

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 1 of 79

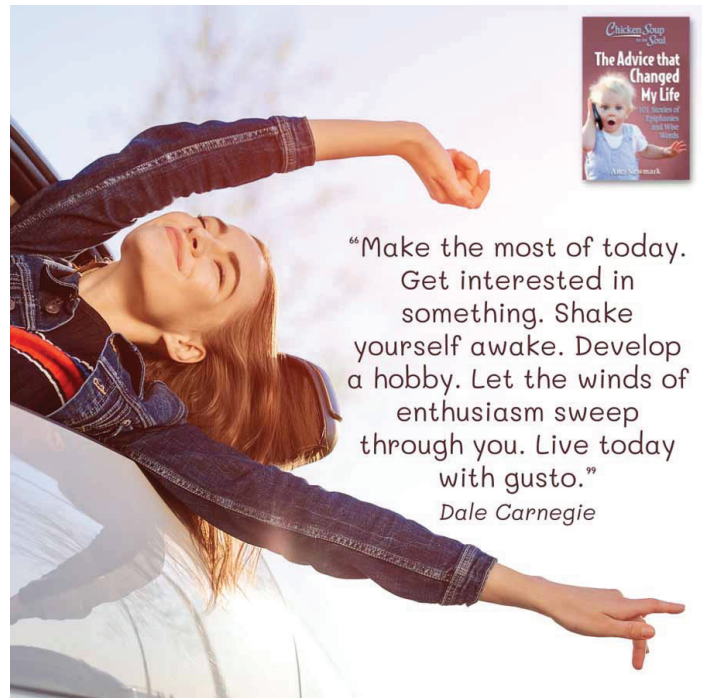
- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Newsweek Bulletin](#)
- [3- Elementary Spring Concert](#)
- [6- City Council Story](#)
- [8- Weekly Round\[s\] Up](#)
- [9- Johnson wins long jump at Milbank Track](#)
- [10- SD Searchlight: Native American advocates criticize new election laws as civil rights group drafts recommendations](#)
- [13- SD Searchlight: Plans for \\$55 million justice center in Lincoln County revealed](#)
- [14- SD Searchlight: Agriculture leaders urge a stronger farm safety net at U.S. Senate farm bill hearing](#)
- [16- SD Searchlight: Interior secretary under fire at U.S. Senate hearing over oil and gas leases, public lands](#)
- [18- Weather Pages](#)
- [22- Daily Devotional](#)
- [23- 2023 Community Events](#)
- [24- Subscription Form](#)
- [25- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [26- News from the Associated Press](#)

## Groton Community Calendar

### Wednesday, May 3

- School Breakfast: Egg Omelets.
- School Lunch: Turkey gravy over mashed potatoes.
- Senior Menu: Spaghetti with meat sauce, lettuce salad with dressing, Mandarin orange salad, whole wheat bread.
- High School Baseball hosts Sioux Valley, V/JV, 6 p.m.
- Groton Chamber Board Meeting at City Hall, Noon.
- Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm
- United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; PPR Meeting in Conde, 7 p.m.
- Emmanuel Lutheran: Sarah Circle, 5 p.m.; Confirmation, 6 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.

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



“Make the most of today. Get interested in something. Shake yourself awake. Develop a hobby. Let the winds of enthusiasm sweep through you. Live today with gusto.”  
*Dale Carnegie*

### Thursday, May 4

- School Breakfast: Muffins.
- School Lunch: Goulash, corn, bun.
- Senior Menu: Oven fried chicken, sweet potatoes, mixed vegetables, cookie, dinner roll.
- Girls Golf at Lee Park, Aberdeen, 10 a.m.
- High School Spring Concert, 7 p.m.
- Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.

### Friday, May 5

- School Breakfast: Eggs and sausage.
- School Lunch: Fish nuggets, try taters.
- Senior Menu: Taco salad, Mexican rice, breadstick, lemon tart bar.
- Track at Sisseton, 3 p.m.

### Saturday, May 6

- Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Groton City-Wide Rummage Day, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.  
© 2023 Groton Daily Independent

## The Bulletin

by Newsweek

JANUARY 24, 2023

### World in Brief

testified during a civil trial that she received a call about Trump attacking her friend Carroll just minutes after it occurred.

- A dissident Belarusian journalist who was pulled off a commercial flight that was diverted to the country in 2021 has been sentenced to eight years in prison on charges of organizing unrest and plotting to seize power.
- The Federal Reserve is expected today to raise interest rates again in an attempt to tackle growing inflation, in a move that could trigger a recession in the U.S. economy.
- A man carrying a knife has been arrested, accused of tossing shotgun cartridges onto the grounds of England's Buckingham Palace only days before the planned coronation of King Charles III.
- Three imprisoned Iranian female journalists, Niloufar Hamed, Elaheh Mohammadi and Narges Mohammadi, have been awarded U.N.'s premier prize for press freedom for "for their commitment to truth and accountability."
- In the ongoing war in Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is in Helsinki, Finland, for a one-day summit with the four Nordic prime ministers. A fire broke out at an oil storage facility in southwestern Russia near the vital Kerch Strait bridge, which connects the country to Crimea. No injuries were reported.

### What to Watch in the Day Ahead

- The Federal Reserve concludes its two-day monetary policy meeting at 2 p.m., and a press conference by Fed Chair Jerome Powell will follow shortly after. A quarter of a percentage point rate hike is expected.
- ADP employment and S&P services PMI figures for April are due from 8:15 a.m. ET.
- Major companies report quarterly results, including PepsiCo, Philip Morris, Qualcomm, Gilead Sciences, and CVS Health, among others.
- Half Moon Bay gunman Chunli Zhao is scheduled to appear in court for a hearing after pleading not guilty to murder charges in connection to a January 23 mass shooting at two farms that left seven co-workers dead.
- Florida is set to execute 56-year-old Darryl B. Barwick, who was convicted of breaking into a woman's apartment in 1986 and brutally killing her. He will be executed at 6 p.m.
- UNESCO hosts a commemorative celebration at the U.N. headquarters in New York today for 2023 World Press Freedom Day. Launched by the U.N. General Assembly in 1993, the day celebrates the fundamental principles of press freedom.

- At least nine people, including eight children, have reportedly been killed in a shooting at a school in central Belgrade, Serbia.

- A law banning abortion clinics in Utah that was due to go into effect today has been temporarily blocked by a state judge while courts review a lawsuit filed by Planned Parenthood Association and the ACLU.

- Jessica Leeds of North Carolina testified on Tuesday that Donald Trump molested her years before he allegedly raped writer E Jean Carroll. Meanwhile, Lisa Birnbach

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 3 of 79

## Elementary Spring Concert



**Desiree Yeigh directed the fifth grade band at the Elementary Spring Concert held Tuesday. They performed, Blizzard Rock and Gallant March.** (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)



**Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten: Head and Shoulder  
Directed by Scott Glott**

(Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 4 of 79



**1st Grade: Down by the Bay**  
**Directed by Scott Glott**

(Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)



**2nd Grade: Tempo Island Conga**  
**Directed by Scott Glott**

(Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)



**3rd Grade: Boomwackers**  
**Directed by Scott Glott**

(Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 5 of 79



## 4th Grade: Recorders

**Merrily We Roll Along, Gently Sleep, Hot Cross Buns, It's Raining, Old Macdonald  
Directed by Scott Glott**

(Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)



## 5th Grade: Ukuleles Three Little Birds, Stand by Me Directed by Scott Glott

(Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)

## City eyes new park bathroom

A new park bathroom remains in the forefront of the city council as the city is seeking grants. The city is applying for a FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant for a new park bathroom, also known as a shelter or officially titled Safe House. The structure would be used as a tornado shelter as well. Ted Dickey from Northeast Council of Governments talked about the grant, which has a deadline of December 1, 2023. It's a 75:25 matching grant with the state also matching 10 percent. All of that would result in the city paying for 15 percent of the project plus other items not covered by the grant. Dickey said that based on the city population, there would be one bathroom stall in each the men's and women's bathrooms. If the city wanted more, they would have to cover those costs.

Ken Hier from IMEG (formerly Clark Engineering) was also on hand to talk about their involvement in the project. He said the city would need to hire an architect firm by the next council meeting. Once an architect firm is hired, then the process will begin in developing a plan for the new facility.

The Groton Municipal Airport is closed until June 1, due to flooding conditions at the airport. Darrell Hillestad, who had been spearheading improvements to the airport, said that he has ordered the drain tile for the airport and the cost is about \$8,000. He said that the city could make an application to the state which would pay for 70 percent. Hillestad said that the water can be drained to a direct route to the creek. Several people are donating their equipment and time to help keep the cost down.

Topper Tastad talked about a speaker system in the city park. He said Pauer Sound came out to a study in the park for a sound system. The original quote came in at \$25,483.44. Tastad suggested that the city install the speakers and hang the wire which would save a couple thousand of dollars. In addition, instead of having 10 speakers, Tastad said there would only need to be eight speakers. The city is also applying for a \$4,000 POET grant and a \$5,000 Heartland Energy Economic Development Grant. Tastad said that he has 14 financial commitments. He said if the grants are approved, the project could be a go. "It should be a real nice system," Tastad said. Events such as the Summer Fest, Pumpkin Fest, Easter egg hunt and other events could use the speaker system.

The old jailhouse located south of the Groton Community Center is back in the spotlight. Tastad came before the council, on behalf of the Groton Community Historical Society, to ask for the jail property to be deeded to the Groton Community Historical Society. The jail property is currently under the ownership of the City of Groton. Tastad said that the building needs tuck repair and the roof will need to be replaced soon. If deeded, the building liability would be removed from the city. An asbestos report was done a few years ago and it showed there is asbestos in the building. The amount of property asked for is 50 feet by about 55 feet. Mike Nehls also was present in support of the preservation of the jail building. "There is a lot of history in that building," Nehls said.

Jarod Fliehs and Doug Hamilton came before the council to talk about the new proposed concession stand at the Groton Baseball Complex. Dickey said that the grant application was submitted last Friday. The amount of the grant requested is \$65,600, which is 35 percent of the \$189,000 project. A walk-in cooler, which will not be included in the grant project, would raise the cost to \$202,000. The Groton Baseball/Softball Foundation has raised about \$55,000 towards the project. It will not be known until the end of 2023 or early 2024 if the city will be awarded the grant. It was asked if it would be possible for the city to budget the project in case the grant is not awarded. City Finance Officer Douglas Heinrich said the budget is the council's and they would have to decided that in December.

Heir talked about the Groton Water Reservoir project that is still incomplete. He said that McGuire Iron is hoping to be here between May 15 and May 30 to finish up the work. The tank will need to be drained and dried with sandblasting done to the beams. The tank could be out of commission for two to three weeks. Work is starting later than expected due to the cool spring.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 7 of 79

The Groton Police Station, which is housed in the former City Hall building, will be getting a new sign. The council accepted the low quote from Service Signs for \$2,800 for an enclosed, lighted sign. There will also be an expense for wiring. The old Wage Memorial Library Sign will also be removed and placed in the History Room located in the current City Hall/Library building. The History Room is located in the former bank vault.

During department reports, Waste Water Superintendent Dwight Zerr told the council that an emergency discharge had to be done as the lagoon was full. Zerr had to make an application with the state to get the emergency discharge approved. There was a proposal to change the fine for sump pump violation from 10 days to 24 hours with no action being taken. Terry Herron, City Supervisor, said that he anticipates that the garbage route will be on for one more week.

There was discussion about the No Parking Signs in the downtown district from 2 a.m. to 6 a.m. Both Zerr and Herron were opposed to any changes as it would interfere with snow removal and sweeping times. The proposal was to change it to an Emergency Snow Removal Signs when there is 2" of snow. Towing has been an issue, but it was stated that someone could be starting a towing service in town. The proposal was compared to what Aberdeen is doing and they have no problems with the signage. It was decided not to make any changes to the current signage.

The 2022 Annual Report was presented. Heinrich said that the 2015 debt refinance loan had been in the negative due to journal entries not being done. It was recommended that a journal entry be done to get it out of the negative and then make proper journal entries in the future.

The council authorized the signing of a Renewable Energy Certificate contract with Heartland Energy. There would be no cost to the city and the city could benefit from the REC. A renewable energy certificate, or REC (pronounced: rĕk, like wreck), is a market-based instrument that represents the property rights to the environmental, social, and other non-power attributes of renewable electricity generation. RECs are issued when one megawatt-hour (MWh) of electricity is generated and delivered to the electricity grid from a renewable energy resource. The city gets about 60 percent of its electricity from WAPA and hydro power is now considered a renewable energy resource.

