nations kicked off with a colorful procession of Native American and Indigenous dancers from around the world moving to the beat of traditional drums as they filled an arena at the New Mexico state fairgrounds.

"We're ready to rock the house here," the announcer proclaimed, after introducing drum groups, including from Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

During the event, dancers slowly spiral their way, one by one, toward the center of the venue, making for a spectacular display. This marks the 40th year for the gathering, which has grown from humble beginnings in 1983 into a massive celebration with Indigenous people showcasing their cultures through dancing and singing competitions.

Dale Metallic has been dancing for about 30 years, since he was a teenager, but this marked the first year he was able to persuade his father, Sibugug, to join him in competition. They made the trip from the Mi'gmaq Nation in eastern Canada.

"It's a celebration," the younger Metallic said.

"It's in our blood," his father added. "It's about language, culture, family."

And style.

Competitors wear feathered bustles, buckskin dresses, fancy shawls, and beaded head and hair pieces. Many of the dancers' elaborate outfits are detailed with hand-stitched designs.

Twelve-year-old Violet Sutherland showed off elaborate beadwork and a fancy shawl as she spun around beneath the welcoming sign while her mother took photos. They traveled from Ontario, Canada, so Violet could fulfill a wish made the previous year.

"I always wanted to go and see everyone dance," said Violet, nodding at the colorful Aztec dancers performing nearby.

Violet, who is Ojibwe and Cree and the youngest of three siblings, practices every day, keeping alive a tradition like her parents and grandparents before her.

As spectators and competitors took breaks to get roasted corn, fry bread and lattes, the echoing thunder of drum beats could be heard outside the arena.

In addition to the dancing and singing competitions, more than two dozen contestants from the U.S. and Canada also are vying for the title of Miss Indian World. The winner will be crowned on the final night of the powwow and will spend the next year serving as a cultural ambassador as she travels to events and other powwows.

Several hundred Native American tribes in the United States and First Nations in Canada are represented

at the gathering, which has become Albuquerque's second-largest annual festival and brings in more than \$20 million for the local economy each year.

Organizers held virtual gatherings in 2020 and 2021 because of COVID-19 restrictions. This is the second in-person gathering since public health regulations were relaxed.

Russian official: Ukrainian drones hit Crimea oil depot

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A massive fire erupted at an oil depot in Crimea after it was hit by two of Ukraine's drones, a Russia-appointed official there reported Saturday, the latest in a series of attacks on the annexed peninsula as Russia braces for an expected Ukrainian counteroffensive.

Mikhail Razvozhayev, the Moscow-installed governor of Sevastopol, a port city in Crimea, posted videos and photos of the blaze on his Telegram channel.

Razvozhayev said the fire at the city's harbor was assigned the highest ranking in terms of how complicated it will be to extinguish. However, he reported that the open blaze had been contained.

Razvozhayev said the oil depot was attacked by "two enemy drones," and four oil tanks burned down. A third drone was shot down from the sky over Crimea, and one more was deactivated through radio-electronic means, according to Crimea's Moscow-appointed governor, Sergei Aksyonov.

Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, a move that most of the world considered illegal. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in an interview this week that his country will seek to reclaim the peninsula in the upcoming counteroffensive.

The incident comes a day after Russia fired more than 20 cruise missiles and two drones at Ukraine, killing at least 23 people. Almost all of the victims died when two missiles slammed into an apartment building in the city of Uman, located in central Ukraine.

Five children were among the dead, Ukrainian Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said Saturday, adding 22 out of 23 bodies have been identified. One woman remained missing, Klymenko said.

Russian forces launched more drones at Ukraine overnight. Ukraine's Air Force Command said two Iranian-made self-exploding Shahed drones were intercepted, and a reconnaissance drone was shot down on Saturday morning.

Razvozhayev said the oil depot fire did not cause any casualties and would not hinder fuel supplies in Sevastopol. The city has been subject to regular attack attempts with drones, especially in recent weeks.

Earlier this week, Razvozhayev reported that the Russian military destroyed a Ukrainian sea drone that attempted to attack the harbor and another one blew up, shattering windows in several apartment buildings, but not inflicting any other damage.

Ukraine's military intelligence spokesperson, Andriy Yusov, told the RBC Ukraine news site on Saturday that the oil depot fire was "God's punishment" for "the murdered civilians in Uman, including five children."

He said that more than 10 tanks containing oil products for Russia's Black Sea Fleet were destroyed in Sevastopol, but stopped short of acknowledging Ukraine's responsibility for a drone attack. The difference between the number of tanks Yusov and Razvozhayev gave could not be immediately reconciled.

After previous attacks on Crimea, Kyiv also wouldn't openly claim responsibility, emphasizing, however, that the country had the right to strike any target in response to Russian aggression.

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

After killings, calls to protect S. Africa's whistleblowers

By MOGOMOTSI MAGOME Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — An accountant working on a high-profile corruption case was killed along with his son by unknown gunmen while traveling on one of South Africa's main highways. A government health department employee who warned of illegal dealings worth nearly \$50 million was shot 12 times in the driveway of her home.

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The slayings and other cases have anti-corruption groups urging South African authorities to provide far better protection for whistleblowers. They also have fueled outrage over widespread graft linked to government contracts, which has plagued Africa's most developed economy for years but appears to continue unabated.

The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime counted a total of 1,971 assassination cases in South Africa between 2000 and 2021, with whistleblowers accounting for many of the targeted individuals.

The specialist accountant and liquidator, 57-year-old Cloete Murray, was working on the financial accounts of a company that was heavily implicated in allegedly bribing government ministers and others to win huge state contracts.

The company, previously known as Bosasa and now named African Global Holdings, was one of the most prominent subjects of the Zondo Commission a judicial inquiry into government and other high-level corruption during the 2008-2019 presidency of Jacob Zuma, who is on trial on separate corruption allegations.

Murray was shot in the head while driving with his son in an SUV on the N1 highway just outside Johannesburg in March. He died in the hospital. His son, Thomas Murray, who worked with his father, was declared dead at the scene. No one has been arrested in the killings, which police said had the hallmarks of a professional hit.

South African anti-corruption organization Corruption Watch said the killings of the Murrays was further evidence that the country faced "a crisis in terms of the rule of law."

"Levels of public confidence in our law enforcement capabilities, not to mention the political will to hold criminals and the corrupt accountable, have dropped to an all-time low," Corruption Watch executive director Karam Singh said. "As the most recent example, the brazen murder of Cloete Murray and his son sends a chilling and intimidating message to anyone seeking to end impunity for corruption and crime. This must represent a turning of the tide for our country."

The death of Babita Deokaran, an employee of the health department in Gauteng province, already underlined the dangers for whistleblowers in South Africa. Her August 2021 slaying was described as an assassination. Six men have been charged with murder in her killing.

Deokaran had spoken up about potentially corrupt payments to more than 200 companies by the health department and was a key witness in a probe by the country's anti-corruption Special Investigating Unit into contracts worth more than \$45 million.

She was shot multiple times inside her car soon after dropping her daughter off at school and her story has become a rallying call.

Deokaran's killing spurred another corruption whistleblower, Athol Williams, to leave the country, he said. Williams testified before the Zondo Commission implicating about 39 parties in corrupt activities at the country's tax authority, the South African Revenue Service. Williams is a former partner at consultancy firm Bain & Co, which he also accused of in his allegations regarding the tax authority.

He said he testified out of a sense of civic duty but was not offered any protection despite the important evidence he provided and will not return to his home country unless his safety is guaranteed.

"Without any assurance for my safety from our government, combined with the fact that none of the parties I implicated have been prosecuted, it is unlikely that I can return. This breaks my heart," Williams said in an interview with The Associated Press. "It is the lowest form of unethical behavior to ask a citizen to risk their life for our country and then not offer them protection when they face retaliation."

South Africa's Department of Justice did not respond to messages seeking comment on Williams' experience and the general policy on protection for whistleblowers. But in his State of the Nation Address this year, President Cyril Ramaphosa acknowledged shortcomings and the need to strengthen the witness protection unit.

This week, the former head of the state-owned electricity utility, a company brought to its knees by mismanagement and corruption, appeared at a parliamentary hearing virtually from an "undisclosed location" because of fears for his safety, he said.

Andre de Ruyter has spoken of corruption linked to the government and others at the utility and said

Wednesday that unnamed sources who provided him with information feared for their lives.

He has also claimed he survived an attempt on his life when his coffee was laced with cyanide.

"The alleged criminal and unlawful activities ... involve elements that are best characterized as organized crime," de Ruyter said.

More AP Africa news: <https://apnews.com/hub/africa>

US ex-security adviser calls for closer ties with Taiwan

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — A former U.S. national security adviser called for deeper interaction between his country and Taiwan during a visit Saturday to the self-ruled island, which has seen increasing military threats from China.

John Bolton, a potential Republican presidential candidate in 2024, said at a pro-Taiwan independence event in Taipei that national security teams from both sides must develop contingency plans on how to respond to actions Beijing might take, warning it would be too late once an attack occurs.

"And we have to tell China and Russia what the consequences are if they take actions against Taiwan. Not just in the immediate response, but over the longer term, to basically excommunicate China from the international economic system if it did take military actions against Taiwan or attempt to throw a blockade around it," Bolton said.

Bolton, former President Donald Trump's hawkish national security adviser, started his week-long trip to Taiwan on Wednesday. The visit reflects the importance of the island's democracy as an issue in the U.S. presidential election next year amid heightened tensions between Washington and Beijing.

Taiwan and China split in 1949 following a civil war that ended with the Communist Party in control of the mainland. The island has never been part of the People's Republic of China, but Beijing says it must unite with the mainland, by force if necessary.

The U.S. remains Taiwan's closest military and political ally, despite the lack of formal diplomatic ties between them. U.S. law requires Washington to treat all threats to the island as matters of "grave concern," though it remains ambiguous over whether American forces would be dispatched to help defend the island.

Bolton said the backlog of U.S. military sales to Taiwan is estimated to be \$19 billion and it needs to be resolved.

"Part of that is a U.S. problem. Our defense industrial base is not as strong as it used to be. We need to improve that for global reasons, but particularly for Taiwan," he said.

On Friday, the Taiwanese Defense Ministry said China's military flew 38 fighter jets and other warplanes near Taiwan. That was the biggest such flight display since the large military exercise in which it simulated sealing off the island after the sensitive April 5 meeting between Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen and U.S. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy. China opposes any exchanges at the official level between Taiwan and other governments.

Later Friday, China's People's Liberation Army also issued a protest over the flight of a United States Navy P-8A Poseidon anti-submarine patrol aircraft through the Taiwan Strait, calling it a provocation that the U.S. "openly hyped up." But the U.S. 7th Fleet said Thursday's flight was in accordance with international law and "demonstrates the United States' commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific."

Bolton is scheduled to join a banquet on Monday organized by the Formosan Association for Public Affairs, a pro-independence organization headquartered in Washington, D.C. Tsai will also attend the event.

Find more of AP's Asia-Pacific coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/asia-pacific>

Royal Drama: King's fractious family on stage at coronation

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — King Charles III lives in a palace, travels in a chauffeur-driven Bentley and is one of

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Britain's richest men, but he's similar to many of his subjects in one very basic way: His family life is complicated — very complicated.

There's a second wife, an embarrassing brother, and an angry son and daughter-in-law, all with allies who aren't shy about whispering family secrets in the ears of friendly reporters.

The new king will hope to keep a lid on those tensions when his royally blended family joins as many as 2,800 guests for Charles' coronation on May 6 at Westminster Abbey. All except Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex, are attending.

How Charles manages his family drama over the coming weeks and years is crucial to the king's efforts to preserve and protect the 1,000-year-old hereditary monarchy he now embodies. Without the respect of the public, the House of Windsor risks being lumped together with pop stars, social media influencers and reality TV contestants as fodder for the British tabloids, undermining the cachet that underpins its role in public life.

Royal historian Hugo Vickers says people should look past the sensational headlines and focus on what Charles accomplishes now that he is king.

"In a sense, he sort of becomes a new man when he becomes king," said Vickers, author of "Coronation: The Crowning of Elizabeth II."

"Look at him as he is now, look at him the way he is approaching everything, look at his positivity and look at how right he's been on so many issues," he added. "Unfortunately, he had those difficult times with his marriages and some of the other issues, but we live in a very tricky era."

The horror show came back to haunt Charles last week, when the king's estranged younger son, Prince Harry, dropped a new round of allegations Tuesday about the royal family into the middle of the coronation buildup.

In written evidence for his invasion of privacy claim against a British newspaper, Harry claimed his father prevented him from filing the lawsuit a decade ago. The prince said Charles didn't want to dredge up graphic testimony about his extramarital affair with the former Camilla Parker-Bowles when he was married to the late Princess Diana.

Diana was the mother of Harry and his elder brother and heir to the throne, William, the Prince of Wales. Camilla, now the queen consort, went on to marry Charles in 2005 and will be crowned alongside her husband at Westminster Abbey.

If the past is any indication, attention will now shift to body language, seating plans and even wardrobe choices during the coronation, as royal watchers look for any signs of a thaw in the family tensions.

But Joe Little, managing editor of Majesty magazine, doesn't expect Harry to have a lot of contact with the rest of his family. In any case, Harry won't be in the U.K. for long, so there's not much time for fence mending.

"The stuff that we discovered (Tuesday) is really not going to help his cause," Little said. "But, you know, will there be time to go over all that with the king and the Prince of Wales? Unlikely."

The royal soap opera didn't begin with the current generation of royals. After all, Edward VIII sparked a constitutional crisis in 1936 when he abdicated the throne to marry the twice-divorced American Wallis Simpson.

Charles' grandfather, George VI, is credited with saving the monarchy with a life of low-key public service after he replaced his flamboyant elder brother. The late Queen Elizabeth II burnished the family's reputation during a 70-year reign, in which she became a symbol of stability who cheered the nation's victories and comforted it during darker times.

But Charles grew up in a different era, under the glare of media attention as deference to the monarchy faded.

He has been a controversial figure ever since the very public breakdown of his marriage to Diana, who was revered by many people for her looks and her compassion.

Diana alleged that there had been "three people" in the marriage, pointing the finger at Charles' longtime love Camilla Parker-Bowles.

Camilla, initially reviled by Diana's fans, has worked hard to rehabilitate her image. Her ex-husband and

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their children are expected to attend the coronation, with her grandsons serving as pages of honor.

She supports a raft of causes, ranging from adult literacy to protecting the victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. But even that effort has sparked tensions.

Harry claimed in his memoir "Spare" that the senior royals leaked unflattering stories about him to the news media in return for more favorable coverage, particularly to improve Camilla's image.

At the time of their marriage in 2018, Harry and Meghan were celebrated as the new face of the monarchy. Meghan, a biracial American actress, brought a touch of Hollywood glamour to the royal family and many observers hoped she would help the Windsors connect with younger people in an increasingly multicultural nation.

Those hopes quickly crumbled amid allegations that palace officials were insensitive to Meghan's mental health struggles as she adjusted to royal life.

Harry and Meghan walked away from frontline royal duties three years ago and moved to California, from which they have lobbed repeated critiques at the House of Windsor.

In a 2021 interview with Oprah Winfrey they hinted at racism in the palace, alleging that one unidentified member of the royal family had inquired about the color of their unborn son's skin before his birth.

Harry, in a Netflix series broadcast last year, said the episode was an example of unconscious bias and that the royal family needed to "learn and grow" so it could be "part of the solution rather than part of the problem."

The repeated attacks led to months of speculation about whether the couple would be invited to the coronation. The palace finally answered that question two weeks ago when it announced that Harry would attend but Meghan would remain in California with their two children.

And then there is Charles' brother Prince Andrew, who became a toxic time bomb inside the royal family when the world learned about his friendship with convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein and the financier's long-time girlfriend, Ghislaine Maxwell.

Epstein, who was convicted of sex crimes in 2008, died in a New York jail cell in 2019 while awaiting trial on a second set of charges. Maxwell was convicted last year of helping procure young girls for Epstein and is serving a 20-year sentence at a federal prison in Florida.

Andrew gave up his royal duties in 2019 after a disastrous interview with the BBC in which he tried to explain away his links to Epstein and Maxwell. He was stripped of his honorary military titles and patronages as he prepared to defend a civil lawsuit filed by a woman who said she was forced to have sex with the prince when she was a teenager.

Andrew denied the allegations but settled the suit last year before it came to trial. While terms of the agreement weren't released, The Sun newspaper reported that Charles and the late queen paid the bulk of the estimated 7 million pound (\$8.7 million) settlement.

"I think it was inevitable that when Charles became king, a lot of the personal stuff would come back to haunt him," Little said. "I think as far as the king is concerned, he just has to shrug his shoulders and get on with the job in hand."

Lakers obliterate Grizzlies 125-85, advance to 2nd round

By GREG BEACHAM AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — LeBron James made sure the Lakers had the appropriate urgency for a closeout playoff game. Their raucous fans constantly urged them to end an infuriating decade without a postseason celebration on the Lakers' home court.

When that much passion coincided with a spectacular defensive performance by Anthony Davis, the Memphis Grizzlies didn't stand a chance.

Davis had 16 points and 14 rebounds while blocking five shots and dominating the paint, D'Angelo Russell scored a career playoff-high 31 points and Los Angeles completed its first-round upset of the Grizzlies with a 125-85 victory in Game 6 on Friday night.