In other action:

\* The 136th Council convened with Jon Cutler (appointed), Jason Wambach, Karyn Babcock and Shirley Wells being sworn in council members. Drew Johnson was appointed as city council.

\* A meeting will be held Thursday at 10 a.m. with Tom Manhan, Mayor Scott Hanlon, Doug Heinrich and Lori Swanson from the state to talk about economic development. Heinrich reported that a housing study was approved and will be done later this year.

\* The old yellow digger truck was declared as surplus. The next step is to have it appraised before publishing for bids.

\* The council authorized the mayor to sign an audit Engagement Letter with Eide Bailly to do audits for 2020, 2021 and 2022.

\* City Attorney Drew Johnson said he has been in contact with the contractors for the pickle ball court and that a future date will be set for the contractor to meet with city officials. The work done on the pickle ball court have been disappointing to the council and residents as cracks and bubbles have surfaced on the court.

\* The District 6 meeting of the South Dakota Municipal League was rescheduled for May 16th, which resulted in the council moving that meeting date to May 17th.

- Paul Kosel



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 8 of 79



We had a short week in DC this past week, but managed to pack a lot into three days! I met with South Dakotans from Amherst to Edgemont. Most of the South Dakotans I met with were from surface-level elevations, but I also met with leadership from the Sanford Underground Research Facility who work 4,850 feet below ground. I met with people who are well into their

careers in education, insurance and agriculture fields, and a few employees-in-training, as young as two years old, who got their start in public service in our office this week. You'll have to read to the end to find out who they are and why they were here! More on all of these friendly faces in my Weekly Round[s] Up:

South Dakota groups I visited with: Students from Cheyenne-Eagle Butte High School; the South Dakota Cattlemen's Association; the Standing Rock Housing Authority; South Dakota members of the Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America; the Coalition of Large Tribes, including leadership from the Rosebud Sioux Tribe and Oglala Sioux Tribe; Mike Headley, Executive Director of the Sanford Underground Research Facility (SURF) in Lead; and Alyssa Cassels, South Dakota's 2023 Teacher of the Year.

Meetings this past week: The National Association of Insurance Commissioners and Chuck Hagel, former Secretary of Defense, who is currently chairing the Veterans Justice Commission at the Council on Criminal Justice. I attended an event at the Library of Congress with Neil DeGrasse Tyson, where he spoke about his work as an astrophysicist. We also had a joint session of Congress this past week where we heard from the President of South Korea, Yoon Suk Yeol.

We had our weekly Senate Prayer Breakfast, where I was our speaker this week! I focused my talk on the Beatitudes, specifically Matthew 5:9, which reads "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." There's plenty to disagree on in Congress, but we are stronger when we build bridges, find common ground and work together for the American people.

Met with South Dakotans from: Aberdeen, Amherst, Clear Lake, Eagle Butte, Edgemont, Fort Pierre, Gregory, Herreid, Huron, Lead, Milbank, Oglala, Parmelee, Pierre, Pine Ridge, Rapid City, Rosebud, Sioux Falls, Spearfish, Tulare, Volga and Wall.

Topics discussed: Housing needs on the Standing Rock reservation, the important work being done at SURF in Lead, state-based insurance regulations and diplomatic relations between the United States and South Korea.

Votes taken: 6 – One of these was on legislation to overturn President Biden's EPA regulations that would impose stricter emissions standards on heavy-duty vehicles. I was an original cosponsor of this resolution and voted yes to pass it this week. Unfortunately, we expect President Biden to veto this resolution, thereby allowing the rule to take effect.

Hearings: I attended three hearings this week: two in the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) and one in the Select Committee on Intelligence. At Thursday morning's SASC hearing, I had the opportunity to discuss an issue faced by members of the South Dakota National Guard with General Christopher Cavoli. Ten South Dakota National Guard soldiers from the 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment did not receive payment for their meal expenses for their nine-month European Command deployment in support of operations in Ukraine, which recently ended. Our office was able to assist in correcting this issue. You can watch a clip of that here.

Classified briefings: One – I had our bi-weekly cyber education briefing.

Legislation introduced: I introduced the Securing our Border Act with Senator Tim Scott (R-S.C.) that would redirect \$15 billion of funding passed by Democrats to hire 87,000 Internal Revenue Service (IRS) agents and instead utilize it to bolster security measures along our southern border. You can read more about that legislation here.

My staff in South Dakota visited: Aberdeen, Chamberlain, Highmore, Kennebec and Rapid City.

Steps taken this week: 60,695 steps or 27.98 miles.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 9 of 79

## Johnson wins long jump at Milbank Track

Aspen Johnson took first place at the Valley Queen Cheese Invitational Track Meet held Tuesday in Milbank. Johnson was in 42nd place in the state prior to the meet and with her 15-5.75 jump, could move her into the high 20s in the state. The girls division took fourth place in the team scores as two relay teams placed second. The boys 800m Relay Team also took second.

### Girl's Division

**Team Scores:** 1. Milbank, 185; 2. Great Plains Lutheran, 107; 3. Hamlin, 93; 4. Groton Area, 69.5; 5. Clark/Willow Lake, 59.5; 6. Webster Area, 48; 7. Warner, 39.5; 8. Aberdeen Roncalli, 37; 9. Dakota Hills, 29; 10. Florence/Henry, 26; 11. Border West, 25; 12. Tri-State, 22; 13. Britton-Hecla, 16.5; 14. Sisseton, 16; **15. Langford Area, 3**

**100m Hurdles:** 4. Mckenna Tietz, 18.25; 7. Talli Wright, 19.00; 18. Hannah Sandness, 21.38

**100 Meters:** 33. Shaela McGannon, 15.80

**300m Hurdles:** 4. Mckenna Tietz, 54.37; 12. Hannah Sandness, 59.51; 18. Talli Wright, 1:02.35

**200 Meters:** 9. Mckenna Tietz, 29.31; 17. Talli Wright, 30.51; 30. Hannah Sandness, 32.72

**400 Meters:** 13. Elizabeth Flihs, 1:15.30

**800 Meters:** 4. Taryn Traphagen, 2:47.67; 7. Ashlynn Warrington, 2:50.57; 20. Elizabeth Flihs, 3:08.29

**4x100 Relay:** 2. (Laila Roberts, Kennedy Hansen, Rylee Dunker, Aspen Johnson), 55.23

**4x200 Relay:** 2. (Jerica Locke, Laila Roberts, Kennedy Hansen, Rylee Dunker), 1:56.40

**4x400 Relay:** 5. (Kennedy Hansen, Jerica Locke, Laila Roberts, Rylee Dunker), 4:32.39

**SMR 1600m:** 3. (Laila Roberts, Rylee Dunker, Faith Traphagen, Jerica Locke), 4:43.03

**High Jump:** 5. Anna Fjeldheim, 4-06.00; 15. Emerlee Jones, 4-02.00

**Long Jump:** 1. Aspen Johnson, 15-05.75; 12. Anna Fjeldheim, 13-07.50; 25. Sydney Leicht, 12-04.50

**Triple Jump:** 3. Aspen Johnson, 32-01.75; 15. Emerlee Jones, 29-01.50

**Discus:** 26. Faith Flihs, 64-04; 31. Ashley Johnson, 52-03

**Shot Put:** 4. Emma Kutter, 34-04.00; 19. Faith Flihs, 27-00.50; 32. Ashley Johnson, 20-11.50

### Boy's Division

**Team Scores:** 1. Milbank 144.5; 2. Aberdeen Roncalli 97; 3. Webster Area 89.5; 4. Warner 82.5; 5. Hamlin 73; 6. Border West 51.5; 7. Groton Area 49; 8. Great Plains Lutheran 40; 9. Tri-State 37; 10. Clark/Willow Lake 29; 11. Britton-Hecla 25; 12. Dakota Hills 19; 13. Florence/Henry 16; 14. Tiospa Zina 13; 15. Sisseton 9; 16. Langford Area 4

**110m Hurdles:** 8. Caden McInerney, 19.76

**300m Hurdles:** 11. Colby Dunker, 50.40; 15. Caden McInerney, 53.09

**100 Meters:** 7. Korbin Kucker, 12.00; 8. Jacob Zak, 12.00; 36. Logan Warrington, 13.67

**200 Meters:** 6. Lane Tietz, 24.63; 7. Korbin Kucker, 24.70; 21. Colby Dunker, 26.01

**400 Meters:** 5. Cole Simon, 55.56; 12. Lane Tietz, 57.99; 20. Gage Sippel, 1:00.86

**800 Meters:** 24. Jayden Schwan, 2:34.56; 28. Tristin McGannon, 2:34.97; 29. Jacob Lewandowski, 2:35.03

**1600 Meters:** 13. Jayden Schwan, 5:40.96; 26. Nicolas Fernandez, 6:25.45; 27. Garrett Schultz, 6:41.63

**4x100 Relay:** 3. (Keegen Tracy, Ryder Johnson, Andrew Marzahn, Teylor Diegel), 46.37

**4x200 Relay:** 2. (Keegen Tracy, Ryder Johnson, Andrew Marzahn, Cole Simon), 1:35.87

**4x400 Relay:** 3. (Keegen Tracy, Ryder Johnson, Andrew Marzahn, Cole Simon), 3:40.49

**4x800 Relay:** 4. (Blake Pauli, Jacob Lewandowski, Tristin McGannon, Jayden Schwan), 9:42.65

**Long Jump:** 8. Jacob Zak, 18-08.00; 22. Gage Sippel, 16-02.50

**Triple Jump:** 5. Jacob Zak, 39-00.50; 18. Tristin McGannon, 32-11.00

**Discus:** 6. Logan Ringgenberg, 122-07; 10. Holden Sippel, 103-00; 15. Kaleb Antonsen, 88-11

**Shot Put:** 7. Holden Sippel, 41-04.75; 8. Logan Ringgenberg, 40-08.50; 9. Caleb Hanten, 40-02.00



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **Native American advocates criticize new election laws as civil rights group drafts recommendations**

**BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - MAY 2, 2023 4:42 PM**

South Dakota's Legislature passed 19 election-related bills over the winter, but Native American voting rights advocates say none of the bills addressed their concerns about voter suppression.

Meanwhile, some of those advocates are serving on a federal civil rights committee that's developing recommendations to improve Native American participation in elections.

Republican leaders described bills they passed during the legislative session as proactive measures to increase trust in elections.

"We promised the voters we'd look under every rock to make it better, and we have a package of legislation to do just that," House Majority Leader Will Mortenson, R-Pierre, said in a statement announcing the legislative package. Mortenson is an enrolled member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe.

But that message sounded tone-deaf to Natalie Stites Means, the founder of HeSapa Voter Initiative, a Native American voting rights advocacy organization. She said Native American voters in South Dakota have long expressed a range of concerns, including barriers to voter registration and limited access to polling places.

Stites Means said none of the recently adopted bills address those problems, "further breaking down our faith in this election system."

#### **History of problems**

OJ Semans agrees. He's the co-founder of Four Directions, an organization that advocates for Native American voting rights and works on Native voter engagement.

"They're not too concerned about our people's faith in elections," Semans said of legislators. "There are plenty of Natives that do not trust the government, think elections are rigged. Some older Natives have to see their ballot enter the box on the day of the election."

Semans said courts have repeatedly verified Native Americans' concerns:

In the "motor-voter" case (2019), tribes filed a lawsuit against the state and won a settlement in which the state agreed to take several steps to improve voter registration services.

In *Poor Bear v. Jackson County* (2014), the county was accused of violating the Voting Rights Act and the Constitution's Equal Protection Clause by failing to provide voter registration services at a location on a Native American reservation, and after the lawsuit was filed, the county agreed to provide services at the location in question.

In *Blackmoon v. Charles Mix County* (2007), a federal judge found the county violated the one-person, one-vote principle of the 14th Amendment, and the county was ordered to redraw a district boundary to provide for better representation.

In *Bone Shirt v. Hazeltine* (2006), a federal judge ruled the state's redistricting plan violated the Voting Rights Act and ordered the state to redraw district boundaries to provide for better representation.

"It's ironic to watch," Semans said. "The state and counties only defend our voting rights when the courts make them."

Semans said the simplest thing the state could do to increase tribal trust in the state's election system is to enforce existing state and federal laws.

Sara Frankenstein is an attorney who has represented South Dakota counties against multiple lawsuits alleging infringement of Native Americans' voting rights. She said most of her cases could have been settled



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 11 of 79

without going to court, but advocacy groups rush things "so they can claim a win."

"The real issue is, usually, that counties don't have the money or know-how to implement the plaintiff's request," Frankenstein said. "These are people who are elected. They are not lawyers and we cannot expect them to be."

Regardless of the intent, the outcome is the same, according to Bret Healy, a Four Directions consultant and former executive director of the South Dakota Democratic Party. He said Republicans are more concerned with preventing fraud than addressing voter access and participation.

"And those problems are not imagined. The problems of fraud are," Healy said.

## New election laws

Rep. Mortenson said access is a priority for him and other Republican leaders.

"We protected our early voting window, which is one of the longest in the nation," Mortenson said. "This means that folks can vote almost two months in advance. Whether you're in Sisseton or Sioux Falls, you have full access to vote whenever is convenient for you."

Attempts to shorten the state's early voting window came from other Republicans.

Bills that passed during the legislative session, which ended in March, include a mandate for public testing of ballot tabulation machines, and a bill that effectively bans ballot drop boxes by requiring them be placed indoors, monitored, and only used during office hours. Additionally, a system for post-election audits has been established, and other new laws will enhance penalties for petition circulation perjury, and ban ranked-choice voting.

Mortenson said the security of the state's elections "is just as important in Indian Country as it is anywhere. Our bills to strengthen our election system will help voters across South Dakota to know their votes mattered."

But choosing not to shorten the state's two-month voting window and adding more security measures means little to those who say their nearest polling place is an unfair distance away, according to Kellen Returns From Scout, a Native American rights advocate.

"This can be particularly problematic for those who do not have access to transportation or who have limited mobility," Returns From Scout said.

If anything, Returns From Scout said, the state countered advocates' efforts. He pointed to a failed effort he participated in to relocate a county seat closer to where the Native American population lives. One of the 19 election bills that passed this year makes it more difficult to relocate a county seat, in part by raising the number of petitions needed to get the matter on the ballot.

## Draft recommendations

In the wake of concerns raised by some Native American voters about barriers to voting in the state, the South Dakota Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights decided to take action.

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency established in 1957. The commission's mission is to investigate and report on issues related to civil rights, and to make recommendations to ensure all people are afforded equal protection under the law.

The commission's South Dakota Advisory Committee has held a series of meetings in the past couple of years to gather information on voting rights and voter access, with a focus on Native Americans.

The group is now developing non-binding recommendations for the federal, state and local levels. The draft recommendations include funding voter transportation and mobile polling locations, designating Indian Health Service locations as places people can register to vote, undertaking efforts to ensure an accurate census, educating voters that they do not need identification to register to vote, and encouraging drop boxes on reservations.

Charles Abourezk is an advisory committee member, as well as chief judge of the Oglala Sioux Tribal Court and chief justice of the Rosebud Sioux Tribal Supreme Court. He's optimistic that the implementation of the recommendations would improve Native American voter participation and trust in the state's election process.

And in the end, the state would "avoid a lot of litigation, and I would say very expensive litigation,"

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 12 of 79

Abourezk said during the working group's April 10 meeting.

The group plans to finalize and submit its recommendations in the coming months.

## **Draft voting rights and access recommendations**

Draft recommendations from the South Dakota Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in regard to voting rights and access:

Federal recommendations

### **More funding for groups to help Native Americans vote.**

Ensuring there are places to vote on tribal lands, such as more drop boxes.

Continued funding for the state's Help America Vote Act fund and oversight to ensure the money is being used for its intended purpose.

Bringing back "pre-clearance requirements," a reference to a provision in the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that required certain jurisdictions with a history of discriminatory voting practices (including Oglala Lakota County and Todd County) to receive clearance from the federal government before making any changes to their voting laws or procedures. (In 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the pre-clearance requirement in the case of Shelby County v. Holder, ruling that it was no longer necessary due to progress made in eliminating discriminatory voting practices.)

Making sure there are enough post offices on reservations to decrease travel distances for tribal members to participate in elections via mail.

Stop counting people in jail as living in jail for the census and instead count them as living at their last home, and make sure people leaving jail know their voting rights.

### **State recommendations**

Inform police they should not go to polling places where many Native Americans vote unless there is a good reason (this recommendation comes in response to a sheriff who was accused of intimidating Native voters during a recent election).

Utilize transportation or mobile polling locations to help more Native Americans vote.

Designate Indian Health Service locations and Veterans Affairs medical centers as places where people can register to vote.

Fund an apolitical committee to help make sure the census counts are accurate.

Change the rules for the Help America Vote Act so that counties can get money back for paying for stamps for people who vote by mail or register to vote.

Educate voters on how to register to vote without an ID, and other helpful information, and put the information in a graphic at all the voting places and county offices so people can use it on election day.

Local recommendations

Teach and help more Native Americans to vote by organizing events to explain how voting works and to register people to vote.

Use Help America Vote Act money to hire more people who are trained to help with elections.

Use Help America Vote Act money to set up satellite offices for voting on reservations.

*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.*



## Plans for \$55 million justice center in Lincoln County revealed

**Facility meant to address rapid growth in population, criminal justice needs**

**BY: JOHN HULT - MAY 2, 2023 4:11 PM**

Lincoln County commissioners in Canton got their first look Tuesday at plans for a \$55 million courthouse and justice center meant to meet the county's needs for decades.

Commissioners approved the spending in December in the interest of dealing with the swelling criminal justice needs of the state's fastest-growing county, which includes the expanding southern edge of Sioux Falls.

Robin Houwman, who serves as the presiding judge for both Lincoln and Minnehaha counties, recently said that steady population growth has led to a surge in case filings that will require the addition of a new judge for the circuit.

For Lincoln County, the growth in its criminal justice obligations has framed debate on two controversial building proposals in recent years. In 2020, voters rejected a push for a new jail, which left the county to continue contracting with the Minnehaha County Jail in Sioux Falls.

A 4-1 vote from commissioners to move forward with the new courthouse came in December. The group approved \$55 million in bonding authority — which would raise property taxes around \$16 a month for the average homeowner — but the group did not choose a final site. At that point, some favored tearing down the current courthouse and rebuilding, while others argued for a new building on a "greenfield" space just north of town.

Commissioner Mike Poppens said he now believes the greenfield site, purchased for about \$1.6 million, has the support of at least four commissioners. The bonding authority resolution that passed in December requires a 4-1 vote on site selection before the project can commence.

The commission was mostly ready to choose the greenfield option before Tuesday's meeting, Poppens said, but "we needed to see some of this information to know that it would legitimately work."

"The writing's on the wall," he said.

The floor plan presentation came from contractors with JLG Architects, Tegra, DLR Group and Henry Carlson Construction. It showed a three-story facility at the greenfield site, which is at the corner of Highway 18 and 480th Avenue just north of town. The new justice center could include up to eight courtrooms, including room for two expansion courtrooms on the third floor.

The layout includes a sally port for the transfer of inmates to a holding area, space for 15 offices for lawyers with the Lincoln County State's Attorney's Office and several multi-purpose meeting rooms for case negotiations, meetings with clients or other uses.

Todd Orr of DLR Group told commissioners that the floor plans would likely see adjustments based on commissioner and public comments.

"This is kind of our first pass," Orr said.

The plan also preserves space to add a jail, should the county choose to build one.

Poppens was among the commissioners to thank the contractors for considering the future.

"This county is going to continue to grow, and the commissions that are sitting here in the years to come will talk about expanding it," he said.

In addition to a vote finalizing the location, there will be public comment periods over the summer and a final vote on the site plan and project specs from commissioners next fall. Bids would follow, and construction could begin next year.

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

## Agriculture leaders urge a stronger farm safety net at U.S. Senate farm bill hearing

BY: ADAM GOLDSTEIN - MAY 2, 2023 5:42 PM

WASHINGTON — Farm and commodity trade association leaders lobbied for updating commodity programs and strengthening crop insurance programs at a Tuesday hearing of the U.S. Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry committee.

The industry officials said federal crop insurance and the Department of Agriculture's Price Loss Coverage and Agriculture Risk Coverage programs are not serving as a "true safety net" for farmers, and that reference prices for crops must be increased to counter declining farm income and high input costs.

A reference price is the estimated cost of an agricultural product set in the farm bill, used for crop insurance and commodity risk management program reimbursement purposes. The last update to reference prices came in the 2014 farm bill.

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

Rob Larew, president of the National Farmers Union, said in the Tuesday hearing that while the 2018 farm bill provided a strong financial safety net for farmers, it is "being tested in new and unprecedented ways."

"Whatever we can do to build on those successes in Title I, making sure that we update the price triggers and the reference prices, making sure that we broaden and strengthen the success of crop insurance, I think will go a long way towards providing that certainty," he said.

Commodity risk management program payouts under the 2018 farm bill totaled \$33 billion from 2018 to 2023, and crop insurance indemnities totaled roughly \$27 billion over 2021 and 2022. These totals also do not account for the roughly \$90 billion in ad-hoc disaster aid distributed over that same time period, mostly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2018 farm bill expires at the end of September 2023, was projected to cost \$867 billion over 10 years when enacted, and has cost roughly \$428 billion over the past five years.

### Crop insurance

Zippy Duvall, a witness and president of the American Farm Bureau Federation, told the committee on Tuesday that what he hears most often from farmers about the farm bill is the need to strengthen and expand federal crop insurance programs.

Federal crop insurance plans can be purchased for both specialty and commodity crops by acres planted, and generally cover up to 85% of a given year's market price for the good.

Caleb Ragland, a witness and row crop farmer from Kentucky, said federal crop insurance is one of the main tools he uses on his farm to stay viable. He said that protecting the programs from cuts and "harmful amendments" should be a top priority for legislators in the coming farm bill.

"Without crop insurance, the risks would be more than many farmers and lenders could handle," he said. "It certainly would be for me and my family."

Arkansas Republican Sen. John Boozman asked Duvall about the benefits of the flexibility of the current safety net, in light of talk in Congress of tying eligibility to climate practices, and mandatory payment limits.

"Our farmers go to those risk management products to be able to protect their farm, for enough revenue to be able to get to the next crop in the wake of a disaster," he said. "Those are real threats. We need not dilute the program. We need to make it better, not more challenging."

Committee Chair Debbie Stabenow of Michigan, a Democrat, asked Larew and Duvall how to better provide crop insurance options for specialty crop farmers in the coming farm bill.

Duvall said that the most important thing is to make sure that the crop insurance program is funded correctly, and is easy for farmers to use.

Larew suggested more actively applying a provision of the Federal Crop Insurance Act to encourage adoption and continued use of climate-smart agricultural practices by developing new specialty crop insurance policies.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 15 of 79

## Reference price increases

All of the industry representatives on the panel spoke in favor of raising reference prices for the Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage programs in the upcoming farm bill.

The Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage programs protect farmers from poor growing seasons and low prices, respectively. These federal programs, located in Title I of the farm bill, are intended to lessen the risk of farming for producers of major commodities like corn, wheat, soybeans and other crops.

"I know it takes a tremendous amount of money to get those where they need to be so we can keep calling them a safety net," said Kody Carson, a past chairman of the National Sorghum Producers. "And I'm not sure if it's two inches above the concrete that is doing the American farmer a lot of good."

Brent Cheyne, president of the National Association of Wheat Growers, said that cuts were made to crop insurance in previous farm bills in efforts to be fiscally conservative that caused the farm safety net to "come up short" in recent years.

He added that this lack of funds required the federal government to institute the existing ad-hoc disaster payment program, which has delivered relief too late to salvage growing seasons for producers.

Republican Sen. John Thune of South Dakota asked the panelists how they could improve the Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage programs for farmers.

Larew suggested allowing producers to enroll in both programs at the same time in a given year, as oftentimes they do not know which program will better support their operation.

Harold Wolle, a vice president of the National Corn Growers Association, added that the ARC program could be improved if Congress removed the provision stating that county payment rates to farmers cannot exceed 10% of the county benchmark revenue. He said that this rule has limited the assistance provided to producers experiencing major disasters.

He added that strengthening the reference price escalator in the PLC program will allow for more responsive price protection. The provision for reimbursement is capped at 115% of the statutory reference price for corn, or \$4.26 per bushel, which is far below market price.

Stabenow said that the ongoing threat of default on the nation's economy has her concerned about funding cuts to the ARC and PLC programs in the farm bill.

She said that the last debt ceiling crisis in 2011 resulted in annual cuts of 5.7% to these mandatory programs year-over-year, and she worries about similar changes in the ongoing negotiations.

"If we do not have additional funding in the baseline, we're going to need to focus on our top priorities, and need your best thinking on how we do this together to be able to target this," she said.

Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa asked how Congress might bolster the farm safety net without costing the country more money.