James scored 22 points on 9-of-13 shooting for the seventh-seeded Lakers, who emphatically clinched

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a playoff series in their own arena for the first time since 2012.

"It was definitely a Game 7 mentality for us," James said. "We understood that we had an opportunity to play in front of our fans, and we wanted to try to end it tonight. We came out with a discipline. From the start of the game, we were just locked in on our game plan all the way until the final seconds."

The Lakers won all three of their home games in the series, and the final victory was a scary demonstration of their capabilities when James and Davis are both healthy alongside their full supporting cast.

Davis' imposing defensive presence largely shut down Memphis' offense in Game 6, while Russell's five 3-pointers highlighted a slick offensive effort from a late-blooming team with championship aspirations.

"We didn't want to go back to Memphis, to say the least," said Austin Reaves, who had 11 points, eight assists and six rebounds. "We wanted to end it tonight, home court, so we were super locked-in."

The Lakers took a 20-point lead in the first half and went up by 36 in the third quarter before coasting to victory in front of superfan Jack Nicholson and a sellout crowd. James and Davis even got to sit out the entire fourth quarter, preserving their legs for the second round.

Los Angeles opens its next series on the road Tuesday against the winner of Sunday's Game 7 between Sacramento and defending champion Golden State.

"This thing is just getting started," Lakers coach Darvin Ham said. "We passed Level 1. Now we've got to start shifting our focus to whoever comes out of that game on Sunday. LeBron had some great words of wisdom he shared after the game. It's about us, just as much as it's about our opponent. We have to be the best versions of ourselves."

Ja Morant scored 10 points on 3-of-16 shooting for the Grizzlies, who won 107 games and two Southwest Division titles in the past two seasons, but just one playoff series.

Morant's injured right hand appeared to hamper his shot, and he seemed unwilling to drive the paint with his usual fearlessness while Davis loomed in the middle. Morant's teammates couldn't pick him up: Desmond Bane, who guaranteed a Game 7, had 15 points on 5-of-16 shooting, while Jaren Jackson Jr. had 14 on 3-of-12 shooting.

"We didn't play our best basketball at all, in my opinion, in these six games," Memphis coach Taylor Jenkins said. "We got two wins in this series, but we were far from where we needed to play. Discipline, execution, defensively, the urgency, and then just our production on offense. ... (we've) just got to find ways to get better. This is a feeling we've got to remember. It's got to motivate us. It's got to be understood that this is part of our evolution as a team."

Dillon Brooks, the Memphis agitator who dismissed James as "old" after Game 2 and then got ejected from Game 3 for striking James in the groin, finished a dismal series performance with 10 points in Game 6 while Lakers fans booed his every move.

Brooks left the Grizzlies' locker room before reporters were allowed in.

"People are going to talk," said Davis, who blocked 26 shots in the series. "We've had some trash talk on the court in the series, but all the talking in the media, we just go out and let our game talk."

The Grizzlies had the second-worst road record among the NBA's 16 playoff teams in the regular season, and they lost all five of their road games against the Lakers this season.

JACK'S BACK

The 86-year-old Nicholson watched his beloved team for the first time since October 2021, returning to his usual seats alongside his son. The Lakers' most famous fan has been a fixture at courtside for the last half-century, and the Oscar-winning actor got a huge ovation from his fellow supporters whenever his face appeared on the scoreboard.

TIP-INS

Grizzlies: Luke Kennard sat out with a sore shoulder, further hurting the depth on a roster already missing Steven Adams and Brandon Clarke. Kennard got a stinger in Game 5. ... Xavier Tillman scored two points in 18 minutes.

Lakers: James won his 40th career playoff series, tying Derek Fisher for the most in NBA history. ... LA has won 14 of its last 18 games. ... Nicholson's return was the highlight of a celebrity-studded night at courtside, where the fans included Larry David, Dr. Dre, Adele and Kyrie Irving, who got a big hug from

James before the game. Irving is a free agent this summer, and he has been linked to a reunion with James repeatedly in recent years.

AP NBA: <https://apnews.com/hub/NBA> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Marijuana job lands Oregon Secretary of State in trouble

By ANDREW SELSKY Associated Press

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — Oregon Secretary of State Shemia Fagan is in hot water, with Republican lawmakers calling for her resignation and the Democratic governor seeking investigations because Fagan took a consulting job with a marijuana firm.

The matter came to a head Friday after Fagan's office released an audit of the state's marijuana regulators, the Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission. The audit called for the OLCC to "reform" some rules for marijuana businesses, saying they are "burdens" when combined with federal restrictions on interstate commerce, banking and taxation.

Fagan, a Democrat, recused herself from the audit because she is a paid consultant of an affiliate of marijuana retail chain La Mota, Fagan's spokesman Ben Morris said at a virtual news conference about the audit's release.

La Mota's co-owner has hosted fundraisers for top Democratic Oregon politicians, including Fagan, while the co-owner, her partner and their business allegedly owe \$1.7 million in unpaid bills and more in state and federal taxes, according to Willamette Week, a Portland newspaper.

Fagan didn't appear at the news conference, which included her spokesman, deputy and the audits director. News of the consultancy was first reported Thursday by Willamette Week.

Morris denied Fagan's outside work represented a conflict of interest and said Oregon Government Ethics Commission guidelines specifically allow public officials to maintain private employment.

But hours after the audit press conference, Republican legislative leaders, who are in the minority in the Legislature, called for Fagan to resign over the consulting job.

"This appears to be an ethics violation and if it isn't then Oregon's ethics laws are broken," Senate Republican leader Tim Knopp and House Republican leader Vikki Breese-Iverson said in a joint statement.

Gov. Tina Kotek, a Democrat, indicated she had concerns later on Friday.

"It's critical that Oregonians trust their government," Kotek said in an emailed statement.

Kotek said she was urging the Oregon Government Ethics Commission "to immediately investigate this situation" and asked the Oregon Department of Justice to examine the audit.

The audit questioned the OLCC's requirement that marijuana businesses keep their stash behind steel doors and have 24-hour video surveillance systems. The OLCC should make marijuana regulations more like those governing distilled spirits, which the agency also regulates, the auditors said.

The audit also said Oregon should prepare for the U.S. government eventually legalizing marijuana and position the state, with its huge stockpiles of the drug, as a national leader in the industry.

Oregon, long known for its potent marijuana, would be competing with other pot-producing states — particularly California, which also has a vast oversupply — for the export market if marijuana is ever legalized nationally.

"Now is the time for Oregon to prepare its system for a future when cannabis is legal nationally," Oregon Deputy Secretary of State Cheryl Myers said at the news conference.

Oregon Audits Director Kip Memmott noted with a bit of envy that Canada legalized marijuana and is "a lot more proactive in looking at the benefits financially."

Oregon can lead the way in the U.S. in how pot is regulated, while also offering its high-end strains of marijuana, Memmott said.

"We have kind of a signature commodity, along with ... our timber and all the other great things that Oregon produces here. And there's a real opportunity," Memmott said.

Oregon's auditors reminded the OLCC to follow its own strategic plan to position the state as a national leader by increasing the number of speaking engagements at national conferences, holding more statewide meetings and championing a nationwide framework for cannabis regulation.

OLCC Executive Director Craig Prins wrote in response that his agency is keen to move quickly if, and when, interstate marijuana commerce is permitted.

Prins said he expects "only the highest quality products from well-regulated systems, that have recognized testing, packaging, labeling, and traceability standards, will be allowed for sale into other states."

Oregon has for years prioritized these standards, which are aimed at protecting consumers, Prins said.

A total of 21 states and Washington, D.C., have legalized recreational use of marijuana, but activists see little chance of the current Congress moving toward national legalization. Still, there's hope the Biden administration will allow pot commerce among states that have legalized it.

Oklahoma's top education official embraces culture wars

By SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — When Oklahoma's newly elected Republican head of public schools campaigned for the job last fall, he ran on a platform of fighting "woke ideology" in public schools, banning certain books from school libraries, empowering parents with school choice and getting rid of "radical leftists" he claims were indoctrinating children in classrooms across the state.

While the political strategy was successful and Ryan Walters won the race for superintendent of public instruction by nearly 15 percentage points, many expected him to pivot toward more substantive education policy: working with lawmakers to improve education outcomes and overseeing the state's largest — and most-funded — agency.

Instead, Walters, a former public school teacher from McAlester, has doubled down on his political rhetoric, focusing his energy on culture-war issues like targeting transgender athletes in schools, banning books and fighting what he calls "Joe Biden's radical agenda."

In doing so, the 37-year-old political newcomer has frustrated even his fellow Republicans in the Legislature, who have publicly voiced concern about whether Walters can effectively improve public education in Oklahoma, which consistently scores below the national average on most standardized testing and where average scores have declined in recent years.

State Rep. Mark McBride, a veteran Republican lawmaker who heads a key education budget committee in the House, said he's disappointed Walters has continued to engage in inflammatory commentary and take advice from his campaign consultant instead of working with lawmakers on policy.

"If he would come over here and talk to us instead of a political hack, I think it would move the state forward and move education forward," said McBride, who said Walters' recent refusal of an invitation to address a committee hearing was the first time in his 11 years in the House that an agency head had done so.

Even Senate President Pro Tempore Greg Treat, who said he considers Walters a friend, said he's turned off by Walters' "fiery" rhetoric.

"I wish we could get down into the details of trying to deliver on school choice and a real teacher pay raise," Treat said.

In an editorial, the state's largest newspaper, The Oklahoman, called on Walters to end the divisive rhetoric or resign from office.

Walters is a strong supporter of a voucher-style plan that would allow parents to use taxpayer money to homeschool their children or send them to private schools, even religious ones. The issue is a major one the Republican-controlled Legislature is considering this year amid bipartisan opposition. But several lawmakers working on the proposal say Walters has had little, if any, input.

For his part, Walters said he's got "great support" in the House and Senate and that he's continuing to work with lawmakers to get some kind of voucher proposal, which he calls school choice, to the governor's desk.

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"I'm going to continue to fight for that in both the Senate and the House, and we're working closely to get this done," he said.

He also proposed a new teacher recruitment pilot program that includes a \$50,000 sign-on bonus for new teachers in certain instructional areas who spend at least five years in the classroom.

While many public school teachers and administrators fiercely oppose the idea of sending public money to private schools, several who spoke to The Associated Press say they're more concerned about Walters' talking points and his threats to punish teachers.

"I would say fear is the most poignant emotion that is felt," said Jaime Lee, a ninth-grade U.S. government and history teacher in the Tulsa suburb of Bixby.

She said many teachers are afraid of violating a state law approved two years ago that prohibits the teaching of certain concepts of race and racism, commonly referred to as an "anti-critical race theory law," which Walters vowed to strongly enforce. Critical race theory, a way of thinking about America's history through the lens of racism that is generally taught at the university level, recently morphed across the country from an obscure academic discussion point on the left into a political rallying cry on the right.

"It's frustrating as a teacher," Lee said.

Those fears were heightened earlier this year when Walters threatened to revoke a Norman teacher's teaching certificate because she provided her high school students with a QR code that linked to the Brooklyn Public Library's section of banned books.

Walters also has not shied away from his support of private Christian schools. He even encouraged a state board to approve what would be the nation's first religious charter school, despite an explicit prohibition in the state constitution and the state's Republican attorney general's warnings.

After a parent and some ministers raised concerns to the board, Walters dismissed them as "radical leftists" who hate the Catholic church.

"(Walters) just could not help himself but interject with very inflammatory, partisan language," said Erika Wright, a mother of two children in public school and the leader of the Oklahoma Rural Schools Coalition who spoke to the board. "I'm a Republican. I'm not a radical leftist."

Walters also has faced criticism for his previous work as Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt's secretary of education, when he had oversight of a program to distribute federal coronavirus relief funds intended for education. A scathing federal audit of the program recommended the state return nearly \$653,000 it said families had spent on items like Xbox gaming systems, grills and televisions.

Some of Walters' other actions have been seen as petty digs toward educators, like when just a month into the job, he removed portraits of members of the Educators Hall of Fame that had been hanging for decades in the Department of Education building. He replaced them with artwork from students.

He also faced criticism for a tweet in December that showed his family posing with a white Santa Claus and said: "No woke Santa this year :)." Many interpreted the message as a thinly veiled racist response to news stories at the time about a Black Oklahoman who dressed as Santa, although Walters rejected any suggestion the tweet was racist.

Despite the controversy, Stitt, who is serving his second term as governor, said he continues to have confidence in Walters.

"I think he's easy to target, maybe, and I think he has some social media stuff," Stitt said. "I know his heart, and his heart is to improve education in Oklahoma and to empower parents."

Follow Sean Murphy on Twitter: @apseanmurphy

Facing revolt, GOP spares ethanol in drive to cut spending

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republicans are touting their debt limit package as a first step toward fiscal restraint, saying it's past time for Congress to reduce the swelling deficits that they warn are threatening the fiscal health of the country.

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But when a group of Midwestern Republicans went marching this week into the office of House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, it wasn't spending cuts they wanted to talk about.

They were on a mission to preserve billions of dollars in federal support for biofuels and ethanol.

The bloc of lawmakers, with Iowa's four Republicans at its core, forced McCarthy to make revisions to the legislation in the hours before it headed to a floor vote, even after the speaker had insisted changes were off the table. The concession amounted to a \$38.6 billion carve-out to safeguard the incentives for biofuels, carbon capture projects and the ethanol industry, and helped the bill pass by a narrow 217-215 margin.

The episode highlighted how, even as Republicans decry the massive spending packages passed under President Joe Biden, their opposition to federal spending often fades when it comes to money flowing to their communities. The dust-up also amounts to a warning of sorts for GOP leaders as they seek a debt-limit deal with Biden, showing that attempts to slash government programs could quickly face opposition in their own ranks.

"This bill is to get us to the negotiating table," McCarthy said ahead of the vote this week. "It's not the final provisions and there's a number of members that will vote for it going forward and say there are some concerns they have."

For the Republicans who adamantly defended the tax incentives, the political turnaround was especially stark. The Iowa Republicans railed against the \$740 billion price tag of Democratic priorities like the Inflation Reduction Act last year, which extended tax breaks for clean energy projects.

But the federal assistance for energy is popular back home in the Corn Belt, where a boom in energy projects is underway.

"I'm thrilled everyone is talking about biofuels," said Rep. Ashley Hinson, an Iowa Republican who fought to save the energy provisions.

The biofuel industry contributes over \$6 billion to Iowa's economy and uses 60% of the corn it produces, Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, a Republican who also lobbied for the carve-out, said in a statement this week.

Incentives in the Biden bill, which Democrats called the Inflation Reduction Act, have spurred growth in the production of ethanol and biofuels, said Tristan Brown, director of the Bioeconomy Development Institute at SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry. As auto manufacturers move towards electric cars, the next generation of the ethanol industry will revolve around manufacturing sustainable aviation fuel.

The impact of the spending is noticeable all across the region. A series of projects aimed at producing sustainable jet fuel have been announced, and plans are underway for a pair of carbon sequestration pipelines, which tap into tax credits by capturing carbon dioxide at ethanol refineries and pumping it to sites where it can be stored underground.

Geoff Cooper, president of ethanol lobbyist Renewable Fuels Association, pointed to investments in agriculture communities across the country as he warned against the repeal of the Inflation Reduction Act's clean energy tax provisions this week.

"Repealing those incentives midstream would rip the rug out from underneath the U.S. bioenergy sector, leave a wake of stranded investments, and undermine the rural communities that are leading the low-carbon energy transition," he said in a statement.

But when Democrats' marquee climate legislation came before House Republicans last year, they all opposed it, often in strenuous terms.

In an August speech on the House floor, Hinson decried the Inflation Reduction Act as "wasting hundreds of billions of taxpayer dollars on Green New Deal priorities."

Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks had similar criticism last year, saying, "This enormous spending package is bad for Iowans, bad for the economy and bad for hardworking Americans and bad for the future of American innovation."

Brown, the economics and agriculture professor, said it is not surprising that the Republican members of Congress would broadly oppose a Democratic-backed spending package while supporting and defending

pieces that benefit the economies of their home state.

Plus, ethanol has long enjoyed political favor from both parties. And Iowa ethanol in particular has played an outsized role in politics as presidential hopefuls make appearances at fairs and ethanol refineries ahead of the state's first-in-the-nation caucuses.

Agriculture groups also hold significant political sway in Midwestern politics. For example, one of the carbon capture pipelines based in Iowa, called the Midwest Carbon Express, is backed by the Summit Agriculture Group. The corporation's CEO, Bruce Rastetter, is a major Republican donor who this year alone made campaign contributions of \$11,600 to Hinson, \$5,800 to Miller-Meeks and \$6,600 to Iowa Rep. Zach Nunn.

"The biofuels industry drives the Iowa economy and is vital to our nation's energy security," the Iowa House delegation, which also includes Rep. Randy Feenstra, said in a joint statement this week defending the energy provisions.

Repeal of the green energy tax credits was not part of McCarthy's initial proposal to raise the debt ceiling. But as he tried to sell the package to the wider GOP conference, a group of hard-right Republicans had insisted that repeal of the green energy tax credits be included in the proposal.

Republicans from coastal states also objected to the repeal of tax incentives for green energy projects like wind power.

"These credits have been very beneficial to my constituents, attracting significant investment in new manufacturing jobs for businesses in southeast Virginia," said Rep. Jen Kiggans in a floor speech.