"I think we've just got to make sure that we determine what's going to keep our safety net strong, and determine what it's gonna take to keep our farmers strong, so that we keep our national security strong," Duvall said. "But to do it without any more money, I don't have any suggestions."

Grassley also asked Larew if commodity farmland owners should be eligible for safety net programs if they are not actively farming the land, given that the largest 10% of farms in the United States have received 70% of the payouts.

Larew said the National Farmers Union supports provisions that limit payments to those who are truly invested in management and labor, and would be willing to work with Congress to find ways to ensure that those rules are being met.

Baseline spending for the coming farm bill is projected at \$1.5 trillion over the next 10 fiscal years, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

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

## Interior secretary under fire at U.S. Senate hearing over oil and gas leases, public lands

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - MAY 2, 2023 4:26 PM

Members of the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee used a Tuesday hearing on the Interior Department's fiscal 2024 budget to voice their displeasure with the administration's energy production policies to Secretary Deb Haaland.

The strongest criticism came from Republicans on the panel, though Chairman Joe Manchin III, a centrist West Virginia Democrat with ties to the state's coal industry, also expressed disappointment with how the department has managed oil and gas production. Members of both parties raised concerns over the timeliness of federal approvals for energy projects.

Manchin, who sponsored the massive climate law Democrats passed last year but has since expressed his disapproval with how President Joe Biden has implemented it, said he was not eager to increase the administration's request to add \$2 billion for the Interior Department.

The department is still lagging on oil and gas initiatives required under the climate law and the 2021 bipartisan infrastructure law, Manchin said.

"In my view, Interior's failure to comply with laws Congress has passed is not a question of funding," he said. "It's a question of misplaced priorities, or perhaps a willingness to ignore certain requirements."

### Dissatisfaction over oil and gas leasing

The Energy Committee does not write appropriations bills, though a final spending package would likely need Manchin's approval to clear the Senate's 60-vote threshold for legislation. The administration's request would be a 12% funding increase for the department.

The climate law, titled the Inflation Reduction Act or IRA, was the result of negotiations between Manchin and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York and was intended to strike a balance between developing more oil and gas sources and transitioning to renewable energy sources, he said.

But the Biden administration has demonstrated an unwillingness to follow through on the provisions related to oil and gas, threatening the law's clean-energy provisions, Manchin said Tuesday.

"Because the IRA ties wind energy to oil and gas, failing to take an all-of-the-above approach to energy security puts the administration at risk of taking a none-of-the-above approach," Manchin told Haaland. "You'll get nothing."

The department's Bureau of Ocean Energy Management still hasn't finalized a five-year plan for offshore oil and gas lease sales and was behind on developing a plan for 2024 sales, Manchin complained. The five-year plan was due in June 2022, he said.

Haaland said the five-year offshore lease sales would be ready in September and blamed the delay on former President Donald Trump's administration.

"The five-year plan is behind because the previous administration dropped the ball and stopped working on the plan," she said.

The department was aware of the requirements under the climate law and would comply, she told Manchin.

### Onshore lease sales

Ranking Republican John Barrasso of Wyoming pressed Haaland to commit to holding quarterly lease sales for oil and gas development, as required by federal law.

Under an executive order President Joe Biden signed in his first week in office, Interior paused lease sales in areas managed by the department's Bureau of Land Management as officials determined how to evaluate the climate impacts of fossil fuel development on federal lands.

A federal judge in Louisiana ordered the department in June 2021 to resume lease sales, saying federal law did not give the department the power to opt out of the quarterly requirement.

"You haven't been following the law," Barrasso said Tuesday.

Haaland said plans were in the works to hold lease sales in June, September and December.

Barrasso also blasted the administration's recent proposed rule to further conservation on federal lands.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 17 of 79

Federal lands are intended for multiple uses, including livestock grazing, mining and recreation. Adding conservation "would make non-use of lands a competing use," Barrasso said.

Haaland said the rule would make conservation a valid use of the land on par with those extractive industries, but would not block any of them.

The proposal "would essentially put conservation on equal footing with our multi-use mandate," she said. "It would not foreclose other uses of our public lands, such as mining or grazing or energy development."

Barrasso objected to that description.

The proposed rule "is nothing more than a thinly veiled attempt to eliminate economic activities on federal lands in Wyoming and across the West," he said. "I would strongly urge you to withdraw this disastrous and illegal proposal."

Nevada Democrat Catherine Cortez Masto also said ranchers in her state worried the rule would limit grazing on federal lands and were "upset they were not consulted" before the proposed rule was published.

Haaland said the proposal was a draft and that the department is currently accepting public comments on it.

## Permitting process

Manchin said the Interior Department was also six months behind on a requirement in the infrastructure law to speed the permitting process for critical mineral mining.

Federal permits for energy projects in general take too long, he said. Congress has provided hundreds of millions of dollars to Interior to improve the permitting process, but Interior agencies still blame lengthy reviews on a lack of funding for staffing, Manchin added.

Manchin reintroduced a bill Tuesday morning that would overhaul the federal environmental review process. The bill received a vote as an amendment to a spending bill last year, but with only seven Republican supporting it, the measure was not approved.

The permitting issue is not limited to fossil fuel projects.

U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich, a Democrat from Haaland's home state of New Mexico, also raised concerns over the length of time for federal approvals for renewable energy projects.

Heinrich noted the department had approved leases for offshore wind energy development.

"There are a lot of steps between leasing and permitting, and I'm concerned that the progress and the economics have changed in ways that put a lot of those projects potentially at risk," he said.

The administration is prioritizing renewable energy development, Haaland said, and had a goal to deploy 30 gigawatts of offshore wind energy by 2030.

Heinrich asked if the department was on track to reach that goal, given how long it can take to issue federal environmental permits for large energy projects.

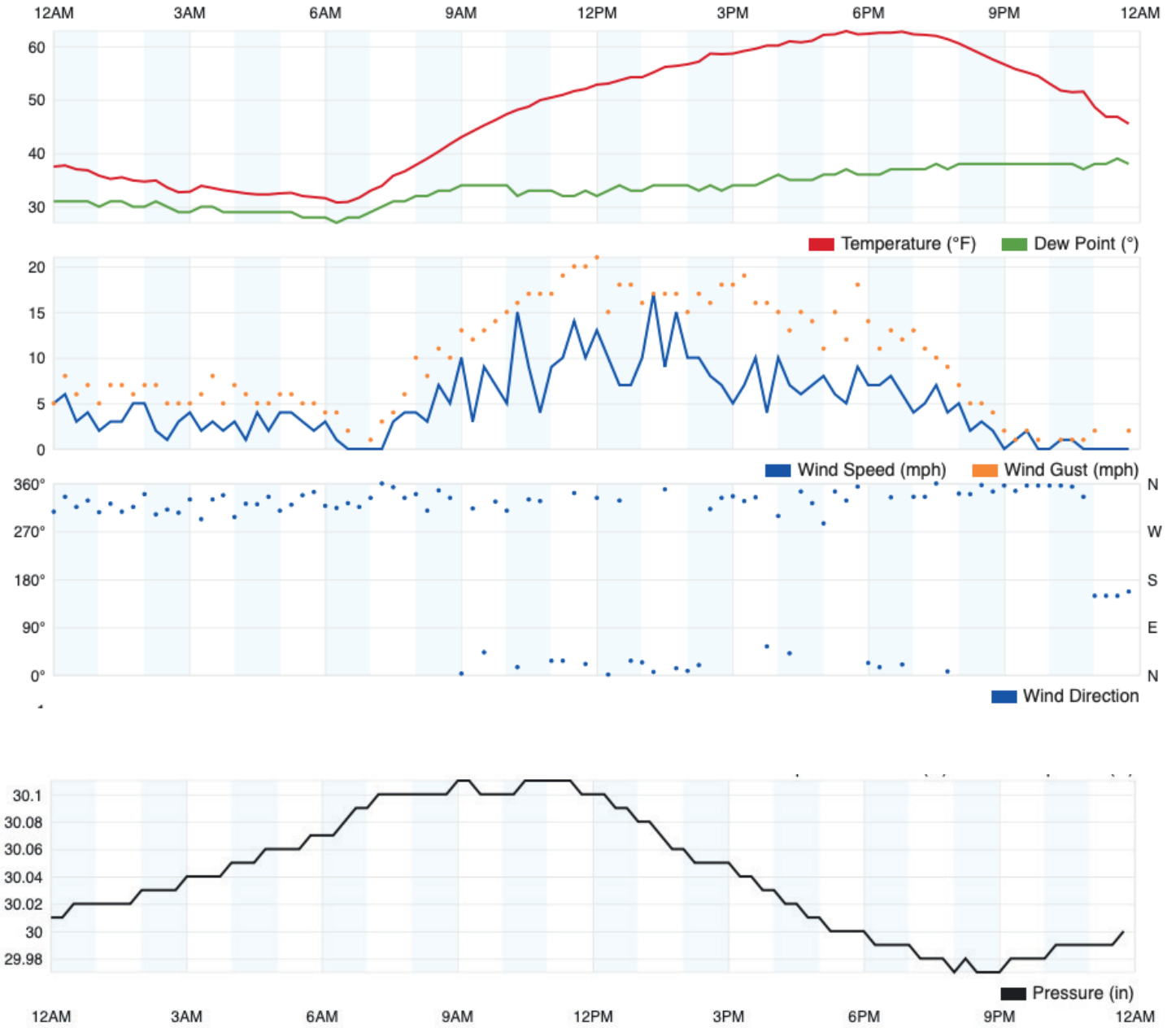
"We believe we are," Haaland responded.

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

# Groton Daily Independent






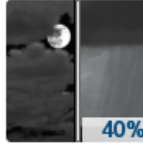

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 18 of 79

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 19 of 79

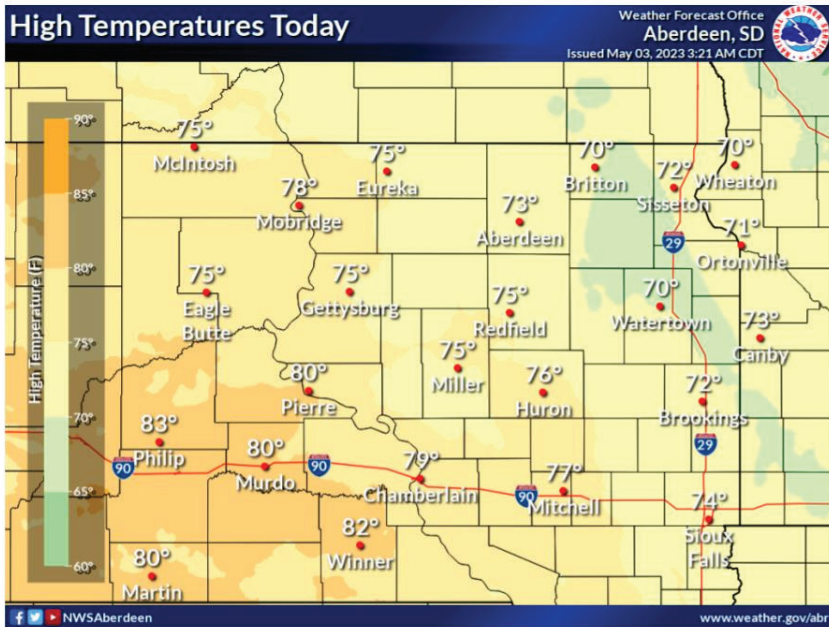
Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
						
Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Clear	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy then Chance Showers	Chance Showers
High: 73 °F	Low: 42 °F	High: 71 °F	Low: 42 °F	High: 66 °F	Low: 47 °F	High: 66 °F



## Pleasant Weather Conditions Today

May 3, 2023  
4:11 AM

### High Temperatures Today



Pleasant weather conditions across the region today under a mostly sunny sky.

Dry and mild weather conditions continue on Thursday.

While it's not expected to be a total wash, a handful of precipitation chances are coming up Friday through Tuesday.



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Pleasant weather conditions can be expected today and Thursday, with highs in the upper 60s and upper 70s. While it's not expected to be a total wash, a handful of precipitation chances are coming up Friday through Tuesday.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 20 of 79

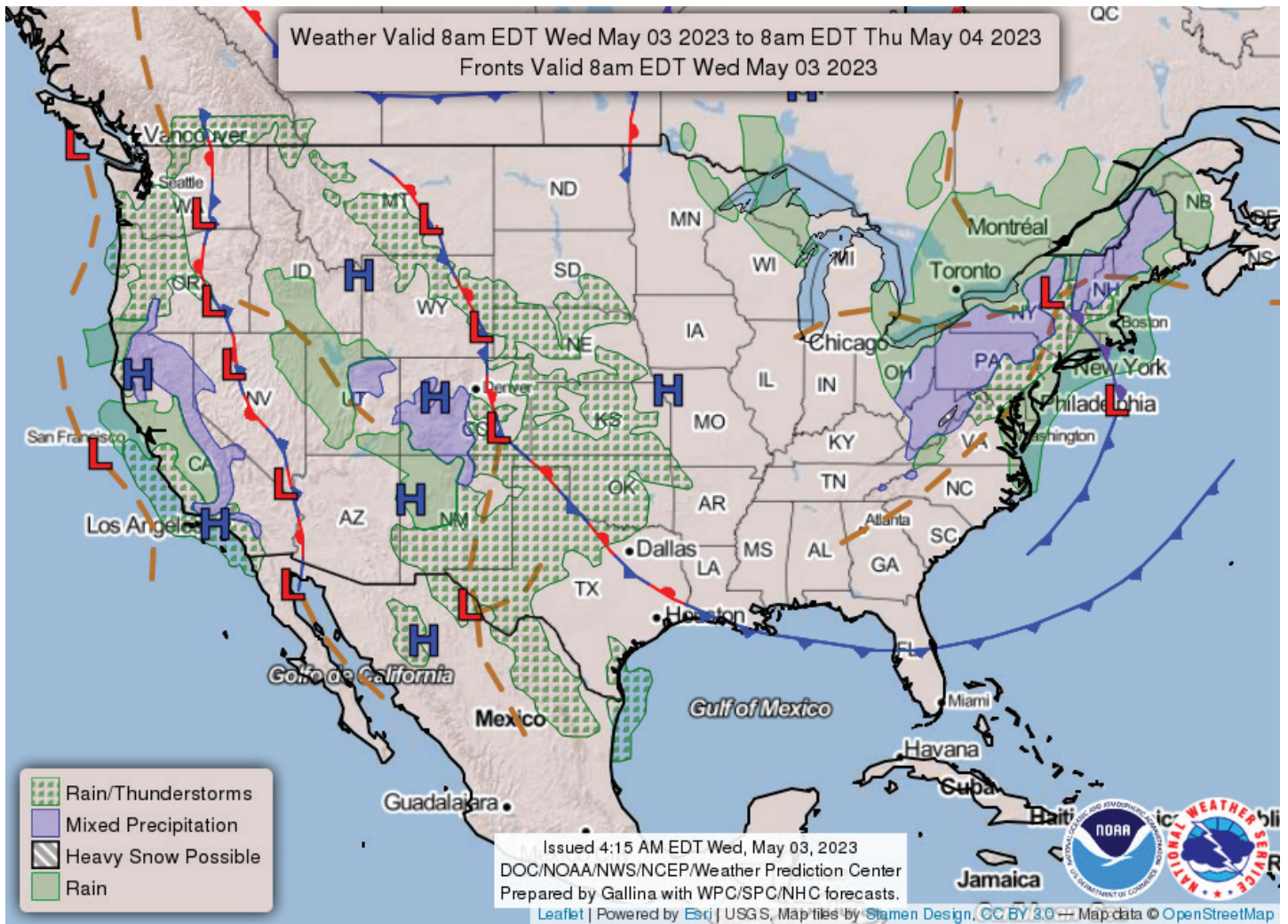
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 63 °F at 5:32 PM**  
**Low Temp: 30 °F at 6:20 AM**  
**Wind: 21 mph at 12:00 PM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 14 hours, 26 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 90 in 1952  
Record Low: 13 in 2005  
Average High: 65  
Average Low: 39  
Average Precip in May.: 0.33  
Precip to date in May.: 0.00  
Average Precip to date: 4.30  
Precip Year to Date: 5.72  
Sunset Tonight: 8:42:44 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:14:21 AM



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 21 of 79

## Today in Weather History

May 3, 1895: A tornado moved northeast from 3 miles northwest of Redfield through Ashton. It was estimated to be on the ground for about 5 miles. Several homes were unroofed and barns destroyed. Tornadoes were spotted in Minnehaha and Bon Homme Counties in South Dakota.

May 3, 1907: The low temperature at Watertown fell to 16 degrees, making this coldest May temperature ever recorded Watertown.

May 3, 1960: Late season snowfall of 3 to 7 inches covered Perkins, Corson, and Campbell Counties. Lemmon reported 7 inches, and 6 miles SE of McIntosh had 6.5 inches. Main roads were very slippery and some rural roads impassable for about one day.

May 3, 1999: Two to four inches of rain fell across southeastern Dewey County causing flash flooding south of La Plant, mainly on Willow Creek. As a result of the flash flooding, several roads were underwater. Highway 212 south of La Plant was flooded for a few hours along with Highway 8, 15 miles south of La Plant. The flash flooding resulted in some road and bridge damage.

May 3, 2002: With low humidity, dry vegetation, and increasing South winds, embers from a day old controlled burn initiated a large grassland fire in the early afternoon hours west of Claremont. South winds of 30 to 40 mph gusting to 50 mph caused the fire to spread quickly. The fire extended to 4 miles wide and spread 4 miles north before it was contained late in the evening. Many trees along with a mobile home, an abandoned house, and an old barn burned. Seven miles of road had to be closed due to poor visibility from smoke. Eleven fire departments with nearly 150 firefighters extinguished the fire. The fire was completely put out during the afternoon hours of the 4th. This fire was one of the largest grassland fires in Brown County history.

1761: Large tornadoes swept through the harbor at Charleston, South Carolina when a British fleet of 40 sails was at anchor. The tornadoes raised a wave 12 feet high, leaving many vessels on their beam ends. Four people drowned.

1868: A tornado traveled 15 miles across Warren and Knox Counties, northwest of Galesburg, Illinois. The small town of Ionia, in Warren County, was destroyed. 16 homes and two churches in the city were leveled, along with 30 homes elsewhere. The tornado killed six people and injured 40 others. Many of the casualties occurred during a church service when the church roof was torn off and dropped onto the congregation.

1895: In Sioux County, Iowa an exceptionally violent tornado, at times 1,000 yards wide packing winds estimated at over 250 mph moved from three miles north of Ireton to two miles southwest of Hull hitting four schools. Two school houses several miles apart were leveled, killing teachers and students. Sibling teachers were killed at two different schools. Adjoining farms were also destroyed with several deaths in homes.

1999: There were 63 tornadoes in Oklahoma, making this the worst outbreak ever to strike the state. In Central Oklahoma alone, eight individual supercell thunderstorms produced 57 tornadoes. Bridge Creek, Moore and southern parts of the Oklahoma City Metro area were hit the hardest. When it was near Moore, Oklahoma, a truck-mounted Doppler radar measured a wind speed of 318 mph, the highest ever observed in a tornado. Forecasters at the Storm Prediction Center in Norman, OK were faced with the unprecedented situation of a major tornado on the ground threatening their location. As a major F5 tornado was approaching the Oklahoma City metro area from the southwest, the SPC notified its backup, the Air Force Weather Agency at Offutt AFB in Omaha, Nebraska that they might have to assume operational responsibility if the tornado approached Norman. The storm remained several miles west of the facility but was visible from the SPC roof. Damage from this single tornado was around one billion dollars, making it the most costly tornado in history. Estimated damage from the entire tornado outbreak was \$1.485 billion, making this the most expensive tornado outbreak ever. 2,314 homes were destroyed, and another 7,428 were damaged. To the north in Kansas, an F4 tornado tracked 24 miles through Sumner and Sedgwick Counties, killing 6, injuring 154, and causing \$146 million in damages. Haysville and Wichita suffered severe damage. A total of 8,480 buildings and homes were damaged or destroyed with, 109 destroyed.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 22 of 79

Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### KEEP ALERT!

Years ago LSU and Indiana were playing in the NCAA Regional finals. LSU was leading Indiana by eight points going into the last few minutes of the game.

Suddenly, LSU began playing a different type of game. They were trying to use the clock to their advantage. But it did not work out the way they planned. As they took their eyes off of the ball and watched the clock, Indiana stayed focused on the ball - not the clock - and won the game.

In the last hours of the life of Jesus, He asked three of His disciples to "stay awake and watch" as He prayed. But they fell asleep. When He returned and found them sleeping, He did not scold them. Instead, He warned them to "keep alert and pray!"

Temptations come to the Christian, as the disciples of Jesus - when least expected. Jesus wisely warned and advised His disciples to combine praying with alertness or they would not see temptation taking advantage of them. Nothing's changed.

Prayer: Lord, please help us to be aware and alert to the subtlety of any and every temptation. May we always realize the power of Satan. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak! Matthew 26:41



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



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 23 of 79

## 2023 Community Events

- 01/29/2023 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 01/29/2023 85th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
- 01/31/2023-02/03/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Drop Off 6-9pm, Community Center
- 02/04/2023-02/05/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Sale 1-5pm, Community Center
- 02/25/2023 Littles and Me, Art Making 10-11:30am, Wage Memorial Library
- 03/25/2023 Spring Vendor Fair, 10am-3pm, Community Center
- 04/01/2023 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
- 04/06/2023 Groton Career Development Event
- 04/08/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
- 04/22/2023 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 04/23/2023 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
- 05/06/2023 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/29/2023 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
- 06/16/2023 SDSU Alumni and Friends Golf Tournament
- 06/17/2023 Groton Triathlon
- 07/04/2023 Couples Firecracker Golf Tournament
- 07/09/2023 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
- 07/26/2023 GGA Burger Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 08/04/2023 Wine on Nine 6pm
- 08/11/2023 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
- 09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
- 09/10/2023 Couples Sunflower Golf Tournament
- 10/14/2023 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)
- 10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
- 11/23/2023 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)
- 12/02/2023 Tour of Homes & Holiday Party
- 12/09/2023 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9-11am

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 24 of 79

## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

### Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

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

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

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

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

City \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

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

## Groton Daily Independent

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

### Subscription Form

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

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

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

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

City \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

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

Password \_\_\_\_\_

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

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



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 25 of 79



## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.02.23

3 15 16 32 41 9

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$68,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 27  
DRAW: Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.01.23

2 17 20 31 45 3

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$2,650,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 27 Mins 25  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.02.23

29 30 34 46 48 12

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

NEXT 15 Hrs 57 Mins 25  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
04.29.23

4 9 11 13 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$43,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 27 Mins 25  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.01.23

14 20 29 33 57 2

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

NEXT 16 Hrs 26 Mins 24  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.01.23

3 38 55 61 66 1

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$71,000,000**

NEXT 16 Hrs 26 Mins 24  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 26 of 79

## News from the Associated Press

### **US culture wars dominated North Dakota's legislative session**

By TRISHA AHMED Associated Press/Report for America

North Dakota's House and Senate have adjourned, capping a session in which state lawmakers aggressively passed bills to restrict transgender rights, abortion access and library content — offering a glimpse of how Republican-controlled states have responded to these national hot-button issues.

Republican Gov. Doug Burgum has until May 19 to act on pending bills passed by the Legislature before lawmakers adjourned early Sunday. Here is where they landed.

#### **TRANS RIGHTS**

House and Senate lawmakers passed several bills with veto-proof majorities that were signed into law by the governor and place sweeping restrictions on transgender people in North Dakota.

The new laws prohibit transgender girls and women from joining female sports teams in K-12 and college. They also criminalize health care providers who give gender-affirming care to minors. And they limit transgender children and adults in accessing the bathrooms, locker rooms and shower rooms of their choice in state-run colleges and correctional facilities.

Burgum has not yet acted on a bill — which also passed both chambers with veto-proof majorities — that would allow teachers and government employees to ignore the pronouns their transgender colleagues and students use.

The bill also would require teachers to tell a student's parent or legal guardian if the student identifies as transgender. And, it would prohibit transgender students from using the bathroom of their choice, unless they have approval from a parent or guardian.

It's all part of a larger push by Republicans across the U.S. to roll back LGBTQ+ rights.

At least 21 states have restricted or banned female transgender athletes' participation in female sports, and at least 14 states have restricted or banned gender-affirming care for minors. Additionally, at least eight states have enacted laws preventing transgender people from using the restrooms associated with their gender identities.

#### **ABORTION ACCESS**

Burgum signed a bill into law that expands public assistance for pregnant women, days after he signed a law that bans abortion at all stages of pregnancy with narrow exceptions. Both measures passed the Legislature with veto-proof majorities.

Abortion is still legal in pregnancies caused by rape or incest, but only in the first six weeks of gestation. After that, there is no exception for rape or incest. Abortion is also allowed later in a pregnancy in specific medical emergencies.