The first-term Republican voted for the bill, even as she urged for the tax credit repeal to be taken out of any final legislation.

Members of Iowa congressional delegation, however, would not budge until the bill was changed to protect the ethanol and biofuel industry.

After the bill was revised, the four Iowa Republicans released their joint statement saying they were proud to deliver a "major victory" for the industry and state.

Looking ahead, they added, "As negotiations continue, we have made it crystal clear that we will not support any bill that eliminates any of these critical biofuels tax credits."

Jack Nicholson returns to courtside for Lakers' playoff game

By GREG BEACHAM AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Jack is back.

Los Angeles Lakers superfan Jack Nicholson was watching at courtside for the first time in nearly two years Friday night when his team hosted the Memphis Grizzlies in Game 6 of their first-round playoff series.

The 86-year-old Nicholson hadn't been in his usual seats in the Lakers' downtown arena since last season's opening game in October 2021, but the three-time Academy Award-winning actor returned to his famed spot near the opposing bench with his son.

Nicholson was a fixture in the last half-century of Lakers history, cheering on the team through several eras of success after getting his season tickets in 1970. He was the most prominent face in the Lakers' gallery of celebrity fans, his sunglasses and famous grin ever-present at courtside — and occasionally on the court if he was particularly displeased by an official's call.

Nicholson cheered while the Showtime Lakers racked up championships and captured Hollywood's imagination, and he remained an avid fan while they won five more titles in the Kobe Bryant era. He famously adjusted his shooting schedules and personal meetings to keep himself free to catch every big Lakers game.

Nicholson rarely attended games after fans returned to the Lakers' building following the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the chance to watch the Lakers attempt to win a playoff series at home for the first time since 2013 was irresistible to their No. 1 fan.

Zoey Zephyr row spotlights rise of GOP far-right caucuses

By MATTHEW BROWN and SAM METZ Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — The banishment of transgender lawmaker Zoey Zephyr from Montana's House floor has showcased the rising power of hard-line conservatives — organized under the banner of the State Freedom Caucus Network — who are currently leveraging divisive social issues to gain influence in 11 statehouses.

In Montana, they led the charge to enshrine a ban on gender-affirming care for minors that the governor signed Friday. In South Carolina, they slowed the budget process this year with failed amendments to punish universities with diversity programs. And in Wyoming, they tried to make certain library books "crimes of obscenity."

Across the country with varying levels of success, the groups have followed the playbook of the House Freedom Caucus, an eight-year old alliance of GOP conservatives determined to pull Republicans in the U.S. Congress to the right.

After debuting on the second anniversary of the January 6 siege on the U.S. Capitol, the Montana Freedom Caucus' 21 members over the past two weeks successfully pushed GOP leaders to punish Zephyr, a Democrat, following her statements and actions in support of the transgender community.

The dispute brought Zephyr a national stage from which to advocate for transgender issues. Though she's seized the moment and drawn support from the left, her elevated profile could work to the GOP's advantage as Republicans try to paint Democrats as extremists heading into 2024, said University of Montana political analyst Robert Saldin. U.S. Sen. Jon Tester, a moderate Democrat and farmer, will be up for reelection in a race considered pivotal for control of the Senate.

"This is what the Freedom Caucus folks wanted," said Saldin. "Now Zephyr is the second most well-known Democrat in Montana. To the extent that she's the face of the party in Montana, that's great for the Freedom Caucus."

Zephyr's punishment appears unprecedented in Montana. It comes after the state's political landscape careened sharply Republican over the past 15 years, giving the GOP a two-thirds supermajority in the statehouse. That shift sidelined the thinning ranks of Republican moderates — and brought to the fore social issues once on the legislative fringe.

"They like to call us extremists, but we're seeing the extremists on the left take front and center stage here," said Montana Freedom Caucus chairwoman and state Sen. Theresa Manzella. "We're getting behind the right issues, the issues that are dear to our hearts and those of our constituency."

The caucus and its members also have repeatedly misgendered Zephyr by using the wrong pronouns to describe her. Manzella indicated that will continue.

Montana's Republican House Speaker stopped recognizing Zephyr's requests to speak on April 18 after she told colleagues they'd have blood on their hands if they restricted gender-affirming medical care. Days later, Zephyr was ousted from the floor on a party-line vote for the remainder of the session, accused of egging on boisterous demonstrators in the House gallery who had demanded she be allowed to speak.

State Rep. Bob Phalen, a Freedom Caucus member and eastern Montana farmer, said the moves against Zephyr capped a session in which the caucus played a key role passing laws banning gender-affirming care for minors and restricting the dissemination of pornography. The group now includes one-fifth of statehouse Republicans and Phalen said he expects it to grow with the addition of freshman lawmakers whose votes aligned with Freedom Caucus priorities and will thereby earn entry.

Phalen, like others in the caucus, described this week's disruption on the House floor as "a riot or insurrection" — employing the same language that's been used for the Jan. 6 siege by supporters of Donald Trump.

The State Freedom Caucus Network is the brainchild of Republican strategist Andy Roth and U.S. Rep. Andy Biggs of Arizona, who in the lead-up to the 2020 election devised expanding the House Freedom Caucus model to the states.

The network uses House Freedom Caucus members to establish state-level affiliates, with congressmen including Biggs, U.S. Rep. Matt Rosendale of Montana and U.S. Rep. Ralph Norman of South Carolina

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informally advising lawmakers in their states — hoping to create a pipeline of conservative lawmakers to higher office. Each backed Trump's false statements about fraud in the 2020 election.

Since its founding, the national network has supported Republican primary candidates with modest funds for attack ads in at least one state, but its primary function has been to advise lawmakers on policy and strategy, Roth, the network's president, said.

The state-level strategy mirrors that of the House Freedom Caucus, which led the GOP rebellion against U.S. Rep. Kevin McCarthy's bid for Speaker in January, extracting major concessions from leadership and coveted committee assignments.

"We're trying to expose the hypocrisy that is going on in every state, especially in red states," Roth said. "Liberal Republicans are going to the voters and saying, 'I'm conservative. Elect me to the Statehouse,' and then getting there and voting exactly opposite."

Biggs, the former Freedom Caucus chair who challenged McCarthy, said freedom caucuses "create leverage points to try to advance a conservative cause."

"Leverage is the key," Biggs said. "When I have something you want, and you feel like you need to have it, then you can't get it anywhere else."

The majority of the 11 states with caucuses are controlled by Republican governors and Legislatures. Roth said that's by design. The national network advises its state members to "be loud" against Republicans who have compromised on fiscal and cultural conservative principles, Roth said.

Freedom caucuses from Idaho to Pennsylvania have focused on abortion, crime and how race, gender and sexuality are navigated in schools and state offices. They've also frequently targeted what Roth called "corporate welfare" including tax incentives designed to lure Hollywood film productions to Wyoming.

The group's rise in Montana follows the departure of lawmakers like former state Sen. Duane Ankney, who was among of a group of moderate Republicans that routinely negotiated with Democrats to break budget impasses. With Montana Republicans now in firm grip of power, Ankney said they no longer need Democratic agreement — or even to engage public debate.

"There's people up there that have an agenda, and it doesn't have to do with jobs and the economic health and well being of Montana," said Ankney, who served four terms in the state House and Senate before leaving the Legislature in January.

Metz reported from Salt Lake City. Associated Press reporters James Pollard in Columbia, South Carolina, and Mead Gruver in Cheyenne, Wyoming, contributed to this story.

Georgia's Kemp veers from Trump, but state GOP not moving on

By JEFF AMY Associated Press

BUFORD, Ga. (AP) — A slate of Georgia Republicans led by Gov. Brian Kemp handily won reelection last year over far-right primary opponents endorsed by Donald Trump and backed by the state party chairperson, showing the limits of the former president and his 2020 election lies in the critical swing state.

Despite those stinging primary losses, the state GOP is showing little interest in moving on from Trump.

Last weekend, Republicans in Georgia's 1st Congressional District, which includes Savannah, elected as its chair Kandiss Taylor, a Kemp gubernatorial challenger who ran on a "Jesus Guns Babies" platform and denies the legitimacy of her primary defeat. In metro Atlanta's 6th Congressional District, Republican activists considered a resolution rejecting the results of the 2020 election and declaring Democrat Joe Biden the "acting" president.

"In many ways, the Georgia Republican Party is a train that has left Crazytown, and the governor is trying to present a scenario and lead and demonstrate that that's not the path to success," said John Watson, a former state Republican Party chair aligned with Kemp.

Kemp and a handful of other elected Republicans said this week that they won't attend the state's GOP convention in June, when the new leader of the state party will be chosen, citing unhappiness with current party leaders.

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Georgia is one of a number of states where far-right Republicans aligned with Trump are joining the ranks of party leadership, giving them increasing influence over the party's direction. But mounting electoral losses, including in last year's midterms, raise questions about whether the state parties are growing out of step with the voters they're supposed to represent.

Republican delegates in Michigan earlier this year elected Kristina Karamo as state party chair, elevating an election conspiracist who was defeated in November in her secretary of state race. In Kansas, Mike Brown, a conspiracy theorist who lost his primary bid for secretary of state, was named chair of the state party. And in Idaho, Dorothy Moon, an election denier and former state representative, became state GOP chair last year shortly after her unsuccessful primary run for secretary of state.

In addition to concerns about the party's direction, Georgia Republican incumbents are still mad at outgoing party Chair David Shafer, who promoted a Trump-aligned ticket of primary challengers against them in last year's primaries. Those state officials, including Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger and Attorney General Chris Carr, not only won their primaries but also went on to beat their Democratic rivals by convincing margins.

"I am going to stand up with those that believe in electing and supporting Republicans, but I don't think it's right when you have a party that went after an entire statewide ticket and undermined our ability to get elected," Carr said Wednesday after a bill-signing in Buford.

Carr and others voice hope that one of the three candidates running to replace Shafer as party chair will patch things up. Chairman since 2019, Shafer is stepping down while a target of investigation by Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis into attempts to overturn President Joe Biden's Democratic victory in Georgia in 2020.

Shafer said he isn't seeking reelection because he wants to refocus on his family.

Republicans have also lost three races for U.S. Senate since January 2021 under Shafer. Democratic Sens. Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock, representing a once reliably Republican state, provide the margin of Senate control for their party.

Kemp has been trying to promote a Trump-divergent vision for Republicans since shortly after the 2020 election, when he defied the then-president's demands to help overturn Trump's narrow loss in the state. His impressive win over Democrat Stacey Abrams last year stoked presidential speculation, but Kemp has said he's not going to seek the White House in 2024. He has, however, been angling for national influence through the Republican Governors Association and could be setting up a 2026 Senate run against Ossoff.

"If you look in the rearview mirror too long while you're driving, you're going to look up, and you're going to be running into somebody, and that's not going to be good," Kemp told CNN in mid-April, shortly after delivering the same message at the Republican National Committee donors' retreat in Nashville.

But it's not Kemp who elects the leader of the state party — it's activists. And that setup has caused conflict before.

Kemp got booed at the 2021 state party convention, and some members tried to censure Republican Gov. Nathan Deal, Kemp's predecessor. Deal skipped the two conventions in his second term.

"The people show up at party events are not representative of Georgia's Republican primary electorate," said Brian Robinson, a political consultant who was Deal's chief spokesperson. "They are, by and large, much further to the right, much more ideologically driven."

The discord is also raising questions about whether control of the party apparatus matters anymore. In Georgia, voters don't register by party and can participate in whatever primary they like. Unlike in some states, Georgia party leaders can't kick candidates off the primary ballot for disloyalty. And a recent Georgia law allows Kemp and some other state officials to raise unlimited sums of money and coordinate with campaigns, which used to be key party functions.

Kemp kept his political operation running after his reelection and loaned its get-out-the-vote effort to the unsuccessful Senate runoff campaign of Herschel Walker, while forming a federal political action committee that lets the governor influence races for Congress and president.

"I don't have a rift with the state GOP," Kemp told reporters Tuesday in Atlanta. "You know, I just think

that to win, we have to have a robust ground operation. The state GOP was not doing that. And so we did that ourselves.”

The three candidates running to lead the state party acknowledge that a new chair needs to focus on rebuilding an organization that has shrunk to two employees, increase fundraising and do more to train party activists how to win votes. Shafer is backing Josh McKoon, a former state senator who is now a lawyer for the state technical college system. McKoon acknowledges a need for unity, saying that a focus on ousting Biden in 2024 should help.

“There’s been a lot of infighting, not just within the primary, but between Republicans, between party officials and elected officials,” McKoon said. “We’ve got to lay that aside.”

But Watson said that may be hard to achieve if activists aren’t ready to change.

“If the party and the party organization continues to focus on conspiracy, backward looking, fringe ideas, fringe policies, then again it will have completed its path to irrelevance,” Watson said.

Presidential battleground states weigh more election funding

By JAMES POLLARD and DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Ahead of the 2024 presidential election, officials in several battleground states have proposed boosting funding to add staff, enhance security and expand training within election offices that are facing heavier workloads and heightened public scrutiny.

The potential extra funding comes as many election offices are grappling with a wave of retirements and a flood of public records requests, stemming partly from lingering election distrust seeded by former President Donald Trump in his 2020 defeat.

In South Carolina, host of one of the earliest presidential primaries, almost half of county election directors have resigned in the last two years, said state Election Commission Executive Director Howard Knapp.

The unprecedented turnover has created an “enormous knowledge and competency gap,” Knapp said, prompting a budget request for millions of additional state dollars to boost staffing and training. Without the funds, Knapp warned the gap will grow and elections will be “severely impacted.”

“I can’t control county directors leaving,” said Knapp. He added, “What I can control is this agency’s ability to deliver quality training to the counties so that it doesn’t matter who is in the chair, they will have an established training program that they can take themselves and they can impart.”

Elections officials, governors and lawmakers in states that hold early primaries or play pivotal roles in the presidential election, including Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina and Wisconsin, also have proposed funding increases. In many of those states, lawmakers are still working on the final budget.

Time is of the essence. Most annual state budgets take effect in July, meaning they will encompass presidential primaries occurring in the first half of 2024. Once funding is approved, election officials will need time to hire and train employees and purchase new security and voting equipment.

Georgia, where a grand jury has been investigating whether Trump and his allies illegally meddled in the 2020 election, is one of about a dozen states where lawmakers already have passed a 2024 budget. The Republican-led General Assembly added \$427,010 to hire two investigators, one administrative assistant and an executive director for the State Election Board.

One state still weighing more election spending is Arizona, which became a focal point for election challenges and conspiracies after Trump narrowly lost the state in 2020.

Arizona Gov. Katie Hobbs, a Democrat who previously served as secretary of state, has proposed an \$11 million increase for a new election task force. The panel, which held its first meeting earlier this month, is expected to release recommendations by November on ways to standardize election practices, update election equipment and security guidelines, and provide training to local workers.

Arizona’s Democratic Secretary of State Adrian Fontes is pushing for an additional \$3.1 million in election-related spending, in part to add six employees to help train and certify election workers and a new chief information security officer to confront cyber vulnerabilities in election systems.

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Military investigators were making their way to Alaska's interior, with a team from Fort Novosel, Alabama, expected to arrive at the crash site by Saturday, said John Pennell, a spokesperson for the U.S. Army Alaska. Little new information about the crash was released Friday.

The Army on Thursday said two of the soldiers died at the site and the third on the way to a hospital in Fairbanks. The injured fourth soldier was taken to a hospital and was in stable condition Friday, Pennell said. The names of those who were killed were not immediately released.

"The safety of our aviators is our top priority, and this stand down is an important step to make certain we are doing everything possible to prevent accidents and protect our personnel," Army Chief of Staff James McConville said of the decision to ground flight units for training.

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 (50 kilometers) northeast of Fort Campbell, Kentucky.

The Army said that while Thursday's crash and the one in Kentucky remain under investigation, "there is no indication of any pattern between the two mishaps."

Healy is home to about 1,000 people roughly 10 miles (16 kilometers) north of Denali National Park and Preserve, or about 250 miles (400 kilometers) north of Anchorage.

Located on the Parks Highway, the community is a popular place for people to spend the night while visiting Denali Park, which is home to 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.

2023 NFL Draft | Who are the top players for Day 3?

By The Associated Press undefined

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Day 2 of the NFL draft is a wrap!

There were 16 trades during the second and third rounds, including the Tennessee Titans moving up eight spots to select quarterback Will Levis with the second pick of the day.

Day 3 begins at noon EST on Saturday and will feature the last four rounds. The draft kicked off Thursday with the Carolina Panthers selecting Alabama quarterback Bryce Young first overall.

TOP PICKS ON DAY 2 OF THE NFL DRAFT

- Joey Porter Jr. was selected by the Pittsburgh Steelers with the first pick of the second round. The Penn State cornerback is the son of former Steelers linebacker and Super Bowl champion Joey Porter.

-Levis, the biggest name on the board at the start of Day 2, went No. 33 overall to the Titans.

-Tennessee quarterback Hendon Hooker, another player who was expected to potentially go in the first round, fell to the third round and was selected No. 68 overall by the Detroit Lions.

TOP PLAYERS AVAILABLE FOR DAY 3

Georgia cornerback Kelee Ringo is the highest-rated prospect remaining on NFL.com's list going into the final day of the draft.

Ringo is rated 47th overall and has watched four of his teammates from the two-time national champions selected ahead of him in the first three rounds.