The new abortion ban was intended to replace a previous one, which had even fewer exceptions. The North Dakota Supreme Court ruled in March that the previous ban will remain blocked while a separate lawsuit over its constitutionality proceeds.

Last year's U.S. Supreme Court ruling that overturned the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision — and dissolved a nationwide right to abortion — has triggered multiple state laws banning or restricting the procedure. Many have been met with legal challenges.

At least 13 other states have bans in place for abortion at all stages of pregnancy, while a handful of others have prohibitions throughout pregnancy where enforcement has been blocked by courts.

#### **LIBRARY CONTENT**

Burgum vetoed a bill that would have required librarians — under threat of criminal penalty — to screen sexually explicit materials from children, but signed another bill barring explicit materials from the children's sections of local and school libraries.

Senate lawmakers voted to override Burgum's veto, but House lawmakers voted to let his veto stand. Supporters of the bill had said exposure to sexually explicit material is devastating for young people,

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 27 of 79

whereas opponents had said the bill to criminalize librarians goes too far.

Attempted book bans and restrictions on libraries have surged around the country, setting a record in 2022, according to the American Library Association. Some books have been targeted by liberals citing racist language, while other books with LGBTQ+ or racial themes have been targeted by conservatives.

Bills to restrict books have been proposed or passed in Arizona, Iowa, Texas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Florida and other states.

## ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Legislation that failed to pass is equally important. It includes a resolution that would have enabled the Fort Berthold Reservation to track air and water pollution from oil and gas development on its land, which covers one of the state's largest oil patches. And, it includes a resolution that would have helped the reservation address oil-related spills on state highways within its borders.

Additional bills that were struck down would have granted landowners more rights in the eminent domain process as a company — Summit Carbon Solutions — builds a massive carbon capture pipeline underground across the state.

On the other hand, climate-related bills that passed into law include one giving tax incentives to oil companies for fracking, or "restimulating" old oil wells in the state through hydraulic fracturing. It includes another bill to dramatically expand child care assistance — with the intention of attracting more oil workers to the state, along with workers in other industries as North Dakota deals with its ongoing workforce shortage.

---

This story has been corrected to say that Summit Carbon Solutions is building a carbon capture pipeline underground across the state, not under people's homes.

---

Trisha Ahmed is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues. Follow Trisha Ahmed on Twitter: @TrishaAhmed15

## Iran's Revolutionary Guard seizes tanker in Strait of Hormuz

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard seized a Panamanian-flagged oil tanker in the strategic Strait of Hormuz on Wednesday, the second-such capture by Tehran in under a week amid heightened tensions over its nuclear program.

The taking of the oil tanker Niovi renewed concerns about Iran threatening maritime traffic in the strait, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which a fifth of all crude passes. It also comes amid the disappearance of a crude oil tanker in southeast Asia believed to be carrying Iranian crude oil amid reports it may have been seized by the U.S.

The U.S. Navy published surveillance footage shot by an aerial drone of about dozen Guard vessels swarming the tanker around 6:20 a.m. The drone had been on a routine patrol in the area and saw the seizure, though the Navy did not receive a distress call from the Niovi itself, 5th Fleet spokesman Cmdr. Timothy Hawkins said.

Those Guard ships "forced the oil tanker to reverse course and head toward Iranian territorial waters off the coast of Bandar Abbas, Iran," the Navy said.

"Iran's actions are contrary to international law and disruptive to regional security and stability," the 5th Fleet said in a statement. "Iran's continued harassment of vessels and interference with navigational rights in regional waters are unwarranted, irresponsible and a present threat to maritime security and the global economy."

Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency, believed to be close to the Guard, reported the paramilitary force had seized a tanker it described as a "violation," without elaborating.

Shipping registries show the Niovi as managed by Smart Tankers of Piraeus, Greece. A woman who answered the phone at the firm declined to immediately comment on the seizure. The Niovi had been

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 28 of 79

coming from dry-dock repairs in Dubai, bound for Fujairah on the eastern coast of the United Arab Emirates without carrying any cargo, according to the data firm Refinitiv.

Last week, Iran seized an oil tanker carrying crude for Chevron Corp. of San Ramon, California, amid wider tensions between Tehran and the U.S. over its nuclear program. The Advantage Sweet had 23 Indians and one Russian on board.

Iran has accused the Advantage Sweet of colliding with another vessel, while offering no evidence to support its claim. Iran has offered a variety of unsupported claims in the past when seizing foreign-flagged ships amid tensions with the West.

The taking of the two tankers in under a week comes amid the disappearance of the Marshall Island-flagged Suez Rajan, which had been in the South China Sea off Singapore for over a year after a report alleged it to smuggling sanctioned Iranian crude oil. Tracking data for the Suez Rajan last showed it off East Africa, moving in a direction that could take it to the Americas.

The Financial Times, as well as the maritime intelligence firm Ambrey, both have reported the Suez Rajan was seized on order of American authorities. The ship's manager has not responded to queries from The Associated Press about the status of the ship. U.S. officials also have not commented.

However, the Greek Ministry of Maritime Affairs acknowledged Wednesday recently sending a warning to Greek ships in the Mideast to be on alert when going through the Persian Gulf. The ministry did not say what prompted the warning.

The seizure by Iran of the two ships in the last week was the latest in a string of ship seizures and explosions to roil the region.

The incidents began after then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States from Iran's nuclear deal with world powers, which saw Tehran drastically limit its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions. They've continued under President Joe Biden and as diplomatic efforts at finding a way back to the accord remain stalemated.

Also, the U.S. Navy has blamed Iran for a series of limpet mine attacks on vessels that damaged tankers in 2019, as well as for a fatal drone attack on an Israeli-linked oil tanker that killed two European crew members in 2021.

Tehran denies carrying out the attacks, but a wider shadow war between Iran and the West has played out in the region's volatile waters. Iranian tanker seizures have been a part of it since 2019. The last major seizure before recent days came when Iran took two Greek tankers in May 2022 and held them until November.

Since the collapse of the nuclear deal, Iran now enriches uranium closer than ever to weapons-grade levels. The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency has warned Tehran has enough of a uranium stockpile to build "several" nuclear weapons if it chooses. Iran long has insisted its program is for peaceful purposes, though the IAEA and Western intelligence agencies believe Tehran had a secret military nuclear program through 2003.

Iran also has restricted the ability of IAEA inspectors to monitor its program. However, the IAEA on Wednesday acknowledged that "work is ongoing" to reinstall monitoring equipment at Iranian nuclear sites following a March visit by its director-general to Tehran. The agency did not elaborate and Tehran did not acknowledge the work.

---

Associated Press writers Nasser Karimi in Tehran, Iran, and Elena Becatoros in Athens contributed to this report.

## Iran's president holds rare meeting with Assad in Syria

By ALBERT AJI and KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press  
DAMASCUS, Syria (AP) — Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi Wednesday met Syrian President Bashar Assad in Damascus in a bid to boost cooperation between the two allies, state media reported.

Tehran has been a main backer of Assad's government since an uprising turned into a full-blown war in



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 29 of 79

March 2011 and has played an instrumental role in turning the tide in his favor.

Iran has sent scores of military advisers and thousands of Iran-backed fighters from around the Middle East to fight on Assad's side. With the help of Russia and Iran, Syrian government forces have controlled large parts of the country in recent years.

In an interview with pan-Arab television channel Al-Mayadeen, Raisi called for reconstruction efforts and for refugees who fled the country's war to return to the country.

Raisi, who is leading a high-ranking political and economic delegation in a two-day visit to Syria, was received on arrival at Damascus International Airport Wednesday by Syrian Economy Minister Samer al-Khalil.

"Syria's government and people have gone through great hardship," Syrian state media quoted Raisi telling Assad during the meeting. "Today, we can now say that you have overcome all these problems and were victorious despite the threats and sanctions imposed against you."

He is also set to visit the Sayida Zeinab and Sayida Ruqayya shrines, both holy sites in Shiite Islam, as well as the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, a monument dedicated to Syrian soldiers killed in battle.

The last Iranian president to visit Syria was President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2010.

The Iranian president's visit comes as some Arab countries, including regional powerhouses Egypt and Saudi Arabia, have been opening up to Assad and their foreign ministers have visited Damascus in recent weeks. Syria's foreign minister also visited the Saudi capital of Riyadh in April, the first such visit since the two countries cut relations in 2012.

In March, Iran and Saudi Arabia, a main backer of Syrian opposition fighters, reached an agreement in China to re-establish diplomatic relations and reopen embassies after seven years of tensions.

The reconciliation between Iran and Saudi Arabia is likely to have positive effects on regional states where the two countries fought proxy wars, including Syria.

Syria was widely shunned by Arab governments over Assad's brutal crackdown on protesters and the breakdown in relations culminated with Syria being ousted from the Arab League in 2011. The conflict has since killed nearly half a million people and displaced half of Syria's pre-war population of 23 million.

"America and its allies failed on all fronts against the resistance, and could not achieve any of their goals," Iran's new ambassador to Syria Hossein Akbari told Iran's state news agency on Tuesday.

Like Syria, Iran is under western sanctions, which alongside decades of mismanagement, has plunged its national currency to new lows. Months of anti-government protests failed to unseat ruling clerics and return to the 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, which lifted sanctions in exchange for restrictions on Iran's nuclear program.

In 2015, Iran's currency was trading at 32,000 rials to the dollar when it signed a nuclear accord with world powers. In February it hit a record low of 600,000.

The Iranian president's visit also comes a week after its Minister for Road and Urban Development Mehrdad Bazrpash met Assad in Damascus, where he delivered a message from the Iranian president supporting the expansion of economic relations between the two countries, according to Iran's state news agency.

Iran's military presence in Syria been a major concern for Israel, which has vowed to stop Iranian entrenchment along its northern border. Israel has carried out hundreds of strikes on targets in government-controlled parts of Syria in recent years — but rarely acknowledges them. Since the beginning of 2023, Syrian officials have attributed a dozen strikes on Syrian territory to Israel, the latest of which came early Tuesday and put the international airport of the northern city of Aleppo out of service.

—  
Chehayeb reported from Beirut.

## Syrian refugees fearful as Lebanon steps up deportations

By ABBY SEWELL and KAREEM CHEHAYEB Associated Press

QAB ELIAS, Lebanon (AP) — Lebanese officials are cracking down on Syrian refugees against the backdrop of a worsening economic crisis and political stalemate, an escalation that has caused a panic among Syrians in the country.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 30 of 79

In recent weeks, the army has raided refugee camps and set up checkpoints to review the documentation of non-Lebanese citizens, arresting and in many cases deporting Syrians found not to have legal residency, according to refugees and humanitarian organizations.

"People aren't sleeping in their houses ... and are afraid even to go to work," said a woman originally from the Syrian province of Idlib who is living in Lebanon's eastern Bekaa Valley. Her husband was deported on April 10, along with 28 other men, after a raid on an apartment building in the Beirut suburb of Jounieh, she said, and she hasn't heard from him since.

Like other Syrians interviewed for this story, the woman spoke on condition of anonymity out of fear of reprisals.

Her 4-year-old son asks where his father is every day, she said. She fears her husband has been put in one of Syria's detention centers because — like many men who fled to Lebanon — he was wanted for dodging mandatory army service.

Pressure has increased in other ways. Municipalities have put in place restrictive measures such as curfews for Syrians. The Interior Ministry announced Tuesday that it ordered municipalities to survey and register their Syrian populations and make sure they are documented before permitting them to rent property.

It also asked the U.N. refugee agency to revoke refugee status from Syrians who go back and forth between Lebanon and their war-torn country. Last week, a committee of government ministers demanded that UNHCR hand over detailed personal information on refugees in its database.

Lebanon hosts some 805,000 registered Syrian refugees, whose official status in theory protects them — although those who fail to keep their residency papers up to date can face deportation. The actual number of Syrians living in Lebanon after fleeing their country's 12-year-old civil war is believed to be much higher as Lebanon's government ordered the United Nations to halt new registrations in 2015.

Government officials have given varying estimates of the number of Syrians in the country, ranging from 1.5 million to more than 2 million. Lebanon is believed to have a population of around 5 million to 5.5 million citizens, but no census has been held for nearly a century.

Since Lebanon's economic meltdown began in 2019, officials have increasingly called for a mass return of Syrians, saying they are a burden on the country's scarce resources and that much of Syria is now safe. The rhetoric has grown increasingly heated; a federation of trade unions recently declared a "National Campaign to Liberate Lebanon from the Syrian Demographic Occupation."

In recent interviews with local media, caretaker Social Affairs Minister Hector Hajjar claimed that refugees make up 40% of Lebanon's population, which "no country in the world would accept."

Hajjar told The Associated Press that Lebanon's government can ensure that Syrians who qualify as refugees would not be deported, by exchanging data with the U.N. refugee agency.

He referred questions about deportations to General Security, the agency in charge of enforcing immigration laws. Spokespeople for the agency and the Lebanese military did not respond to requests for comment and neither has made public statement on the deportations.

The U.N. refugee agency said it has observed an increase in raids taking place in Syrian communities and has received reports of Syrians being deported, including registered refugees. It said it "takes reports of deportations of Syrian refugees very seriously."

U.N. officials did not give a number of confirmed deportations. The Access Center for Human Rights, a group tracking conditions of Syrian refugees, said it documented at least 200 deportations in April.

The United States, one of the Lebanese Army's largest donors, has expressed concerns about the deportations to Lebanese officials, said a spokesperson at the U.S. Embassy in Beirut who spoke on condition of anonymity as per regulations. Refugee returns should be "voluntary, safe, and dignified," the spokesperson said. "We have questions about the procedures followed in recent deportations and the extent to which those criteria were met."

The anti-refugee campaign comes against the backdrop of stalled negotiations with the International Monetary Fund and a six-month deadlock in electing the country's next president.

Meanwhile, several Arab countries have moved towards a rapprochement with Syrian President Bashar

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 31 of 79

Assad. Refugee returns have been on the agenda of recent regional talks, including a meeting of top diplomats in Jordan on Monday to discuss a political solution to Syria's civil war.

Mohanad Hage Ali, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Middle East Center, said refugees are serving as a scapegoat for Lebanese politicians at a time of heightened public anger over their failure to deal with the country's economic and political crises.

Refugees are "sort of the punching bag that shows up when everyone needs one," he said. He suggested the crackdown could also be linked to Lebanon's ongoing presidential deadlock.

A leading presidential candidate, Sleiman Frangieh, is close to Damascus and has promised to use his connections to broker a deal for refugee returns. His likely rival, army chief Gen. Joseph Aoun, may be "trying to showcase his ability to forcibly return the refugees," Hage Ali said.

Lebanese authorities have periodically deported Syrians over the past few years, citing a regulation that allows for Syrians who entered without legal authorization after April 2019 to be forcibly removed.

However, past deportations mostly involved small numbers and were carried out under formal procedures, giving the U.N. and human rights groups a chance to intervene and, in some cases, halt them.

In contrast, recent months have seen increasing reports of the Lebanese Army summarily deporting those believed to be in the country illegally. Human rights organizations have cited cases of returning refugees being detained and tortured in Syria, allegations Lebanese authorities deny.

A Syrian from Idlib who, along with his brother, was among those arrested in the April 10 raid in Jounieh, said the army dropped off the men in a mountainous area in the no-man's land between the Lebanese and Syrian borders.

He and some others managed to cross back into Lebanon on foot. Others, including his brother, were caught.

The last communication he received from his brother, he said, was a voice message on April 11, saying: "They brought us back and dropped us off in the same place and they're going to turn us over to Syria."

Many Syrians are lying low, hoping the anti-refugee campaign will blow over.

"Many of us are scared that we could be next," said another Syrian refugee in the Bekaa. "Six of my friends were deported in the last raid."

For some, the pressure campaign has had its intended effect.

A young woman living in the Bekaa said that after her camp was raided and dozens of men were deported, her family decided to return to the Syrian city of Raqqa, which remains outside the control of the Damascus government.

"There is no security (there). We don't have a house or any money," she said. "But we don't have another choice."

## Teenage boy kills 8 children, guard at school in Belgrade

By JOVANA GEC and DUSAN STOJANOVIC Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) — A teenage boy opened fire at a school in Serbia's capital Wednesday, killing eight children and a school guard, police said. Six more children and a teacher were injured and hospitalized.

Police identified the shooter by his initials, K.K., and said he had opened fire with his father's gun. He was arrested in the school yard, police said. A statement identified him as a student at the school in central Belgrade who was born in 2009.

Police said they received a call about the shooting at the Vladislav Ribnikar primary school around 8:40 a.m. Primary schools in Serbia have eight grades, starting with first grade.

"I was able to hear the shooting. It was non-stop," a student who was in a sports class downstairs when the gunfire erupted. "I didn't know what was happening. We were receiving some messages on the phone."

Unlike in the United States, mass shootings in Serbia and in the wider Balkan region are extremely rare; none were reported at schools in recent years. In the last mass shooting, a Balkan war veteran in 2013 killed 13 people in a central Serbian village.

Experts, however, have repeatedly warned of the number of weapons left over in the country after the



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 32 of 79

wars of the 1990s. They also note that decades-long instability stemming from the conflicts as well as the ongoing economic hardship could trigger such outbursts.

Local media footage from the scene showed commotion outside the school as police removed the suspect, whose head was covered as officers led him to a car parked in the street.

The student who heard the shooting, who was identified only by her initials, E.M., because of her age, described the suspect as a "quiet guy" who "looked nice."

"He was having good grades, but we didn't know much about him," the student added. "He was not so open with everybody. Surely I wasn't expecting this to happen."

Milan Milosevic, who said his daughter was in a history class when the shooting took place, told N1 television that he rushed out when he heard what had happened.

"I asked where is my child but no one could tell me anything at first," he said. "Then she called and we found out she was out."

"He (the shooter) fired first at the teacher and then the children who ducked under the desks," Milosevic quoted his daughter as saying. "She said he was a quiet boy and a good student."

Police sealed off the blocks around the school, in the center of Belgrade.

## In coronation, King Charles carries on a medieval tradition

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Great Britain's royal family turns the page on a new chapter Saturday with the coronation of King Charles III.

The pomp, pageantry and symbolism dates back more than 1,000 years, but the crowning of this king will feature new twists on the tradition and changes from the coronation of his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, 70 years ago.

Plans for the ceremony at Westminster Abbey call for a more toned-down affair than the last one, even though royals from other nations, heads of state and most of Charles' family will be there, and the monarch plans to wear the same vestments as Elizabeth did.

Here are some things to know about the coronation:

### WHY HAVE THE CORONATION IF CHARLES IS ALREADY KING?

Charles automatically ascended to the throne when Elizabeth died Sept. 8, and he was officially proclaimed Britain's monarch two days later in an ascension ceremony broadcast for the first time on television.

Charles said he was "deeply aware of this great inheritance and of the duties and heavy responsibilities of sovereignty which have now passed to me."

There is no legal requirement for a coronation, and other European monarchies have done away with the ceremonies.

But the deeply religious and regalia-heavy event is a more formal confirmation of his role as head of state and titular head of the Church of England and was intended to show the king's authority was derived from God.

During the service conducted by the church's spiritual leader, the archbishop of Canterbury, Charles will be anointed with oil, receive the traditional symbols of the monarch — including the orb and scepter — and have the St. Edwards Crown placed on his head for the first time. Charles' wife, Camilla, will be crowned as queen consort.

### WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT FROM THE LAST CORONATION?

The coronation ceremony dates back to the medieval period, and much of it remains unchanged.

Westminster Abbey has been the setting of the ritual since William the Conqueror was crowned in 1066.

Elizabeth II's coronation in June 1953 was the first to be televised live. The broadcast in black and white drew an audience of tens of millions in Britain and was later played to a worldwide audience. In the age of streaming and social media, people will be able to watch Charles' crowning live — and in vivid reds, blues and golds — from virtually anywhere on the planet and post their hot takes with a crown emoji created for the occasion.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 33 of 79

Charles has said he plans to slim down the monarchy. His coronation is expected to reflect that with a ceremony shorter than his mother's three-hour extravaganza and 2,000 guests in the audience — a quarter the number who assembled to see Elizabeth crowned.

In a nod to the change in the religious makeup of the United Kingdom, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh religious leaders will play a role at the coronation. That reflects Charles' vow to be "the defender of faiths," as opposed to the "defender of the faith."

The procession after the ceremony also will be decidedly shorter than the 5-mile (8 kilometer) route that Elizabeth and her husband, Prince Philip, took around London in 1953. Charles and Camilla plan to take a more modern set of horse-drawn wheels for the 1.3-mile (2-kilometer) route from Buckingham Palace to the abbey. Once crowned, they will step back in time and retrace the journey in the 260-year-old carriage — notorious for its rough ride — used in every coronation since William IV's in 1831.

## WHO'S ON THE GUEST LIST?

A hundred heads of state are expected to attend along with royalty ranging from Japan's Crown Prince Akishino and his wife, Kiko, to Spain's King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia.

The U.S. will keep alive its streak of a president never attending a British royal coronation, although first lady Jill Biden is set to attend.

William, Prince of Wales and heir to the throne, is expected to kneel before his father and pledge his loyalty in what's known as the Homage of Royal Blood.

His younger brother, Prince Harry, the disgruntled Duke of Sussex, is not expected to take part in the service. His explosive memoir "Spare," which became a bestseller early this year, made unflattering claims about the royal family.

Until three weeks ago, there was a question of whether Harry and his wife, Meghan, would attend the crowning after leveling charges of racism and media manipulation at the royal family.

While Harry will be there, the duchess is to remain at the couple's Southern California home with their two young children, Prince Archie and Princess Lilibet.

The coronation is just a few days before the first of Harry's lawsuits against the British tabloid press goes to trial. The case could reveal more family secrets.

During a hearing in a similar case last week, Harry said in court papers that Buckingham Palace, with the approval of the queen, had an agreement with Rupert Murdoch's English newspapers to settle phone hacking allegations without a lawsuit. Harry said he was directed by palace staff to drop his litigation because his father wanted to curry favor with the press.

The family drama doesn't end there. Charles' brother, Prince Andrew, is also not expected to play any role in the ceremony. Andrew gave up royal duties and was stripped of military titles and patronages after revelations of his friendship with convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. Andrew settled a lawsuit with a woman who said she was forced to have sex with him when she was a teenager.

## WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CORONATION?

With opinion polls showing support for the monarchy has weakened in recent years, this is the chance for Charles to seek and showcase the public's embrace.

Crowds are expected to line the streets to cheer the new king, and throngs will stand outside Buckingham Palace waiting for him to appear on the balcony after the procession.

While criticism of the crown was relatively muted in recent years out of respect for the queen and her decades of service to the country, there is likely to be much more discussion of whether Britain still needs this antiquated institution or if it should become a republic with an elected head of state.

The leader of the anti-monarchist group Republic said it plans to have more than 1,000 protesters clad in yellow chanting, "Not my king" as the royal procession passes by.

For the vast majority, though, it will be an opportunity to celebrate being British — or show their support for an institution that is the subject of fascination for so many around the world.

Streets will be lined with union flags, spectators will dress in red, white and blue, and military jets will fly overhead streaming plumes of smoke in the national colors. The pomp and circumstance of the ceremony itself is also a reminder of a time when Britain was the most powerful nation in the world.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 34 of 79

WHO IS PICKING UP THE TAB FOR THE CELEBRATION?

The public is footing the bill for the coronation. There is no official estimate yet of what it might cost. Some reports estimate it could top 100 million pounds (\$125 million).

The celebration comes as the U.K. weathers a bruising cost-of-living crisis that left many struggling to heat their homes this winter and put food on their tables.

But plenty of people stand to profit from the hoopla.

Officials are expecting to see a tourism boost and there is no shortage of coronation-themed events and commemorative products that could ring up additional sales taxes.

Fans looking to remember the historic event can find everything from fine china to souvenir coins or even cardboard masks of Charles and Camilla. Coronation themed biscuits, chocolates and beers are likely to be quickly forgotten.

Danica Kirka contributed to this report.

## US, Mexico agree on tighter immigration policies at border

By COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. and Mexican officials have agreed on new immigration policies meant to deter illegal border crossings while also opening up other pathways ahead of an expected increase in migrants following the end of pandemic restrictions next week.

Homeland Security adviser Liz Sherwood-Randall spent Tuesday meeting with Mexico President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador and other top officials, emerging with a five-point plan, according to statements from both nations.

Under the agreement, Mexico will continue to accept migrants from Venezuela, Haiti, Cuba and Nicaragua who are turned away at the border, and up to 100,000 individuals from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador who have family in the U.S. will be eligible to live and work there.

Despite sharing a 1,951-mile border with the U.S., Mexico had been notably absent from the rollout last week of a fresh set of efforts, including the creation of hubs outside the United States where migrants could go to apply to legally settle in the U.S., Spain or Canada. The first centers will open in Guatemala and Colombia.