Alabama leads its Southeastern Conference rivals with eight selections through the first three rounds, including Young at No. 1 overall. Big Ten rivals Ohio State and Michigan had four players apiece taken in the first three rounds.

PANTHERS TRADE UP TO SELECT DJ JOHNSON

The Carolina Panthers traded up 13 spots in the third round to No. 80 to select outside linebacker DJ

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There is no evidence of widespread fraud or manipulation of voting equipment in the 2020 elections. Yet distrust about U.S. elections persists among Republicans, fueled by Trump allies who have been traveling the country highlighting theoretical vulnerabilities.

In the past three years, almost every election office across the country has seen an increase in the number of public records requests, said Tammy Patrick, chief executive officer for programs at the National Association of Election Officials.

South Carolina experienced a 500% increase in election-related public-records requests, driven largely by election skeptics submitting model language drafted by out-of-state conspiracy groups, Knapp said. The state election commission is seeking \$3.2 million to help establish a new training division and enhance technical support. Knapp also wants about \$1.2 million to hire seven staff members, including a public information officer to respond to media, voters and interest groups.

Voting advocates said strong training is especially important in a hostile environment where bad-faith actors may twist instances of incompetence or irregularities to undermine election integrity.

Cynthia Holland, who oversees elections for Aiken County, an expansive rural county in the western part of South Carolina, said the funded training would be a "blessing." She estimated that her four-person office has spent over 100 hours since November 2020 responding to records requests.

"It's enough time that it puts us behind on our work that we're supposed to be hired to do," she said.

Officials in Nevada, Oregon and Wisconsin also have proposed funding increases to hire additional staff to handle public requests for election records and information.

Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers, a Democrat, proposed \$1.9 million over the next two fiscal years to hire 10 staff for a new Office of Election Transparency and Compliance to handle requests and complaints. Until recently, the Wisconsin Election Commission only had a single attorney to process complaints and one public information officer.

"Unfortunately, this structure has proved inadequate to address the hundreds of thousands of questions and concerns, along with hundreds of records requests and complaints," the election commission wrote in its budget request.

Separate budget plans by North Carolina's Democratic governor and Republican-led House both include money to hire more regional staff to help county election boards with technology, security and other needs.

Michigan's Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer is seeking to boost the secretary of state's overall budget by nearly \$10 million, including a \$3 million increase for branch offices and \$1.2 million to expand staffing for seven mobile offices. But the increase is substantially less than the \$100 million annually that Democratic Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson estimates is needed to "address historic disinvestment in Michigan elections."

About three-fourths of local election officials across the U.S. say their budgets need to grow over the next several years, according to a recent Brennan Center for Justice survey of 852 local election officials. The nonpartisan democracy-focused policy institute highlighted the need for more spending to hire poll workers and office staff, replace voting equipment and improve physical and cyber security measures.

"Things are strained – there's no question about it. The challenges in the elections field keep mounting," said Lawrence Norden, director of the Brennan Center's elections and government program. "There's a lot of concern in the elections community about what can be done in the remaining 18 months to make sure that our elections are as strong and secure as possible."

Lieb reported from Jefferson City, Missouri. AP reporters across the U.S. contributed to this report.

Pollard, Cappelletti and Venhuizen are corps members for the Associated Press/Report for America State-house News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

Political prisoners share how Jimmy Carter saved their lives

By MICHAEL WARREN Associated Press

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ATLANTA (AP) — Jimmy Carter tried like no president ever had to put human rights at the center of American foreign policy. It was a turnabout dictators and dissidents alike found hard to believe as he took office in 1977. The U.S. had such a long history of supporting crackdowns on popular movements — was his insistence on restoring moral principles for real?

After Carter, now 98, entered hospice care at his home in Georgia, The Associated Press reached out to several former political prisoners, asking what it was like to see his influence take hold in countries oppressed by military rule. They credit Carter with their survival.

Michèle Montas witnessed the impact from the control room of Radio Haiti-Inter, which carefully began challenging the dictatorship of Jean Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier after Carter said U.S. aid would depend on the growth of a civil society.

“So much was done in Haiti because of him. He managed to force the regime to open up,” Montas said.

But when they broadcast Carter’s reelection loss to Ronald Reagan in November 1980, Duvalier’s dreaded enforcers, the TonTon Macoutes, fired weapons and shouted, “Human rights are over, the cowboys are back in the White House!”

Haitians listened on their radios as Macoutes destroyed the station and imprisoned the staff, along with students, intellectuals, lawyers, human rights advocates and political candidates. “Everyone who could move in Haiti was suddenly arrested, and the country fell into complete silence,” Montas said.

But Carter wasn’t out of office yet. Montas was put on a plane to Miami, one of a list of prominent Haitian prisoners U.S. diplomats presented to the dictator’s staff.

“We were expelled because there was a strong protest on the part of the Carter administration,” said Montas, who later became the U.N. secretary-general’s spokeswoman.

Other dictators across Latin America also released political prisoners and hastened transitions to democratic elections, a transformation Carter encouraged without sending Americans into combat. He noted proudly that no bombs were dropped nor shots fired by U.S. troops under his watch. Aside from the eight service members who died in an accident trying to rescue hostages in Iran, no one was killed.

Carter had been briefed by outgoing Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, whose “realpolitik” approach meant covertly cozying up to autocrats as they terrorized their citizens. But Carter sought a new approach to winning the Cold War.

“We are now free of that inordinate fear of communism which once led us to embrace any dictator who joined us in that fear,” he announced four months into his presidency. “For too many years, we’ve been willing to adopt the flawed and erroneous principles and tactics of our adversaries, sometimes abandoning our own values for theirs.”

Carter then sent his wife Rosalynn on a “goodwill” mission around Latin America to show the dictators he meant what he said, according to “President Carter,” the White House memoir written by one of his top aides, Stuart Eizenstat.

Carter also expanded the State Department’s report on human rights in each country, an annual document authoritarians loathed and feared. His Foreign Corrupt Practices Act aimed to abolish bribery by multinational corporations. And his embassies welcomed victims of state terror, documenting 15,000 disappearances in Argentina alone.

Years later, Carter described his finger-wagging treatment of the Argentine dictator Jorge Videla at a Carter Center event, where he was introduced to some of the people he saved.

“I said, ‘These are innocent people and I demand they be released.’ And they were,” Carter recalled.

Declassified documents eventually confirmed Kissinger’s secret encouragement of Operation Condor, an effort by South America’s dictators to eliminate each other’s political opponents. Carter’s presidential daily memos, by contrast, included names and numbers of people kidnapped, imprisoned or killed.

Fernando Reati was a 22-year-old Argentine college activist when his whole family was arrested. Although his parents were released and fled into exile, he and his brother were tortured — waterboarding, beatings and stress positions — and narrowly escaped being shot by prison guards.

“They came to the cells, they called the names, and we never saw them again. And later on we learned

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from other people that they had been killed outside. That took place throughout 1976. And at the end of the year, they no longer killed people that way," said Reati.

The U.S. government's sudden insistence on respecting human rights came as a complete surprise to political prisoners and must have been "very mind-boggling" for Argentina's military, said Reati.

"They didn't believe that he was serious, because it was so hard to believe it after decades of U.S. support for all kinds of military dictatorships in Latin America," said Reati, whose testimony helped convict his torturers of crimes against humanity. He now leads Georgia State students on tours of dirty war sites in Buenos Aires.

Carter hadn't focused on human rights until it proved to be a potent campaign issue. As president, he framed it in terms of civil and political rights, avoiding the more difficult rights to food, education and health care, and applied its principles selectively, reflecting pragmatic calculations about U.S. interests, according to historian Barbara Keys, who wrote "Reclaiming American Virtue - the Human Rights Revolution of the 1970s."

So while Carter was personally committed to Latin America, he maintained a hands-off approach in Southeast Asia after the U.S. pullout from Vietnam — and his record there suffered for it.

Despite emerging evidence of brutality, Carter waited until 1978 to declare that Cambodia's bloodthirsty Khmer Rouge was "the worst violator of human rights in the world." Their nearly four-year reign of terror, from 1975-79, ultimately killed more than 1.7 million people.

Carter also stuck with his predecessors' support for Indonesia's authoritarian President Suharto, who used U.S. weapons and aircraft to crush an independence movement in East Timor. Hundreds of thousands died there in a quarter-century of conflict.

In Africa, however, his post-presidential Carter Center helped transform societies by fostering grassroots activism and social justice through public health initiatives, said Abdullahi Ahmed An-Naim, a former director of Africa Watch who taught human rights law at Emory University in Atlanta.

An-Naim was a University of Khartoum professor advocating for a Sharia that guarantees women's equality when the dictator of Sudan, Jaafar al-Nimeiri, decreed a draconian version of Quranic principles. To stifle dissent in the religiously diverse country, al-Nimeiri detained An-Naim and 50 colleagues for 18 months without charges.

At another scholar's request, Carter wrote a personal appeal. Al-Nimeiri became extremely angry and screamed about traitors and enemies, but "we were released without charge, without trial, without a word," An-Naim said. "It is Carter the human being who did this."

Michael Warren was the AP's deputy regional director for Latin America and the Caribbean and then Southern Cone bureau chief from 2004-2014. U.N. Correspondent Edie Lederer in New York contributed.

Army grounds aviators for training after fatal crashes

By BECKY BOHRER Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — The U.S. Army has grounded aviation units for training after 12 soldiers died within the last month in helicopter crashes in Alaska and Kentucky, the military branch announced Friday.

The suspension of air operations was effective immediately, with units grounded until they complete the training, said Lt. Col. Terence Kelley, an Army spokesperson. For active-duty units, the training is to take place between May 1 and 5. Army National Guard and Reserve units will have until May 31 to complete the training.

"The move grounds all Army aviators, except those participating in critical missions, until they complete the required training," the Army said in a statement.

On Thursday, two Army helicopters collided near Healy, Alaska, killing three soldiers and injuring a fourth. The aircraft from the 1st Attack Battalion, 25th Aviation Regiment at Fort Wainwright, near Fairbanks, were returning from training at the time of the crash, according to the Army. The unit is part of the 11th Airborne Division, which is nicknamed the "Arctic Angels."

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Johnson from Oregon, who garnered national attention last season when he appeared to punch a fan in the back of the head following a 38-34 loss to rival Oregon State.

Johnson said the issue was handled internally, and he has not been charged with any crime. He said he has learned from the experience.

"You learn how to keep your composure no matter what the situation," Johnson said.

QB HENDON HOOKER SELECTED IN THIRD ROUND

The Tennessee quarterback had an outside chance of going in the first round, but the second round appeared the likely destination.

Until it wasn't.

Hooker's wait finally ended in the third round when the Detroit Lions selected him with the 68th overall pick.

SECOND ROUND ENDS WITH SEVEN TRADES

The trades started early and kept on coming in the second round of the NFL draft.

It started when Tennessee moved up eight spots to the second selection and took Levis off the board.

Other teams moving up were Las Vegas, Atlanta, Detroit, Tampa Bay, Kansas City and Chicago. Green Bay and Indianapolis moved down in the second round twice each.

The Chiefs moved up eight spots to get another target for Super Bowl MVP Patrick Mahomes, taking wide receiver Rashee Rice at No. 55.

NEW RAIDERS TIGHT END HAS GOOD MEMORIES FROM VEGAS

New Las Vegas tight end Michael Mayer has some familiarity with the Raiders' Allegiant Stadium.

Mayer's Notre Dame beat BYU 28-20 in a Shamrock Series game there Oct. 8. Mayer starred by catching 11 passes for 118 yards and two TDs.

Mayer, selected No. 35 overall, also starred in a promotional video before the game against BYU. Mayer, defensive lineman Isaiah Foskey and coach Marcus Freeman did a spoof of "The Hangover," the 2009 comedy of a bachelor party gone wrong in Las Vegas.

"That was cool," Mayer said. "That was the first time I got to see the city and drive around. I'm looking forward to the fans, the greatest fans in America. I know (the Raiders) have a great fan base. I'm excited to be a part of it."

FAMILY FIRST FOR WILL LEVIS

Levis left the NFL draft in Kansas City before the second round started Friday night because he and his family needed to get back to their home in Connecticut for a big party planned for Saturday, reports AP Football Writer Teresa Walker.

The Titans ended the QB's agonizing wait under the glare of TV cameras with the No. 33 overall pick. Levis says they were in a very different atmosphere at home after being in nice suits and dresses Thursday night.

Levis said his fight was delayed, and he arrived home just before the Titans called to tell him they selected him. Levis says he was a "crying mess" and he was "ecstatic to get the call."

LAST DRAFT ATTENDEES FINALLY OFF THE BOARD

The last two of the 17 players who attended the draft are finally off the board.

Alabama cornerback Brian Branch and Georgia Tech defensive end Keion White have been taken back-to-back picks in the middle of the second round. Branch went 45th overall to Detroit and White was taken at No. 46 by New England.

Branch was the last player in the green room. White left Kansas City before his name was announced and received the news from his home in Atlanta.

"It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," Branch said when asked why he decided to stay in Kansas City. "Just wanted to enjoy the moment."

TOP TIGHT END PROSPECTS GO QUICKLY IN ROUND 2

The top prospects at tight end have gone quickly in the second round of the NFL draft after hanging around longer than expected on opening night.

Detroit has taken Iowa's Sam LaPorta at No. 34 overall. Michael Mayer of Notre Dame was the next

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selection to Las Vegas, and Luke Musgrave went No. 42 to the Green Bay Packers. The Raiders traded up four spots with Indianapolis to get Mayer.

LEVIS TAKEN IN SECOND ROUND BY TITANS

The Titans selected Levis with the 33rd overall pick.

The Kentucky QB projected as a first-round pick but wasn't selected on opening night.

The 6-foot-4 Levis has prototypical size for an NFL quarterback with a strong arm. Accuracy and decision-making have been inconsistent, especially in his final college season.

PICK OFF THE OLD BLOCK: STEELERS GET JOEY PORTER JR.

The Pittsburgh Steelers drafted the Penn State cornerback with the first pick in the second round.

Porter is the son of former Pittsburgh linebacker Joey Porter. The elder Porter was a four-time Pro Bowler who won a Super Bowl with the Steelers.

The younger Porter was projected as a first-round pick but didn't get selected on opening night. Steelers fans at the draft in Kansas City were chanting, "Jo-ey, Jo-ey" when the Steelers were on the clock.

LEVIS LEAVES KANSAS CITY

Levis didn't stick around to hear his name called with the 33rd overall pick by the Titans.

He was expected to go in the top 15 with some draft analysts projecting him among the top five. Levis sat uncomfortably in the green room, sometimes squirming in front of the TV cameras, as he watched three quarterbacks picked in the first four selections: Young to the Panthers, Stroud to the Texans and Anthony Richardson to the Indianapolis Colts.

CHIEFS OWNER SAYS NFL DRAFT IS A SHOWCASE FOR KC

The owner of the Kansas City Chiefs believes the NFL Draft has been a spectacular showcase for their hometown.

Clark Hunt, the son of Chiefs founder Lamar Hunt, added Friday that he's "heard nothing but compliments from league personnel about the job the city has done," AP's Dave Skretta reports.

The draft is being held at Union Station, where the Chiefs celebrated their latest Super Bowl triumph in February. Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes and tight end Travis Kelce began the draft Thursday night by bringing the Lombardi Trophy onto the stage to hype up a crowd of about 125,000.

MAHOMES TO RAIDERS PICK: TAKE IT EASY ON ME

Mahomes tweeted at new Las Vegas pass rusher Tyree Wilson to "take it easy on me" when the Raiders play the Chiefs this season.

The Raiders drafted Wilson seventh overall Thursday out of Texas Tech, where Mahomes starred before leading the Chiefs to two Super Bowl titles.

"Pat is from the same area I'm from," Wilson said Friday at the Raiders' facility in Henderson, Nevada. "I know his family, and it's ironic that me and him both went to Texas Tech, and now we're in the same division. So it's going to be a lot of competition and excitement for Texas Tech and East Texas."

RAIN DAMPENS NFL DRAFT

Showers started in the Kansas City area with the second and third rounds of the NFL Draft approaching, dampening the festive spirit that came with Thursday's first round at Union Station.

Still, thousands of fans descended on the downtown area for the second straight night to take in the scene. Many headed for the NFL Draft Experience and the little cover it provided in an otherwise open expanse of grass.

The stage erected in front of the train station is covered, as are the seats immediately in front of it. But most of the crowd, which figures to be far less than on opening night, will have to deal with the intermittent rain expected throughout the second and third rounds.

LEVIS TO THE COLTS?

Colts owner Jim Irsay raised eyebrows on Twitter hours before the start of the second round of the NFL draft by asking fans if the team should take Levis for a Joe Montana-Steve Young QB combo.

Irsay asked the question after Indianapolis took Richardson with the fourth overall pick. The Colts had the fourth pick in the second round, the 35th overall.

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Montana and Young are both Pro Football Hall of Famers who won Super Bowls in San Francisco. Young was Montana's backup before replacing him.

Levis was selected No. 33 overall by the Titans.

FIRST ROUND DRAFT PICKS

AP College Football Writer Ralph Russo breaks down all 31 first-round picks.

Young, Stroud, Alabama linebacker Will Anderson Jr. (Texans), Richardson and Illinois cornerback Devon Witherspoon (Seattle Seahawks) were the top five selections, while Kansas State defensive end Felix Anudike-Uzomah was the last player picked in the first round by the Super Bowl champions Kansas City Chiefs.

BIJAN ROBINSON, BACK WHERE HE STARTED

Robinson knew all about the Atlanta Falcons – and their Dirty Birds nickname – long before there was any hint he might one day be picked by the team in the first round of the NFL draft.

Robinson, a native of Tucson, Arizona, played for the Tucson Falcons as his first team in youth football. He posted photos on his Twitter account of him holding his No. 1 Falcons jersey on Thursday night and wearing his No. 8 Tucson Falcons jersey.

"We stole every slogan from the Falcons. We were the Dirty Birds," Robinson said during first news conference at the Falcons' practice facility on Friday. "That was my first team. It's just crazy that now we're here because I wore No. 8 the first year and wore No. 1 the year after."

STEELERS FIRST ROUNDER HONORS GEORGIA TEAMMATE

Steelers first-round pick Broderick Jones began his NFL career by honoring former Georgia teammate Devin Willock.

Jones, a 6-foot-3, 310-pound offensive tackle taken 14th overall by the Steelers, will wear No. 77 in Pittsburgh. That's the number Willock wore during his time with the Bulldogs.

"I just wanted to show my respects by taking that number and letting (Willock) live through me," Jones said.

Willock and Georgia recruiting staffer Chandler LeCroy died in a car accident in January, shortly after the Bulldogs won their second straight national title. Willock started every game at right guard for Georgia last season. Georgia defensive tackle Jalen Carter, taken ninth overall by the Eagles on Thursday, pleaded no contest to misdemeanor charges of reckless driving and racing related to the wreck.

AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/hub/nfl> and https://twitter.com/AP_NFL

Global Citizen NOW summit yields commitments, big and small

By GLENN GAMBOA AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Hugh Evans highlighted a staggering new statistic to explain why this year's Global Citizen NOW conference was packed with calls to action and urgent requests for involvement.

The CEO of Global Citizen, who has been fighting against extreme poverty since he was 14, told The Associated Press that climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and a global debt crisis have erased decades of progress in raising people's quality of life.

"For the first time in my lifetime, we're making reverse progress on this issue," Evans said. "When I was born in 1983, 52% of the planet lived in extreme poverty. We got it down to 7%. That was about 690 million people. It's now increased by hundreds of millions in the last three years."

This reversal is why Evans turned the two-day Global Citizen NOW conference, which wrapped up Friday night in New York, into a collection of calls to action. Political, business, philanthropic and cultural leaders urged Global Citizen supporters, especially younger generations, to tackle the causes concerning them.

New York Attorney General Letitia James said young people have been responsible for every movement in the world.

"I know that all of you have the power and the compassion and the fire in your belly to make a difference," she said. "I will be with you, cheering you on and leading the way."

Some actions were big, such as supporting Global Citizen's Power Our Planet initiative, which urges sup-

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porters to demand global financing reform from political and banking leaders to help speed investments to battle climate change.

French President Emmanuel Macron, addressing the conference virtually from France, offered support for the idea. "We all have to be a part of the reshaping and reinvention," he said.

The nonprofit JUST Capital, which advises companies how to deploy their investments more equitably, announced the creation of the Corporate Care Network, which aims to improve health care benefits for workers.

Singer-songwriter John Legend challenged supporters to pledge to build systems to create record-breaking youth turnout in the 2024 election.

"We want a democracy that's open to everybody, and one that encourages our leaders to do what's right because they know that they answer to the people," Legend said.

Other actions were more personal. A panel of advocates for a more plant-based diet – including Impossible Foods CEO Peter McGuinness and restaurateur Pinky Cole, owner of the Slutty Vegan burger chain – sought promises from the conference's worldwide audience to eat one plant-based meal a day.

"Food choice is the No. 1 weapon we have to combat climate change," McGuinness said.

Global Citizen's Evans said even though his organization remains focused on fighting extreme poverty, that battle cannot be won without addressing climate change and gender equity at the same time.

"We are all interconnected in some ways, whether you like it or not," he said. "What happens on one side of the planet will affect you. And so we can't just close our eyes and say, 'OK, these issues don't matter to me.' No nation is an island unto itself."

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>.

Conflict over transgender rights simmers across the US

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

As transgender people have increasingly gained acceptance and visibility, conservative lawmakers have zeroed in on restricting their rights: keeping transgender children off girls' sports teams and out of certain bathrooms, and blocking them from receiving gender-affirming medical care.

In response, a growing number of Democratic-controlled states have moved to protect such rights, especially access to gender-affirming care.

In developments this week, one governor is telling lawmakers they'll have to return for a special session if they fail to pass some restrictions, two others signed protections into law and a transgender lawmaker was barred from a Statehouse floor amid a standoff with colleagues.

THE BIG PICTURE

The push by conservatives has mushroomed over the last few years and become, alongside abortion, a major theme running through legislative sessions across the country in 2023.

Six states have laws or policies in effect barring minors from receiving puberty blockers or hormone therapy. Similar provisions have been adopted but paused by courts in three more. They've been signed into law but haven't yet taken effect in at least eight more.

THE CENTER OF DEBATE

In Missouri, the gender-affirming care battle is playing out in the Legislature and in court.

Earlier this month Republican Attorney General Andrew Bailey used an emergency rule to impose restrictions on both children and adults before they can receive such care. Just before it was to take effect this week, a judge halted enforcement until at least Monday and said she could push the date back further while legal challenges are considered.

Gov. Mike Parson, also a Republican, said he would call a special legislative session if lawmakers fail to pass bills that would restrict transgender rights by May 12.

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The GOP-controlled Legislature is on board but not in agreement over exceptions such as whether treatment for people already receiving puberty blockers or hormones would be allowed to continue.

BANNED FROM THE HOUSE FLOOR

Montana House Republicans barred a Democratic transgender colleague from the floor of the chamber for the rest of the legislative session as punishment.

Zoey Zephyr had told Republicans there would be “blood on your hands” — an expression frequently used in politics — if they approved a ban on gender-affirming care for minors. The bill passed, though it has not yet been signed into law.

Zephyr’s situation, which echoed the ouster of two Tennessee lawmakers from that state’s Legislature for a protest over gun policy this year, has turned her into a political cause for liberals nationwide.

She spent the first day of her exile this week battling to use a bench in a Statehouse hallway.

Also in Montana, Gov. Greg Gianforte signed legislation Friday banning gender-affirming care for minors.

The measure establishes penalties for health professionals who provide such care and allows for lawsuits if a patient suffers harm. Physicians could not hold malpractice insurance against such claims. The law also prohibits public employees and property from being involved in gender-affirming treatment.

During hours of emotional hearings, opponents testified that hormone treatments and in some cases surgery are supported by numerous medical associations and can be life-saving for someone with gender dysphoria, the clinically significant distress or impairment caused by feeling that one’s gender identity does not match one’s biological sex.

Gianforte said the bill “protects Montana children from permanent, life-altering medical procedures until they are adults, mature enough to make such serious decisions.”

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WEIGHS IN

The U.S. Department of Justice on Wednesday filed a lawsuit challenging Tennessee’s law, scheduled to take effect July 1, banning transgender youth from receiving gender-affirming care.

The federal government said “no person should be denied access to necessary medical care just because of their transgender status.”

Assistant U.S. Attorney General Kristen Clarke sent a letter last month to all state attorneys general warning them that federal law protects transgender youth against discrimination.

ACCESS PROTECTED

Governors’ signatures in Minnesota and Washington on Thursday made them the latest of at least nine states with laws protecting access to gender-affirming care. Vermont lawmakers passed bills with similar provisions this week, though they haven’t been signed.

The measures aim to shield patients, health care providers and other actors from punishment or investigations into whether they violated gender-affirming care and abortion bans in states that have them.

So far, officials have not been trying to reach across state lines to enforce bans.

DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS IN KANSAS

The Republican-controlled legislature in Kansas fell one vote short this week of overriding Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly’s veto of a ban on gender-affirming care for minors.

But lawmakers overrode other vetoes of restrictions on rights for transgender people. One blocks them from using restrooms that correspond with their gender identities at schools, prisons, domestic violence shelters and rape crisis centers.

At least eight other states have bathroom restrictions, but most of them apply only at schools.

ROLING BACK A LIBERAL CITY’S BOYCOTT

San Francisco’s Board of Supervisors voted Tuesday to repeal a measure barring city staffers from mak-

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ing business trips to states with restrictions on abortion, voting and LGBTQ+ rights.

The 2016 policy also blocked the city government from doing business with companies headquartered in those states.

Officials said it was doing more harm than good. Instead of exerting pressure on those states, it was raising costs for San Francisco.

A final vote is expected on Tuesday. California is considering a repeal a similar measure at the state level.

RESTRICTING DRAG SHOWS

In tandem with the push to restrict transgender rights, conservatives in several states have also lately targeted drag shows as part of what critics say is a wave of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation.

Alabama became the latest to do so after legislation was filed Thursday that would add a provision to the state's anti-obscenity laws.

The bill by Republican Rep. Arnold Mooney would prohibit "male or female impersonators, commonly known as drag queens or drag kings," from performing in K-12 public schools, libraries and other public places where minors are present.

The measure is pending before the House State Government Committee.

Tennessee was the first state to place strict limits on drag shows. But last month a federal judge there temporarily blocked that measure after a group filed a lawsuit claiming it violates the First Amendment.

Montana latest to ban gender-affirming care for trans minors

By AMY BETH HANSON Associated Press

HELENA, Mont. (AP) — Montana became the latest state to ban or restrict gender-affirming medical care for transgender kids Friday when its Republican governor signed legislation that exiled transgender lawmaker Zooey Zephyr told fellow lawmakers would leave "blood" on their hands.

Montana is one of at least 15 states with laws to ban such care despite protests from the families of transgender youth that the care is essential.

Debate over Montana's bill drew national attention after Republicans punished Zephyr for her remarks, saying her words were personally offensive. House Speaker Matt Regier refused to let Zephyr speak on the House floor until she apologized. She has not.

Zephyr decried the bill's signing, saying "it is unconscionable to deprive Montanans of the care that we need."

"I know that this is an unconstitutional bill. It is as cruel as it is unconstitutional. And it will go down in the courts," Zephyr said. To trans youth she added: "There's an understandable inclination towards despair in these moments, but know that we are going to win and until then, lean on community, because we will have one another's backs."

On Monday, Zephyr had stood defiantly on the House floor with her microphone raised as protesters shouted "Let her speak," disrupting House proceedings for at least 30 minutes. Zephyr was then banned from the House and its gallery and voted on bills from a bench in the hallway outside the House on Thursday and Friday.

Lambda Legal, the American Civil Liberties Union and the ACLU of Montana have said they would file a court challenge against the ban, which is set to take effect on Oct. 1, starting a five-month clock in which Montana youth can try to find a way to work around the ban or to transition off of hormone treatment.

"This bill is an overly broad blanket ban that takes decisions that should be made by families and physicians and puts them in the hands of politicians," the Montana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics has said.

Gov. Greg Gianforte signaled his willingness to sign the bill on April 17 when he offered some amendments to make it clear that public funds could not be used to pay for hormone blockers, cross-sex hormones or surgical procedures.

The bill "protects Montana children from permanent, life-altering medical procedures until they are

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adults, mature enough to make such serious decisions," Gianforte wrote in his letter accompanying the amendments.

Debate over the amendments led Zephyr to admonish supporters the following day. House Majority Leader Sue Vinton said Zephyr's language was "entirely inappropriate, disrespectful and uncalled for."

The Montana Freedom Caucus deliberately misgendered Zephyr, using male pronouns in a letter saying she should be censured. After Monday's protest, the caucus said she should be further disciplined.

Under the new law, health professionals who provide care banned by the measure could have their medical licenses suspended for at least a year. They could also be sued in the 25 years following a banned procedure if a patient suffers physical, psychological, emotional or physiological harm. Physicians could not hold malpractice insurance against such lawsuits. The law also prohibits public property and employees from being involved in gender-affirming treatment.

During hours of emotional committee hearings, opponents testified that hormone treatments, and in some cases, surgery, are evidence-based care, supported by numerous medical associations and can be life-saving for someone with gender dysphoria — the clinically significant distress or impairment caused by feeling that one's gender identity does not match one's biological sex.

Parents of transgender children testified that the bill infringed on their parental rights to seek medical care for their children.

Opponents also noted that treatments such as puberty-blockers and breast-reduction surgery would still be legal for minors who are not suffering from gender dysphoria, a difference they argue is unconstitutional.

In the letter to legislative leaders accompanying his proposed amendments, Gianforte said he met with transgender residents, understands that their struggles are real and said Montanans who struggle with gender identity deserve love, compassion and respect.

"That's not what trans Montanans need from you," Zephyr said as the House considered his amendments. "We need access to the medical care that saves our lives."

This was the second legislative session in which Sen. John Fuller brought the bill to ban gender-affirming care for transgender children. In 2021, when he was a member of the House, he brought a bill to ban surgical and hormone treatments for transgender children, which was voted down. He brought a second bill to ban surgical treatments which was also rejected. He was successful in 2021 in passing a bill to ban transgender females from participating in girls and women's sports. The part of the bill that applied to colleges was ruled unconstitutional.

Greener pastures? 2,500 hopeful sheep cross Idaho highway

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Why did 2,500 sheep cross the road? Because the grass was greener on the other side.

In Idaho, it's not unusual to see ranchers moving a bleating herd of sheep up to higher elevation at this time of year. But the sight of 2,500 woolly beasts trotting across a highway earlier this week brought a crowd about 300 people.

It was the largest turnout that Steve Stuebner, spokesperson for the Idaho Rangeland Resources Commission, has seen in 15 years.

"It's a novelty. Maybe they've never seen anything like that before, but it's real typical in Idaho," he told KTVB-TV. "When you're out in rural parts of Idaho in the spring and summer, or fall, you could run into a cattle drive or a sheep drive."

Curious onlookers lined the road as the animals sheepishly entered the highway, guided by ranchers and steered by sheepdogs. They traveled up the road a little ways, the fluffy white herd obscuring the yellow-painted centerline amid a chorus of "baas" and the lead ewe's jangling bell.

Leaving the open road behind, they will journey through the sagebrush-dotted foothills for a few weeks to their summer home in the Boise National Forest.

This trip up to higher elevations is a tradition dating back around 100 years, the Boise-area TV station reported, and having the sheep graze in the forest helps prevent fires and invigorates plant growth.

The ovine spectacle will return when the sheep are brought back down again in the fall.

Fed faults Silicon Valley Bank execs, itself in bank failure

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER and KEN SWEET AP Business Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Federal Reserve blamed last month's collapse of Silicon Valley Bank on poor management, watered-down regulations and lax oversight by its own staffers, and said the industry needs stricter policing on multiple fronts to prevent future bank failures.

The Fed was highly critical of its own role in the bank's failure in a report compiled by Michael Barr, the Fed's chief regulator, and released Friday. As Silicon Valley Bank grew rapidly beginning in 2018, banking supervisors were slow to recognize problems that eventually contributed to the bank's downfall, including an increasing amount of uninsured deposits and inadequate safeguards against a sudden change in interest rates. Once those problems were identified, supervisors appeared unwilling to press the bank's management to address the issues, the report said.

The passive approach stemmed from actions taken by Congress and the Fed in 2018 and 2019 that lightened rules and regulations for banks with less than \$250 billion in assets, the report concluded. Both Silicon Valley Bank and New York-based Signature Bank, which also failed last month, had assets below that level.

The changes increased the burden on regulators to justify the need for supervisory action, the report said. "In some cases, the changes also led to slower action by supervisory staff and a reluctance to escalate issues."

A separate report from the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. said the failure of Signature Bank was likely fallout from the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank. The FDIC also found its own regulatory deficiencies, notably insufficient staffing to adequately supervise Signature Bank, which was based in New York. The agency also took a light-handed approach to regulation, the report found.

Both SVB and Signature had large amounts of deposits that exceeded the FDIC's insurance cap, making them vulnerable to a panic. SVB's wealthy clients, many in the tech industry, fled after the bank said it needed to raise capital. Signature's customers appeared to get nervous about the developments at SVB, as well as Signature's large exposure to cryptocurrencies, which accounted for 20% of its assets.

In its report, the Fed said it plans to reexamine how it regulates larger regional banks such as Silicon Valley Bank, which had more than \$200 billion in assets when it failed, although less than the \$250 billion threshold for greater regulation.

"While higher supervisory and regulatory requirements may not have prevented the firm's failure, they would likely have bolstered the resilience of Silicon Valley Bank," the report said.

The report is likely to reignite a debate about the proper scope of bank regulation that has ebbed and flowed since the 2008 financial crisis and the Dodd-Frank legislation that followed two years later that imposed a new set of rules on banks. In 2018 a law that passed with bipartisan support in Congress and that was strongly supported by the banking industry, sought to loosen those rules, particularly for banks smaller than the largest global lenders.

Randal Quarles, who preceded Barr as the Fed's vice chair for supervision, in 2019 then pushed to loosen some of the Fed's bank regulations, including by exempting smaller banks from some capital requirements.

But Quarles strongly disputed the Fed report's conclusions that deregulatory moves contributed to Silicon Valley's collapse. In a statement, Quarles said the report provides "no evidence" that policy changes forestalled effective supervision of the bank.

Banking policy analysts said the critical reports make it more likely regulation will be tightened, though the Fed acknowledged it could take years for proposals to be implemented.

The reports "provide a clear path for a tougher and more costly regulatory regime for banks with at least \$100 billion of assets," said Jaret Seiberg, an analyst at TD Cowen. "We would expect the Fed to advance proposals in the coming months."

Alexa Philo, a former bank examiner for the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and senior policy analyst

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at Americans for Financial Reform, said the Fed could adopt stricter rules on its own, without relying on Congress.

"It is long past time to roll back the dangerous deregulation under the last administration to the greatest extent possible, and pay close attention to the largest banks so this crisis does not worsen," she said.

The Bank Policy Institute, a trade group that represents the largest banks, said the Fed report was wrong to single out deregulation as a contributing factor to Silicon Valley's collapse. Instead, the BPI said, the Fed's report points to the failure of bank supervisors to enforce existing rules, "suggesting that the regulations were fit for purpose, but the examiner response was inadequate."

The Fed's report, which includes the release of internal reports and Fed communications, is a rare look into how the central bank supervises individual banks as one of the nation's bank regulators. Typically such processes are confidential, and rarely seen by the public, but the Fed chose to release these reports to show how the bank was managed up to its failure.

Bartlett Collins Naylor, financial policy advocate at Congress Watch, a division of Public Citizen, was surprised at the degree to which the Fed blamed itself for the bank failure.

"I don't know that I expected the Fed to say 'mea culpa' — but I find that adds a lot of credibility," to Federal Reserve leadership, Naylor said.

The Fed also criticized Silicon Valley Bank for tying executive compensation too closely to short-term profits and the company's stock price. From 2018 to 2021, profit at SVB Financial, Silicon Valley Bank's parent, doubled and the stock nearly tripled.

However, there were no pay incentives tied to risk management, the report says. Silicon Valley Bank notably had no chief risk officer at the firm for roughly a year, during a time when the bank was growing quickly.

The report also looks at the role social media and technology played in the Silicon Valley Bank's last days. The Fed notes that social media was able to cause a bank run that happened in just hours, compared to days for earlier bank runs like those seen in 2008.

Although regulators guaranteed all the banks' deposits, customers at other midsize regional banks rushed to pull out their money — often with a few taps on a mobile device — and move it to the perceived safety of big money center banks such as JPMorgan Chase.

The withdrawals have abated at many banks, but First Republic Bank in San Francisco appears to be in peril, even after receiving a \$30 billion infusion of deposits from 11 major banks in March. The bank's shares plunged 75% this week after it revealed the extent to which customers pulled their deposits in the days after Silicon Valley Bank failed.

Sweet reported from New York. Reporter Fatima Hussein contributed from Washington.

Colorado governor signs 4 gun control bills after massacre

By JESSE BEDAYN Associated Press/Report for America

DENVER (AP) — Colorado's governor signed four gun control bills Friday, following the lead of other states struggling to confront a nationwide surge in violent crime and mass shootings, despite a recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling that expanded Second Amendment rights.

Before the ink was even dry on Gov. Jared Polis' signature, gun rights groups sued to reverse two of the measures: raising the buying age for any gun from 18 to 21, and establishing a three-day waiting period between the purchase and receipt of a gun. The courts are already weighing lawsuits over such restrictions in other states.

The new laws, which Democrats pushed through despite late-night filibusters from Republicans, are aimed at quelling rising suicides and youth violence, preventing mass shootings, and opening avenues for gun violence victims to sue the long-protected firearm industry. They were enacted just five months after a mass shooting at an LGBTQ club in Colorado Springs.

"Coloradoans deserve to be safe in our communities, in our schools, in our grocery stores, in our night-

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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.

AP reporter Mike Stobbe in New York and data journalist Camille Fassett in Seattle contributed to this report.

Follow Patrick Whittle on Twitter: @pxwhittle

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Summer Movies: Indy, Barbie, 'Fast X' zooming to theaters

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

The stakes are always high in the summer movie season.

But even in a schedule that has heavyweights like Indiana Jones, Ariel, Ethan Hunt and Dominic Toretto vying for box office supremacy, the biggest, funniest showdown is happening on July 21. On that fateful Friday, cinephiles will be faced with a difficult choice: Christopher Nolan's "Oppenheimer" or Greta Gerwig's "Barbie"?

The "Barbieheimer" showdown is, naturally, a bit silly. First, it's entirely possible to see two new movies in one weekend. Second, while opening weekends are important, they're also not everything. In 2008, "The

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clubs," Polis said as he signed the measures in his office. The governor was flanked by activists wearing red shirts reading, "Moms Demand Action," students from a Denver high school recently affected by a shooting, and parents of a woman killed in the Aurora theater shooting in 2012.

Supportive lawmakers and citizens alike had tears in their eyes and roared their applause as Polis signed each bill. Colorado has a history of notorious mass shootings, reaching back to the Columbine High School massacre in 1999.

Republicans decried the bills as onerous encroachments on Second Amendment rights that would impede Colorado residents' ability to defend themselves amid a rising statewide crime rate. Gun rights advocates pledged to reverse the measures.

"It's a sad day for Colorado; we are becoming one of the most anti-Second Amendment states in the nation," said Rep. Mike Lynch, the Republican minority leader.

A third measure passed by the legislature will strengthen the state's red flag law, and a fourth rolls back some legal protections for the firearm industry, exposing them to lawsuits from the victims of gun violence.

Lynch anticipates that the magnitude of the gun restrictions — along with other bills Democrats pushed this year — will incite a backlash in the next election, especially in swing districts that helped reinforce Democrats' majority in the legislature.

The new red flag law, also called an extreme risk protection order, empowers those working closely with youth and adults — doctors, mental health professionals, and teachers — to petition a judge to temporarily remove someone's firearm. Previously, petition power was limited mainly to law-enforcement and family members. The goal is to act preemptively before someone attempts suicide or attacks others.

At the signing ceremony, Senate President Steve Fenberg, a Democrat and one of the bill's sponsors, said Republicans and other gun control opponents often respond to mass shootings by saying it's too soon to talk about restricting firearms.

"It isn't too soon. It's too late for so many of the lost souls," Fenberg said. "We needed to have done more to prevent what happened."

Republicans argued that the law would discourage people — especially military veterans — from candidly speaking with medical doctors and mental health professionals for fear of having their weapons temporarily seized.

Lynch argued that while the shooting in Colorado Springs was often held up as a reason to pass these types of gun restrictions, "evidence shows they would've done absolutely nothing to stop that."

"It kind of breaks my heart that we're taking these tragic events ... and we're using those events to promote an agenda that doesn't fix the problem," he said.

The law requiring a three-day delay between buying and receiving a firearm — an attempt to curtail impulsive violence and suicide attempts — puts Colorado in line with nine other states, including California, Florida and Hawaii.

Colorado has the sixth-highest suicide rate in the country, with nearly 1,400 in 2021, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A RAND Corporation analysis of four studies found that waiting periods are linked to lower suicide-by-gun deaths.

Opponents raised concerns that people who need to defend themselves — such as victims of domestic violence — may not be able to get a gun in time to do so.

In raising the minimum age to purchase a firearm from 18 to 21, Colorado joins California, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, New York and Rhode Island. Proponents point to now oft-cited data from the CDC showing that gun violence has overtaken vehicle accidents as the leading cause of death for children and teenagers in recent years.

At the ceremony, Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser likened the new laws to the campaign for vehicle safety that spawned groups such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the forerunner of Moms Demand Action.

But Taylor Rhodes, executive director of Rocky Mountain Gun Owners, the group that filed the lawsuits, had a different perspective.

"This is simply bigoted politicians doing what bigoted politicians do: discriminating against an age," said

Rhodes, referring to the new minimum age for gun purchases.

In their speeches about rolling back legal protections for gun manufacturers, lawmakers looked often to Sandy and Lonnie Phillips, whose daughter, Jessica Ghawi, was slain in the 2012 Aurora theater shooting. The parents tried to sue the companies that had sold the shooter ammunition and tear gas but were unsuccessful. Ultimately, the couple ended up owing more than \$200,000 in defense attorney fees and had to file for bankruptcy.

California, Delaware, New Jersey and New York have passed similar legislation over the past three years. Opponents of the bill argued that it would merely bog the firearms industry down in bogus lawsuits.

New report blames airlines for most flight cancellations

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

Congressional investigators said in a report Friday that an increase in flight cancellations as travel recovered from the pandemic was due mostly to factors that airlines controlled, including cancellations for maintenance issues or lack of a crew.

The Government Accountability Office also said airlines are taking longer to recover from disruptions such as storms. Surges in cancellations in late 2021 and early 2022 lasted longer than they did before the pandemic, the GAO said.

Much of the increase in airline-caused cancellations has occurred at budget airlines, but the largest carriers have also made more unforced errors, according to government data.

Airlines have clashed with Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg over blame for high rates of canceled and delayed flights in the past two years. Airlines argue that the government is at fault for not having enough air traffic controllers, while Buttigieg has blamed the carriers.

The GAO report was requested by Republican leaders of the House Transportation Committee. The GAO said it examined flight data from January 2018 through April 2022 to understand why travelers suffered more delays and cancellations as travel began to recover from the pandemic.

The GAO said weather was the leading cause of cancellations in the two years before the pandemic, but the percentage of airline-caused cancellations began increasing in early 2021. From October through December 2021, airlines caused 60% or more of cancellations — higher than at any time in 2018 or 2019.

At the time, airlines were understaffed. The airlines took \$54 billion in taxpayer money to keep employees on the job through the pandemic, but they reduced workers anyway by paying them incentives to quit.

As travel rebounded, the airlines struggled to replace thousands of departed workers. They now have more workers than in 2019 — and the cancellation rate this year is lower than during the same period in 2019, according to data from tracking service FlightAware.

A spokeswoman for trade group Airlines for America said the majority of cancellations this year have been caused by severe weather and air traffic control outages — about 1,300 flights were canceled in one day because of an outage in a Federal Aviation Administration safety-alerting system.

“Carriers have taken responsibility for challenges within their control and continue working diligently to improve operational reliability as demand for air travel rapidly returns,” said the spokeswoman, Hannah Walden. “This includes launching aggressive, successful hiring campaigns for positions across the industry and reducing schedules in response to the FAA’s staffing shortages.”

Several airlines agreed to reduce schedules in New York this summer at the request of the FAA, which has a severe shortage of controllers at a key facility on Long Island.

In 2019, Hawaiian Airlines and Alaska Airlines had the highest percentages of their own cancellations being caused by an airline-controlled issue — more than half of each carrier’s cancellations. In late 2021, they were joined by low-fare carriers Allegiant Air, Spirit Airlines, JetBlue Airways and Frontier, each of whom were responsible for 60% or more of their own total cancellations, according to GAO.

The percentage of cancellations caused by the airline also increased at Southwest, Delta, American and United. The figures did not include the 16,700 late-December cancellations at Southwest that followed the breakdown of the airline’s crew-rescheduling system.

The GAO said the Transportation Department has increased its oversight of airline-scheduling practices. The Transportation and Justice departments are investigating whether Southwest scheduled more flights than it could handle before last December's meltdown.

The Southwest debacle has led to calls to strengthen passenger-compensation rules.

Brazil recognizes 6 Indigenous areas in boost for Amazon

By CARLA BRIDI and FABIANO MAISONNAVE undefined

BRASÍLIA, Brazil (AP) — Brazil President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva on Friday granted official recognition of nearly 800 square miles of Indigenous lands, most of it in the Amazon, in a move that seeks to safeguard critical rainforest from the unchecked exploitation that marked his predecessor's administration.

Lula's action was partial delivery on his promises to the Indigenous supporters and environmentally minded voters who lifted him to a narrow victory last year over far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, who had encouraged widespread development of the Amazon -- both legal and illegal -- and pledged not to grant "one more inch" of land to Indigenous peoples.

The land remains under the federal government's jurisdiction, but the designation grants Indigenous peoples the right to use it in their traditional manner. Mining activities are prohibited, and commercial farming and logging require specific authorizations. And non-Indigenous people are forbidden from engaging in any economic activity on Indigenous lands.

Kleber Karipuna, executive coordinator at Indigenous people's organization Apib, called it a welcome shift after four years of threats and invasions targeting Indigenous territories under Bolsonaro.

"For us, it is a very significant process of restarting," he said. "Of course, there are still other lands that can be advanced."

The Amazon rainforest, covering an area twice the size of India, holds tremendous amounts of carbon and is a crucial buffer against climate change. Studies have shown that Indigenous-controlled forests are the best-preserved in the Brazilian Amazon.

But deforestation surged to a 15-year high during the Bolsonaro years, with destruction largely caused by illegal miners and land-robbers. Destruction in the eastern Amazon has been so extensive that it has become a carbon source, rather than a carbon sink.

The designations granted Friday don't assure protection for the rainforest, with Bolsonaro allies still in charge of a majority of Amazon states. But Lula has shown a willingness to back up his rhetoric with action. In February, armed government officials began ejecting illegal gold miners from Yanomami Indigenous territory in the northwest corner of Brazil's Amazon.

The six newly recognized territories amount to an area larger than Los Angeles and New York City combined. Lula announced it to a chanting crowd at the Free Land Camp, an annual weeklong encampment of Indigenous people in the capital of Brasilia that includes hundreds of tents on the main esplanade with Indigenous people of various ethnicities gathering to dance, sing, sell handicrafts and hold political demonstrations.

"We are going to legalize Indigenous lands. It is a process that takes a little while, because it has to go through many hands," Lula said. "I don't want any Indigenous territory to be left without demarcation during my government. That is the commitment I made to you."

For some Indigenous people, Friday's announcement was disappointingly small. The country has 733 territories with cases for demarcation pending before the federal government; the newly recognized territories accounted for just 6% of that number, according to Socio-Environmental Institute, a nonprofit.

In January, Lula's government had pledged to create 14 new territories in the short term.

Among lands that missed out was the Barra Velha territory of the Pataxó people in southern Bahia state. Renato Atxuab, a Pataxó leader, said "this government that we supported, that we helped build" must demarcate their land as soon as possible to prevent invasions by outsiders.

Already there are conflicts involving agribusiness and land-grabbers, he said, and drug traffickers have been moving in, too.

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Atxuab said he has met with the Indigenous Peoples minister — a newly created position under Lula's government — but has not been given any date for his land's demarcation.

The largest new area is located in the Amazonas state. The Nadöb people's Uneiuxi Indigenous Territory has been expanded by 37% to 554,000 hectares (2,100 square miles) of primary rainforest. It is in a remote area — from the main village, it takes four days to travel to the closest city in a low-powered motor boat, the most common mode of transportation in the region.

"The demarcation will make the Nadöb people feel safe and protected within our territory. That is where we live, fish, hunt, and gather fruits. We want to continue there, like our ancestors," chief Eduardo Castelo, 45, told The Associated Press in a phone interview. "We don't want the impact of the whites on our territory."

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Abortion bans fail in conservative South Carolina, Nebraska

By MARGERY A. BECK and JAMES POLLARD Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Abortion bans in Nebraska and South Carolina fell short of advancing in close votes amid heated debates among Republicans, confounding conservatives who have dominated both legislatures and further exposing the chasm on the issue of abortion within the GOP.

In Nebraska, where abortion is banned after 20 weeks of pregnancy, an effort to ban abortion at about the sixth week of pregnancy fell one vote short of breaking a filibuster. Cheers erupted outside the legislative chamber as the last vote was cast, with opponents of the bill waving signs and chanting, "Whose house? Our house!"

In South Carolina, lawmakers voted 22-21 to shelve a near-total abortion ban for the rest of the year. Republican Sen. Sandy Senn criticized Majority Leader Shane Massey for repeatedly "taking us off a cliff on abortion."

"The only thing that we can do when you all, you men in the chamber, metaphorically keep slapping women by raising abortion again and again and again, is for us to slap you back with our words," she said.

The Nebraska proposal, backed by Republican Gov. Jim Pillen, is unlikely to move forward this year. And in South Carolina, where abortion remains legal through 22 weeks of pregnancy, the vote marked the third time a near-total abortion ban has failed in the Republican-led Senate chamber since the U.S. Supreme Court reversed *Roe v. Wade* last summer.

Katie Glenn, the state policy director for Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, characterized the failure of both proposed abortion bans as disappointing.

"It's a sign that legislating is hard, and there's a lot of pieces and parts that all have to come together," Glenn said.

The bans' staunchest supporters have promised political retribution.

Since the fall of *Roe*, both states have become regional havens of sorts as they've watched neighboring states enact stricter abortion bans. Conservative lawmakers have bitterly made that observation in Nebraska, which has a long history as a leader in abortion restrictions. In 2010, it was the first state in the nation to ban abortion after 20 weeks of pregnancy.

Most aggravating to some Republicans is that the pushback is coming from inside the house. The Nebraska bill on Thursday failed when Republican Sen. Merv Riepe, an 80-year-old former hospital administrator, refused to give it the crucial 33rd vote needed to advance. Riepe was an original co-signer of the bill but later expressed concern that a six-week ban might not give women enough time to know they were pregnant.

When his fellow Republicans rejected an amendment he offered to extend the proposed ban to 12 weeks and add an exception for fatal fetal anomalies, Riepe pointed to his own election last year against a Democrat who made abortion rights central to her campaign. His margin of victory dropped from 27

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percentage points in the May primary election, which occurred before the fall of Roe, to under 5 percentage points in the general election.

"Had my opponent had more time, more money, and more name recognition, she could have won. This made the message clear to me how critical abortion will be in 2024," he said. "We must embrace the future of reproductive rights."

Riepe and some Republicans across the country have noted evidence pointing to abortion bans as unpopular with a majority of Americans. An AP VoteCast nationwide survey of the 2022 electorate showed only about 1 in 10 midterm voters — including Republicans — believe abortion should be "illegal in all cases." Overall, a majority of voters said abortion should be legal in all or most cases. That includes nearly 9 in 10 Democrats and about 4 in 10 Republicans.

An Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll in July showed Republicans are largely opposed to abortion "for any reason" and at 15 weeks into a pregnancy. But only 16% of Republicans say abortion generally should be "illegal in all cases."

Even so, Republican politicians who buck party leadership on abortion can find themselves targets of political retaliation. The backlash against Riepe was swift, with public reprimands from the governor and fellow Republican lawmakers. Anti-abortion groups demanded his immediate resignation. And the Nebraska Republican Party issued a statement warning that Riepe would be censured.

"The entities and individuals who aided in the defeat of a Core Republican Value have been duly noted by the leadership of this party. 'The Watchfulness in the Citizen' applies now more than ever," the statement reads.

Riepe did not return a message Friday seeking comment on the backlash.

Likewise, some of the South Carolina Republican holdouts shared last week that they received anatomical backbone figurines from an anti-abortion group urging them to "grow a spine" and pass a ban starting at conception.

The South Carolina vote came with days left in a session that began shortly after the state's highest court struck down a 2021 law banning abortion when cardiac activity is detected, about six weeks into pregnancy. Since then, both chambers have advanced abortion bans at differing stages -- a disagreement that Massey, the Senate majority leader, hoped to resolve by considering the stricter House bill.

Frustrated after his last-ditch effort to break the impasse, Massey issued a warning for the ban's fiercest Republican opponent.

"The response to Sen. Senn will be in 2024," Massey told reporters after the vote, referring to elections next year.

Fourteen states have bans in place on abortion at all stages of pregnancy. Four other states have bans throughout pregnancy where enforcement is blocked by courts. The majority of those bans were adopted in anticipation of Roe being overturned, and most do not have exceptions for rape or incest.

In Utah, a judge on Friday heard a request from Planned Parenthood to delay implementing a statewide ban on abortion clinics set to take effect next week. Planned Parenthood argues a state law passed this year will effectively end access to abortion throughout the state when clinics stop being able to apply for the licenses they've historically relied on to operate.

In North Dakota, Gov. Doug Burgum signed a ban Monday that has narrow exceptions: Abortion is legal in pregnancies caused by rape or incest, but only in the first six weeks of pregnancy. Abortion is allowed later in pregnancy only in specific medical emergencies. The North Dakota law is intended to replace a previous ban that is not being enforced while a state court weighs its constitutionality.

And on Friday, Tennessee Republican Gov. Bill Lee reversed course and signed off on softening the state's strict abortion ban. That change came after several high-profile Republican lawmakers warned early in the session that doctors and patients were facing steep risks under Tennessee's so-called trigger law, arguing that the statute did not include clear exemptions when a physician may provide abortion services.

Pollard reported from Columbia, South Carolina. Associated Press writer Freida Frisaro contributed from

Fort Lauderdale, Florida. James Pollard 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.

This story has been corrected to show that the votes in Nebraska and South Carolina blocked advancement, not passage, of abortion bills; and that 14 states, not 13, now have abortion bans.

Electronic line calls at all ATP men's tennis events by 2025

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

There won't be any more arguing with line judges over calls at tennis tournaments on the ATP men's tour as of 2025 — because there won't be any more line judges at those events by then.

The London-based ATP announced Friday that it will use Electronic Line Calling Live — known as ELC Live — for all "out" calls in all matches beginning two years from now. Each match still will be overseen by a chair umpire, but the line judges who used to be entrusted with determining where shots landed will no longer be present on court.

It represents the next step toward relying on technology for line calls in a process that gained speed at the 2017 Next Gen ATP Finals, when ELC Live was first tried on the men's tour.

The St. Petersburg, Florida-based WTA women's tennis tour has not made any announcements regarding any plans for electronic calls at its tournaments. A WTA spokesperson wrote in an email to The Associated Press on Friday: "This is something that we have been reviewing and are very interested in."

Line judges were used at fewer and fewer sites during the coronavirus pandemic that began in 2020, including at the Australian Open and U.S. Open, Grand Slam tournaments that are not run by the ATP and thus do not need to adhere to the tour's policies.

Electronic systems have been used mainly on hard courts and grass courts, but the ATP said its new policy will include every surface, including clay courts.

Some in the sport, including the French Open, where main-draw play begins on May 28, have resisted switching away from humans making calls because tennis balls leave marks in the clay that can be used to determine where a shot hit the ground.

"This is a landmark moment for our sport, and not one we've reached without careful consideration. Tradition is core to tennis and line judges have played an important part in the game over the years," ATP CEO Andrea Gaudenzi said.

"That said, we have a responsibility to embrace innovation and new technologies," Gaudenzi added. "Our sport deserves the most accurate form of officiating."

AP tennis: <https://apnews.com/hub/tennis> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

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?

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. Since Jan. 1, more than 1,000 ticks have been sent in for a testing program, and that is the second highest number of submissions in recent years. 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

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"Dark Knight" debuted on the same weekend as "Mamma Mia!" and both went on to be major successes.

But it has inspired the kind of feverish, half-serious, half-joking discourse online that no marketing can buy, with memes, jokes, bets and Highlander references galore every time either film drops a new advertisement. There were even a few hours in April when the internet panicked that the beach-off was canceled (it wasn't). And before you go googling, the Highlander jokes are not about that film's disastrous 1986 box office run, but instead the enduring "there can only be one" line.

The summer movie season always begins before actual summer. This year it kicks off on May 5 with the release of Disney and Marvel's "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3" and runs through Labor Day. Since "Jaws," the summer season has been the most important for the moviemaking industry and typically accounts for around 40% of a year's domestic box office, according to data from Comscore. Pre-pandemic, that usually meant more than \$4 billion in ticket sales. Last year hit \$3.4 billion.

But the industry is feeling optimistic. Last summer, only 22 films released on over 2,000 screens. This year there are 42, the same as in 2019, spanning every genre. And, it seems, every studio has re-prioritized theatrical releases over direct-to-streaming.

There are movies based on comic characters ("The Flash," "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse"), toys ("Transformers: Rise of the Beasts"), racing games ("Gran Turismo") and theme park rides ("Haunted Mansion"); Action adventures ("Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny," "Mission: Impossible — Dead Reckoning"); Family friendly fare ("Elemental," "Harold and the Purple Crayon"); Documentaries ("Still: A Michael J. Fox Movie," "Stephen Curry: Underrated"); And a starry Wes Anderson movie ("Asteroid City.") (For a comprehensive guide to summer releases, visit: <http://apne.ws/vfZSaqF>)

And it's not just the superhero films getting wide releases and large format screens. Disney's live-action "The Little Mermaid" will have a 3D IMAX version, a laser version and a Dolby one all available when it opens in theaters on May 26.

Director Rob Marshall was no stranger to technically ambitious movie musicals but "The Little Mermaid," starring Halle Bailey as the teenage dreamer, put him to the test trying to stage a photorealistic underwater musical.

"As complicated as it as it was, my goal was never to let the technical part of it lead it," said Marshall, who has been at work since 2018. "I really wanted to make sure that the story and the characters led it."

Even in the throes of the pandemic, Marshall was confident that "The Little Mermaid" was too big to end up as a streaming offering.

"I'm actually glad that we waited until 2023 when officially the pandemic is over," he said. "It feels like people are returning to the theaters."

On quite the opposite spectrum, indie darling Nicole Holofcener has in her three decades of directing movies grown used to getting smaller releases for her films. So it came as a surprise when A24 told her they wanted to go wide on Memorial Day weekend for "You Hurt My Feelings."

Her latest is an insightful New York-set comedy about what happens to a relationship when Julia Louis-Dreyfus' character accidentally overhears her therapist husband (Tobias Menzies) confessing that he doesn't like her book. It debuted to raves at Sundance earlier this year.

"I think A24 felt like, 'Oh, this could cross over. This doesn't have to be an indie movie,'" Holofcener said. "But I've never had a movie release like that. I'm excited but also anxious. I hope it works out. You know, it's safe when you release a movie in like six theaters."

A24 is also giving a wide release to another Sundance sensation, Celine Song's wistful and romantic directorial debut "Past Lives," starring Greta Lee as a woman considering the other path her life may have taken. It opens June 2.

Big budget spectacles like "Fast X," the penultimate movie in the \$6 billion franchise led by Vin Diesel, are more typical summer fare. But even well-oiled vehicles like "Fast" run into their own problems and for this film, franchise veteran Justin Lin made the surprising decision to step away from directing while filming was already underway.

French director Louis Leterrier had been talking to Universal about directing a "Fast" film for years, but

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he never expected his shot to come in the form of a 2 a.m. phone call.

He got the script, read it twice before meeting with producers at 6 a.m. and later that day was on a plane to London to get "Fast X" back on track during a chaotic week where they'd lost a director and a location: Montenegro. Instinct kicked in and after a week, he'd found his rhythm. And he's already signed on for the 11th.

"No 'Fast and Furious' movie is the same, but this is quite different," Leterrier said. "Because we're nearing the end we're able to take big swings with character and story. There will be some major changes. We're going to have to say goodbye to characters we love. And Jason Momoa's character is really an agent of chaos."

Closing out the summer, on Sept. 1, is Sony's "The Equalizer 3," which reunites director Antoine Fuqua with Denzel Washington and takes his character Robert McCall to Italy's Amalfi coast.

"It will be nice to see a man of color in a story that's more international," Fuqua said. "We normally see the James Bonds doing the international films. And there's something about Denzel that feels right in Italy.

Comedies are also back in a big way this summer, with films like "No Hard Feelings," "About My Father," "Strays" and "Joy Ride," Adele Lim's movie about four Asian American girlfriends on a trip to China, coming to theaters.

Seth Rogen produced "Joy Ride," which already has a 100% on Rotten Tomatoes going into its June 23 release.

"There's not a lot of people even aspiring necessarily to make a big, raucous, wild, crowd-pleasing R-rated comedy these days and it's such a joyous experience when those things work," Rogen said. "Some people would argue that big R-rated comedies don't take the swings they used to anymore. I would tell them to go see this movie."

Rogen is also the driving engine behind a new animated Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles movie, "Mutant Mayhem" (Aug. 4) which he shepherded since the beginning as a producer, co-writer, voice actor and general Ninja Turtles enthusiast.

Years ago he wrote a kind of joke tweet about how the "teenage" part of the mutant ninja turtles was the most interesting aspect of the characters and one that had been largely ignored by the movies. But it stuck in his head and eventually inspired this film which combines action-adventure and coming of age. The animation was even inspired by the "reckless energy" of scribbling in a notebook during school.

Rogen cast himself as Bebop, opposite John Cena's Rocksteady and called on a host of funny friends and actors to round out the cast. Ice Cube is Superfly. Ayo Edebiri is April. Paul Rudd is Mondo Gecko. Rose Byrne is Leatherhead, Hannibal Buress is Genghis Frog and Jackie Chan is Master Splinter.

"What's really cool is that we did pretty much all the recording sessions in big groups. We had some with eight people at the same time," Rogen said. "It brings so much life and energy to it."

He's also felt the gaze of the business returning to theaters.

"Hollywood seems to be embracing this idea again, that movies can do well in theaters, but actually movies only do really well on a streaming service if they already were in the theater," Rogen said. "The cultural cachet you get from being in a theater is irreplaceable."

China's Mars rover finds signs of recent water in sand dunes

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Water may be more widespread and recent on Mars than previously thought, based on observations of Martian sand dunes by China's rover.

The finding highlights new, potentially fertile areas in the warmer regions of Mars where conditions might be suitable for life to exist, though more study is needed.

Friday's news comes days after mission leaders acknowledged that the Zhurong rover has yet to wake up since going into hibernation for the Martian winter nearly a year ago.

Its solar panels are likely covered with dust, choking off its power source and possibly preventing the rover from operating again, said Zhang Rongqiao, the mission's chief designer.

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Before Zhurong fell silent, it observed salt-rich dunes with cracks and crusts, which researchers said likely were mixed with melting morning frost or snow as recently as a few hundred thousand years ago.

Their estimated date range for when the cracks and other dune features formed in Mars' Utopia Planitia, a vast plain in the northern hemisphere: sometime after 1.4 million to 400,000 years ago or even younger.

Conditions during that period were similar to now on Mars, with rivers and lakes dried up and no longer flowing as they did billions of years earlier.

Studying the structure and chemical makeup of these dunes can provide insights into "the possibility of water activity" during this period, the Beijing-based team wrote in a study published in Science Advances.

"We think it could be a small amount ... no more than a film of water on the surface," co-author Xiaoguang Qin of the Institute of Geology and Geophysics said in an email.

The rover did not directly detect any water in the form of frost or ice. But Qin said computer simulations and observations by other spacecraft at Mars indicate that even nowadays at certain times of year, conditions could be suitable for water to appear.

What's notable about the study is how young the dunes are, said planetary scientist Frederic Schmidt at the University of Paris-Saclay, who was not part of the study.

"This is clearly a new piece of science for this region," he said in an email.

Small pockets of water from thawing frost or snow, mixed with salt, likely resulted in the small cracks, hard crusty surfaces, loose particles and other dune features like depressions and ridges, the Chinese scientists said. They ruled out wind as a cause, as well as frost made of carbon dioxide, which makes up the bulk of Mars' atmosphere.

Martian frost has been observed since NASA's 1970s Viking missions, but these light dustings of morning frost were thought to occur in certain locations under specific conditions.

The rover has now provided "evidence that there may be a wider distribution of this process on Mars than previously identified," said Trinity College Dublin's Mary Bourke, an expert in Mars geology.

However small this watery niche, it could be important for identifying habitable environments, she added.

Launched in 2020, the six-wheeled Zhurong — named after a fire god in Chinese mythology — arrived at Mars in 2021 and spent a year roaming around before going into hibernation last May. The rover operated longer than intended, traveling more than a mile (1,921 meters).

AP video producer Olivia Zhang in Beijing contributed to this report.

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Maine highway shooting victims healing, grateful, confused

By PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — The father of two of the victims of a deadly shooting rampage in Maine said Friday he and his children are recovering from their injuries and grateful for the support they've received from the community. The family is also still baffled why such violence befell them while they were driving down the highway.

A 34-year-old man confessed last week to injuring three people while shooting at vehicles on Interstate 295 in Yarmouth and four killings at a home in Bowdoin, police have said.

Soon after the discovery of the bodies in Bowdoin, police responded to gunshots fired at several vehicles more than 20 miles (about 32 kilometers) to the south on a busy highway in Yarmouth. Bullets struck a family in one of the vehicles, wounding Sean Halsey, 51, and his children Justin Halsey, 29, and Paige Halsey, 25, police said.

The shootings left Paige Halsey in critical condition for several days, and she is now in stable condition and recovering, Sean Halsey said Friday outside Maine Medical Center, where the family has been receiving treatment. Sean Halsey, whose hand was wrapped up in bandages from his wounds, said Justin Halsey

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has been released and is recovering at home.

Sean Halsey said the family members "have all received amazing care at Maine Medical and we have taken our first steps on the road to recovery," and that they've benefited from support from friends and neighbors. The eldest Halsey said the family's recovery from the terrifying shooting is happening just after the death of his father after months of declining health, and he and his children are looking forward to all being together again.

Sean Halsey recalled the scary scene of hearing bullets pierce through his car window while he and his children were driving to the grocery store.

"It was just so unexpected. Just driving down to get some groceries at the grocery store and started hearing some pops and weren't sure what it was," Sean Halsey said. "And then the back window exploded and we kind of heard more that obviously were gunshots. We knew what that was. Accelerated until I couldn't hear them anymore, pulled the car over and tried to do everything I could to help my kids."

Joseph Eaton, who is charged with the Bowdoin shootings, has been jailed since his arrest on April 18 near the chaotic scene along the highway, where traffic backed up as heavily armed law enforcement searched the area. Killed in Bowdoin were Eaton's parents, Cynthia Eaton, 62, and David Eaton, 66, along with their longtime friends, Bowdoin homeowners Robert Eger, 72, and Patti Eger, 62, officials said.

Police have yet to determine a motive for the killings, and Eaton has yet to be charged with the Yarmouth shootings. He has been charged with four counts of murder for the Bowdoin deaths.

Police said Eaton told them he shot at vehicles in Yarmouth because he believed they were police following him after the Bowdoin shootings. Investigations into the shootings still need to be completed and presented to grand juries, authorities have said.

"At this time, detectives are still investigating, talking to witnesses," said Shannon Moss, a spokesperson for Maine Department of Public Safety.

Eaton's attorney, Andrew Wright of Brunswick, did not respond to a call seeking comment. Eaton has yet to enter a plea and is due in court again in June. He made a brief first appearance in court last week.

The bodies in Bowdoin were found on April 18, four days after Eaton's release from prison.

Eaton's parents were staying with their longtime friends after his mother picked him up from a Maine prison on April 14, where he served about two years for a sentence revocation after completing a sentence in Florida for aggravated assault, part of a long criminal history in Maine, Kansas and Florida.

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

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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." 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."

French actor Eva Green wins \$1M in spat over 'B movie'

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Eva Green was awarded \$1 million Friday by a British court in a sensational dispute over the collapse of a film project she feared was destined to become a "B movie" that could ruin her career.

The film in question was a sci-fi thriller but the case played out in court like a melodrama. The producers of "A Patriot" portrayed the French actor as a diva. She had called one of the executive producers a "devious sociopath" and "pure vomit" and said the production manager was a "moron."

A High Court judge cut through the vitriol that he said threatened to complicate the case and deemed it "relatively straightforward," awarding Green the fee she had been promised for the production that folded in 2019.

Green, 42, who played Vesper Lynd in the 2006 version of the James Bond thriller "Casino Royale," said her professional reputation had been upheld after she stood up to a small group of rich men who employed "bully-boy tactics" to use her as a scapegoat for their own failures.

Her lengthy statement, however, exposed her fragility in the face of criticism and the hurt she felt from what she claimed was misreporting in the press that "has been more painful than I can say."

"There are few things the media enjoys more than tearing a woman to pieces," Green said. "It felt like being set upon by hounds; I found myself misrepresented, quoted out of context and my desire to make the best possible film was made to look like female hysteria. It was cruel and it was untrue."

Justice Michael Green dismissed a countersuit brought by England-based film production company White Lantern Film that had said the actor made "excessive creative and financial demands" and torpedoed the production.

The judge said Green hadn't renounced or breached her obligations and was entitled to her 810,000-pound fee.

White Lantern Film said Green's claim of "gender-based bullying" was "completely unwarranted."

"Eva Green filed a lawsuit to be paid \$1 million for a film which was not made and for which she did not provide any acting services," it said in a statement with fellow litigant SMC Specialty Finance. The firms

said they were "carefully considering our options as to potential next steps, including appeal."

Green said she "fell in love" with the script for "A Patriot" and its environmental message, but became increasingly concerned as corners were cut and production was moved from Ireland to England.

"When an actor has appeared in a B movie, they are labeled as a B actor, you never get offered quality work ever again," she testified.

During the trial, the court was told that Green used an expletive when describing potential crew members as "peasants." She had said executive producer Jake Seal was "evil" a "devious sociopath" and a "madman," and dubbed production manager Terry Bird a "moron."

She downplayed her biting words as her "Frenchness," which the judge dismissed as inadequate and not credible.

While Justice Green found in favor of Eva Green, he gave poor reviews to both sides in his 71-page ruling. "For such a perfectionist in her art, she was surprisingly under-prepared for her evidence," he wrote, calling the actor "in some senses a frustrating and unsatisfactory witness."

The judge said that the unpleasant things that Green said about Seal were out of a genuine concern that the film wouldn't do the script justice, and he didn't altogether disagree with her criticism.

"I have to say that, having heard him give evidence, I can see how it might be possible to take an instant dislike to him," the judge wrote. "He was at times patronizing, sarcastic and denigrating. I found him to have an innate aggression and can understand why Ms. Green and others might have been displeased to be told that they had to make the film under his full control."

Russian missile and drone attack in Ukraine kills 23 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 23 people, almost all of them when two missiles slammed into an apartment building in a terrifying nighttime attack, 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. Twenty-one people died in that attack, according to Ukraine's National Police. They included 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 such strikes are part of a deliberate intimidation strategy by the Kremlin.

The Russian Defense Ministry said the long-range cruise missiles launched overnight were aimed at places where Ukrainian military reserve units were staying before their deployment to the battlefield.

"The strike has achieved its goal. All the designated facilities have been hit," Lt. Gen. Igor Konashenkov, the Defense Ministry's spokesperson, said. He didn't mention any specific areas or residential buildings getting hit.

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 neigh-

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boring 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 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 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 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 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.

In Ukrainka, a town about 10 kilometers (6 miles) south of Kyiv, debris from shot down missiles or drones left holes in the walls of some apartment buildings, and a smashed pink stroller in the street.

"It feels like this nightmare has been going on for two years, but I still can't wake up," local resident Olena, 62, said. She asked for her surname not to be used, saying her son lived in a sensitive military area.

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.

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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.

Meanwhile, the Moscow-appointed mayor of the Russia-held city of Donetsk, Alexei Kulemzin, said a Ukrainian rocket killed seven civilians in the center of the city Friday. He said the victims died when a minibus was hit.

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>

Kicked off Medicaid: Millions at risk as states trim rolls

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 state agency did not respond to AP's request for comment.

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

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re-apply, Hawkins said. A spokesman for Arkansas' Department of Human Services said the forms instruct enrollees to fill in their information.

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."

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

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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.

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.

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

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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 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

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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."

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>

Biden plan aims to stem border migration as restrictions end

By REBECCA SANTANA, COLLEEN LONG and ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With COVID-19 immigration restrictions set to expire, the Biden administration on Thursday announced measures meant to stop migrants from illegally crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, both by cracking down on many of those who do come, and by creating new pathways meant to offer an alternative to the dangerous journey.

The effort includes opening processing centers outside the United States for people fleeing violence and poverty to apply to fly in legally and settle in the United States, Spain or Canada. The first processing centers will open in Guatemala and Colombia, with others expected to follow.

The administration also plans to swiftly screen migrants seeking asylum at the border itself, quickly deport those deemed as not being qualified, and penalizing people who cross illegally into the U.S. or illegally through another country on their way to the U.S. border.

But it is unclear whether the measures will do much to slow the tide of migrants fleeing countries marred by political and economic strife. Further increasing the pressure is the looming end of public health rules instituted amid the pandemic that allowed for quickly expelling many migrants and set to expire on May 11.

"This is a hemispheric challenge that demands hemispheric solutions," said Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas during a news conference as he laid out how the U.S. is working with other countries in the region.

Mayorkas also warned that migrants and human smugglers should not interpret the upcoming deadline to mean that everyone should come: "Let me be clear, our border is not open and will not be open after May 11."

Immigration has vexed Biden throughout his presidency, with top GOP leaders hammering him as soft on border security. Immigrant advocates, meanwhile, argue that the president is abandoning humanitarian

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efforts with stricter measures meant to keep migrants from coming illegally.

The topic isn't going away. As he announces his 2024 reelection bid, Biden is trying to strike a balance that could be difficult to achieve, particularly if crowds of migrants end up in border facilities after May 11.

The administration has also repeatedly pointed to Congress, saying it has been unable to come to an agreement on comprehensive immigration reform.

The efforts announced Thursday build on a carrot-and-stick approach to immigration that the administration has been increasingly using, whereby they offer incentives like humanitarian parole visas for hundreds of thousands of people and harsh consequences for many who come to the border. Those have so far included:

— Processing centers: The administration will open migration centers in numerous countries starting with Guatemala and Colombia to be run by the International Organization of Migration and the U.N. agency tasked with helping refugees. There potential migrants can get information on various ways they can migrate to the United States, such as applying for refugee status or a worker program. The administration said both Canada and Spain have said they'd take migrants referred from these centers, although no specific numbers were given. The U.S. also said it would double the number of refugees taken from Central and South America. No specific number was given there, either, but during fiscal year 2023 the U.S. pledged to accept 15,000 refugees from Latin America and the Caribbean.

— Stiffer, faster penalties: The administration says it will process asylum-seekers who come to the southern border faster — in days, not weeks — with the goal of sending people back quickly who don't clear initial screenings. Those removed from the country would be barred from entering the U.S. for five years. The administration says it aims to dramatically increase flights on which migrants are sent home from the U.S. Officials also said a previously announced rule which would limit asylum for those who pass through another country without first seeking protection there, or who enter the U.S. illegally, is also set to go into effect before the May 11 deadline passes.

— No family detention: The administration stopped short of saying they'd detain families crossing the border illegally. That step would have sparked widespread condemnation from immigration advocates and Biden allies. But they said they'd monitor families through things like curfews and GPS monitoring and stressed that families would be removed if found unqualified to stay in the U.S.

— Family reunification: DHS is creating a new family reunification parole process for people from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Colombia. And the agency is "modernizing" the existing family reunification process for people from Cuba and Haiti.

— Smuggler crackdown: Mayorkas stressed efforts to more strictly combat smuggling networks that facilitate travel from across the region to the U.S. border.

Andrew Selee, who heads the Migration Policy Institute, said the plans announced are the "clearest we've seen of a strategy" from the administration on how to deal with immigration. But he cautioned that it would still require a lot of time and commitment for the plan to be successful.

"I think it's the closest we've seen to a comprehensive plan," Selee said. He said the administration was betting a lot on the processing centers, and said potentially they can serve to give people information about migration options in a way that a U.S. Embassy, for example, cannot.

But Selee said they would have to be closely linked to local networks in various countries so prospective migrants know about them, and so local organization who know the people who are most desperate to flee can refer them to the centers.

Thursday's announcement was met with criticism by many immigration advocates, including members of the president's own party who have been troubled by Biden's increasing efforts to make it harder to access asylum at the border.

Sen. Bob Menendez, a New Jersey Democrat, said he was "disappointed" in the plan, especially after spending recent weeks urging the White House to adopt a different immigration strategy, including extending temporary protected status to people from several Central American countries. He also cast doubt on how parts of the plan would be implemented.

"The question is, how are we going to set up those processing centers? What are the entities that will

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be there to make sure that a person is being processed in the appropriate way? What are we doing with third countries to be able to accept individuals and make sure that they are safe?" said Menendez.

Many groups that work to assist refugees and other migrants said they welcomed some aspects of the president's plan, such as allowing in more refugees from South and Central America and speeding up family reunification efforts. But they said that shouldn't come at the expense of people applying for asylum at the border.

The International Refugee Assistance Project said in a statement that it is concerned at the lack of details in the plan, how it will be implemented and where the money will come from. The group also said that the U.S.'s refugee resettlement program is still struggling to recover after cuts during the Trump administration.

"We have more questions than answers," said Lacy Broemel, a project policy analyst.

Others, including right-leaning groups already intensely critical of Biden, lambasted the plan, saying that faster processing of migrants simply means they're entering the country faster. The Federation for American Immigration Reform said the initiatives amount "to a massive and illegal scheme designed to accommodate unlimited numbers of migrants."

Spagat reported from San Diego. Stephen Groves in Washington and Valeria Gonzales in McAllen, Texas, contributed to this report.

This story was first published on April 27, 2023. It was published again on April 28, 2023, to correct the name of an organization to the International Refugee Assistance Project, not the International Refugee Assistance Program.

Man livestreamed standoff before being fatally shot by FBI

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — FBI agents fatally shot a man who barricaded himself inside a Minneapolis home for several hours and livestreamed negotiations with officers as they tried to convince him to surrender.

A federal affidavit released Thursday night identified the man killed as 33-year-old Chue Feng Yang of St. Paul, who also went by the first name Kevin, the Star Tribune reported. Yang used Facebook to livestream and record several minutes of negotiations until he went outside the house with a woman tied to him.

"After barricading himself for several hours, the subject was armed as he emerged from the home," an FBI statement read. "The subject was fatally wounded, and another individual required medical assistance."

Yang's criminal history included convictions for terroristic threats, burglary, illegal firearm possession and auto theft. He also had three outstanding felony warrants for his arrest. Court records indicate that in one case, he and another person were accused of shooting a dog multiple times with a BB gun inside a stolen SUV before abandoning the wounded animal.

In a separate case, Yang was accused of animal cruelty for throwing a pit bully puppy from a speeding pickup being chased by police in January. The dog was injured and had to be euthanized.

An FBI affidavit said officers went to the home early Thursday to arrest Yang in connection with the car theft and noted additional warrants. Agents could see that he was armed with a sawed-off shotgun, according to the affidavit, and Yang allegedly threatened to shoot anyone who came in. He also claimed he would detonate bombs if agents entered.

Yang livestreamed himself twice during the standoff, in which a woman occasionally appears with him. She was hospitalized for an apparent fentanyl overdose, the affidavit stated, and was in stable condition.

On the livestream, Yang is seen with what appears to be a firearm while someone, apparently a negotiator, speaks on the phone. The negotiator said he was aware that Yang posted a "goodbye message."

"I know you know you're in control of this, and you can end this at any time, but it doesn't mean that you need to end your life or anyone else's lives today," the negotiator says.

As the negotiator urges surrender, Yang responds, "I hope y'all brought body bags."

The livestream also included the woman pleading with Yang, saying, "We have a (expletive) baby coming."

Yang disappears from the frame, then reappears with the woman tied to him at the waist. A handgun

briefly appears to be in her hand while he holds what looks like a shotgun, the Star Tribune reported.

"I love you," he says, and they walk out the door before shots are fired.

Bystander video posted on Facebook showed tactical unit officers yelling, "Hands!" shortly before gunfire. Soon thereafter, officers surrounded someone on the ground and appeared to perform life-saving measures while others walked a crying woman away.

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

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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

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posting what appeared to be classified information roughly in December.

Tucker and Copp reported from Washington.

Today in History: April 29, Dachau is liberated

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, April 29, the 119th day of 2023. There are 246 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 29, 1946, 28 former Japanese officials went on trial in Tokyo as war criminals; seven ended up being sentenced to death.

On this date:

In 1429, Joan of Arc entered the besieged city of Orleans to lead a French victory over the English.

In 1916, the Easter Rising in Dublin collapsed as Irish nationalists surrendered to British authorities.

In 1945, during World War II, American soldiers liberated the Dachau (DAH'-khow) concentration camp. Adolf Hitler married Eva Braun inside his "Führerbunker" and designated Adm. Karl Doenitz (DUHR'-nihtz) president.

In 1957, the SM-1, the first military nuclear power plant, was dedicated at Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

In 1967, Aretha Franklin's cover of Otis Redding's "Respect" was released as a single by Atlantic Records.

In 1991, a cyclone began striking the South Asian country of Bangladesh; it ended up killing more than 138,000 people, according to the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

In 1992, a jury in Simi Valley, California, acquitted four Los Angeles police officers of almost all state charges in the videotaped beating of motorist Rodney King; the verdicts were followed by rioting in Los Angeles resulting in 55 deaths.

In 1997, a worldwide treaty to ban chemical weapons went into effect.

In 2008, Democratic presidential hopeful Barack Obama denounced his former pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, for what he termed "divisive and destructive" remarks on race.

In 2010, the U.S. Navy officially ended a ban on women serving on submarines, saying the first women would be reporting for duty by 2012. The NCAA's Board of Directors approved a 68-team format for the men's basketball tournament beginning the next season.

In 2011, Britain's Prince William and Kate Middleton were married in an opulent ceremony at London's Westminster Abbey.

In 2020, scientists announced the first effective treatment against the coronavirus, the experimental antiviral medication remdesivir, which they said could speed the recovery of COVID-19 patients.

Ten years ago: Opening statements took place in Los Angeles in a wrongful death lawsuit brought by Michael Jackson's mother, Katherine Jackson, against concert giant AEG Live, claiming it had failed to properly investigate a doctor who cared for Jackson and was later convicted of involuntary manslaughter in his 2009 death. (The jury determined in October 2013 that AEG Live was not liable.) Syria's prime minister, Wael al-Halqi, narrowly escaped an assassination attempt when a bomb went off near his convoy in Damascus. NBA veteran center Jason Collins became the first male professional athlete in the major four American sports leagues to come out as gay in a first-person account posted on Sports Illustrated's website.

Five years ago: Central Americans who traveled in a caravan to the U.S. border, hoping to turn themselves in and ask for asylum, were stalled at the border as U.S. immigration officials announced that the San Diego crossing was already at capacity. T-Mobile and Sprint reached a \$26.5 billion merger agreement that would reduce the U.S. wireless industry to three major players. (The deal is awaiting the approval of federal regulators.)

One year ago: The United Nations is working doggedly to broker an evacuation of civilians suffering in the ruins of Mariupol. The negotiations continued on Friday, as Ukraine accused Russia of showing its contempt for the world organization by bombing Kyiv while the U.N. leader was visiting the capital. Tennis

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great Boris Becker was sentenced to 2 1/2 years in prison for illicitly transferring large amounts of money and hiding assets after he was declared bankrupt. Bronx Zoo officials announced the birth of a baby tree kangaroo that was the first of its species born at the zoo since 2008.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Keith Baxter is 90. Conductor Zubin Mehta is 87. Pop singer Bob Miranda (The Happenings) is 81. Country singer Duane Allen (The Oak Ridge Boys) is 80. Singer Tommy James is 76. Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., is 73. Movie director Phillip Noyce is 73. Comedian Jerry Seinfeld is 69. Actor Kate Mulgrew is 68. Actor Daniel Day-Lewis is 66. Actor Michelle Pfeiffer is 65. Actor Eve Plumb is 65. Rock musician Phil King is 63. Country singer Stephanie Bentley is 60. Actor Vincent Ventresca is 57. Singer Carnie Wilson (Wilson Phillips) is 55. Actor Paul Adelstein is 54. Actor Uma Thurman is 53. International Tennis Hall of Famer Andre Agassi is 53. Rapper Master P is 53. Actor Darby Stanchfield is 52. Country singer James Bonamy is 51. Gospel/R&B singer Erica Campbell (Mary Mary) is 51. Rock musician Mike Hogan (The Cranberries) is 50. Actor Tyler Labine is 45. Actor Megan Boone is 40. Actor-model Taylor Cole is 39. NHL center Jonathan Toews is 35. Pop singer Foxes is 34. Actor Grace Kaufman is 21.