The COVID-19 restrictions have allowed U.S. officials to turn away tens of thousands of migrants crossing the southern border, but those restrictions will lift May 11, and border officials are bracing for a surge. Even with the restrictions, the administration has seen record numbers of people crossing the border, and President Joe Biden has responded by cracking down on those who cross illegally and by creating new avenues meant as alternatives to a dangerous and often deadly journey.

Mexico's support is critical to any push by the U.S. to clamp down at the southern border, particularly as migrants from nations from as far away as Haiti are making the trek on foot up through Mexico, and are not easily returned back to their home countries.

With Mexico now behind the U.S., plus an announcement Tuesday that 1,500 active-duty U.S. troops are deploying south for administrative support, and other crackdown measures in place, border officials believe they may be able to manage overcrowding and other possible issues that might arise once the COVID-19 restrictions end.

Biden, who announced his Democratic reelection campaign a week ago, is trying to signal his administration is making a serious effort to tamp down the number of illegal crossings, which has been a potent source of Republican attacks. He also is trying to send a message to potential border crossers not to attempt the journey.

But the effort also draws potentially unwelcome comparisons to Biden's Republican predecessor, Donald Trump, whose policies Biden frequently criticized. Congress, meanwhile, has refused to take any substantial immigration-related actions.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 35 of 79

The U.S. will continue to turn away Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans who cross illegally. Mexico said Tuesday it would continue to accept up to 30,000 migrants per month from the four countries that are making up a ballooning share of the overall illegal border crossings, with no easy way to quickly return migrants to their home countries.

According to data on asylum seekers in Mexico, people from Haiti remained at the top with 18,860 so far this year, higher than the total for the whole of 2022.

Meanwhile, the U.S. is accepting 30,000 people per month from the four nations for two years and offering them the ability to legally work, as long as they come legally, have eligible sponsors and pass vetting and background checks.

The administration also plans to swiftly screen migrants seeking asylum at the border itself, quickly deport those deemed as not being qualified, and penalize people who cross illegally into the U.S. or illegally move through another country on their way to the U.S. border.

In addition, 1,500 active-duty personnel will be deployed to the border area for 90 days and will be pulled from the Army and Marine Corps. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will look to backfill those troops with National Guard or Reserve troops during that period, Pentagon spokesman Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder said. There are already 2,500 National Guard members at the border. They are not working in a law enforcement capacity, but their mere presence sends a message.

Then-President Trump deployed active-duty troops to the border to assist border patrol personnel in processing large migrant caravans, on top of National Guard forces that were already working in that capacity.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre downplayed any similarity between Biden's immigration management and Trump's use of troops during his term. "DOD personnel have been supporting CBP at the border for almost two decades now," she said. "So this is a common practice."

But some in Biden's own party objected to the decision.

"The Biden administration's militarization of the border is unacceptable," said Senate Committee on Foreign Relations chair Bob Menendez, D-N.J. "There is already a humanitarian crisis in the Western Hemisphere, and deploying military personnel only signals that migrants are a threat that require our nation's troops to contain. Nothing could be further from the truth."

The Pentagon on Tuesday approved a request for troops made by the Department of Homeland Security, which manages the border.

As a condition for Austin's previous approval of National Guard troops to the border through Oct. 1, Homeland Security had to agree to work with the White House and Congress to develop a plan for longer-term staffing solutions and funding shortfalls to maintain security and immigration processing without the use of Defense Department resources, Pentagon officials said.

As part of the agreement, the Pentagon has requested quarterly updates from Homeland Security on how it would staff its border mission without service members. It was not immediately clear if those updates have happened or if border officials will be able to meet their terms of the agreement — particularly under the strain of another expected migrant surge.

---

Associated Press writers Aamer Madhani, Tara Copp, Zeke Miller, Rebecca Santana, Lolita Baldor and Michael Balsamo in Washington and Maria Verza in Mexico City contributed to this report.

## Judge rejects Zoey Zephyr bid to return to Montana House

By AMY BETH HANSON and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

HELENA, Mont. (AP) — Rep. Zoey Zephyr, the transgender state lawmaker silenced after telling Republicans they would have blood on their hands for opposing gender-affirming health care for kids, was barred from returning to the Montana House floor in a Tuesday court ruling that came just hours before the Legislature wrapped up its biennial session.

District Court Judge Mike Menahan said it was outside his authority to overrule lawmakers who voted last week to exclude Zephyr from the House floor and debates. He cited the importance of preserving the

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 36 of 79

Constitution's separation of powers between the legislative, executive and judicial branches.

"Plaintiffs' requested relief would require this Court to interfere with legislative authority in a manner that exceeds this Court's authority," Menahan wrote in his ruling.

The ruling and lawmakers' decision to adjourn brought a sudden end to a political standoff that dominated the last days of the Legislature and put a national spotlight on transgender issues and the muffling of dissent in statehouses across the U.S.

It leaves bitter feelings on both sides, with Democrats and the transgender community outraged over Zephyr's treatment, and Republicans indignant over the vehemence of the response.

Attorneys for the state of Montana had asked the judge to reject an emergency motion from Zephyr's lawyers challenging her ouster. The first-term lawmaker was silenced two weeks ago for admonishing Republican lawmakers, then banished from the floor for encouraging a raucous statehouse protest.

Zephyr told The Associated Press that Menahan's decision was "entirely wrong."

"It's a really sad day for the country when the majority party can silence representation from the minority party whenever they take issue," Zephyr said.

An attorney for Zephyr, Alex Rate, said an appeal was being considered. But with the 2023 legislative session ending, a ruling in coming days would be of little immediate consequence.

The punishment against Zephyr was through the end of the 2023 session. Since Montana's Legislature convenes every two years, Zephyr would have to be re-elected in 2024 before she could return to the House floor in two years.

Lawyers working under Attorney General Austin Knudsen had cautioned that any intervention by the courts on Zephyr's behalf would be a blatant violation of the separation of powers. They wrote in a court filing that the Montana House of Representatives retains "exclusive constitutional authority" to discipline its own members.

Knudsen, a Republican, issued a statement through a spokesperson saying the lawsuit was an attempt by outside groups to interfere with Montana's lawmaking process.

"Today's decision is a win for the rule of law and the separation of powers enshrined in our Constitution," he said.

Zephyr and several of her Missoula constituents on Monday filed court papers seeking an emergency order allowing her to return to the House floor. Zephyr and fellow Democrats have denounced her exclusion from floor debates as an assault on free speech that's intended to silence her criticism of new restrictions on gender-affirming care for minors.

But lawyers for the state said the censure of Zephyr by her Republican colleagues was "for good cause" following the April 24 demonstration by her supporters.

"One legislator cannot be allowed to halt the ability of the other 99 to engage in civil, orderly, debate concerning issues affecting Montana," the state's lawyers wrote.

GOP leaders under pressure from hard-line conservatives initially silenced Zephyr from participating in floor debates and demanded she apologize almost two weeks ago, after she said those who supported a ban on gender-affirming care for youths would have "blood" on their hands.

On April 24, Zephyr raised a microphone in defiance on the House floor as protesters in the gallery demanded she be allowed to speak and refused orders to leave. Seven people were arrested on trespassing charges and two days later lawmakers voted along party lines to oust Zephyr from the floor and gallery for the remainder of the session.

She's since been working from a bench in a hallway and, when that's been occupied, at a statehouse snack bar.

The actions taken against Zephyr have propelled her into political prominence and made her part of broader conversations about who gets to speak in statehouses. But in Montana, Republicans hope to capitalize on her high profile by painting Democrats as a party of extremists headed into the next election.

The lawsuit seeking to reverse her punishment was filed by attorneys working with the Montana ACLU. It named House Speaker Matt Regier and Sergeant-at-Arms Brad Murfitt as defendants.

Regier said in a statement that the court recognized "that the judicial branch has no power to revise or overrule the power expressly held by the Montana State Legislature."

## Could France protest fury spill into next year's Olympics?

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Retired and with time to kill, Bernard Gauvain wants to be a volunteer at the 2024 Olympics — but a bad one.

His intention is not to help out, but to gum up the Olympic machine by refusing to turn up for work. If others do likewise in sufficient numbers, he hopes they'll sting the VVIP who stands to gain if the Paris Games run triumphantly like clockwork: French President Emmanuel Macron.

The 68-year-old former agricultural consultant in southern France is part of an otherwise mostly hush-hush band of Olympic opponents who call themselves "un-volunteers." Also anti-Macron — the president has ignited a months-long firestorm of French protest with unpopular pension reforms — the anti-Olympic Trojan horses are working to infiltrate and then disrupt next year's Paris Games by signing up as volunteers, posing as willing-to-help superfans when they're anything but.

Their surreptitious operation, and other Olympic contestation that is picking up online and starting to spill onto French streets, highlight a growing risk of the Paris Games becoming entangled in unflagging public anger against Macron for raising France's retirement age from 62 to 64. Efforts by Macron's opponents to link protests to Olympic preparations that have otherwise been largely smooth and low-key raise the possibility that the Games themselves could be whacked by demonstrations and strikes if fury pushes into 2024 unabated.

### HOW MUCH OPPOSITION?

So far, protests targeting Olympic preparations have been small and sporadic. Olympic organizers say polling shows enduring strong support for the Games that will showcase Paris' recovery from attacks by the Islamic State group that killed 130 people on Nov. 13, 2015. Athletes will compete against televisual backdrops of iconic landmarks in the French capital's first Olympics in a century.

Other numbers also suggest that opponents remain a minority. Four million applicants signed up for the latest ticket draw. Organizers also say that more than 200,000 candidates put themselves forward to be picked as the 45,000 volunteers who work without pay at the world's biggest sports event that generates billions from sponsors, broadcast rights, ticketing and merchandise. The deadline for volunteering is Wednesday.

But somewhere in the pile are applications from Gauvain and others who want to hinder, not help.

Even though Macron has enacted the pension-age increase into law, having used his executive powers to ram it past lawmakers without giving them a vote, Gauvain is among the many in France who aren't giving up the fight. Demonstrators are following Macron and his ministers on their outings around the country, banging pots and pans. And some are leveraging the Olympics to maintain pressure. There are online hashtags that say the Games shouldn't happen if the pension reform stays.

"We don't want to turn the page," said Clara Jaboulay, who organized one such demonstration outside a swimming club famous for preparing Olympians in Marseille. The Mediterranean port city will host Olympic soccer matches and sailing competitions in 2024. The dozen or so protesters unfurled a banner reading "No withdrawal, no Olympics," with five kitchen saucepans painted to represent the Olympic rings.

"The Olympic Games are putting our country in the spotlight. We have to show that the population doesn't feel represented by this government," Jaboulay said.

Gauvain said it took him 45 minutes to complete the online registration form to be a Paris Games volunteer, which includes 180 personality-test questions. If selected, he says: "I'll tell them an hour before that I'm not coming."

"The Olympic Games are Macron's pride and joy," he said. "So it's a way of stinging him."

Because he posted about his intentions on Twitter, collecting more than 9,000 likes and retweets, Gauvain acknowledges that he's now unlikely to be picked. But other "un-volunteers," who spoke to The Associated



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 38 of 79

Press on condition of anonymity to avoid torpedoing their chances, are hoping they'll be selected so they can throw spanners in the works. Their view is that the Olympics are socially, financially and environmentally destructive and that the policing around them erodes civil liberties.

They're considering an array of possibilities: not turning up to leave organizers short-handed; turning up but working badly and slowly; unfurling banners inside the Olympic perimeter; sabotaging equipment; using the opportunity to lobby other volunteers; or going to a labor court afterward to argue they should have been paid for their help. Gauvain even mentioned that some suggest gluing venue doors shut.

"There are a thousand ways of being obstructive, of protesting," Gauvain said. "Each to their own imagination."

## WEEDING OUT

Alexandre Morenon-Condé, director of the Paris Games volunteer program, says he's confident their screening process "will allow us to be sure of people's sincerity" and that if volunteers pull out, there will be backups "who'll be delighted to join."

"We have a certain number of methods that allow us to be sure that the people who join the volunteer program are the most committed, the most in tune with our values," Morenon-Condé said. A self-described "absolute fan of the Games," he volunteered at the 2004 Athens Olympics and says the experience "changed my life."

Games organizers are also working with labor unions that are leading demonstrations and strikes against Macron's pension reform. Veteran labor leader Bernard Thibault is the union representative on Paris organizers' executive board. He expects public fury at Macron "will have evolved one way or another" by Games-time, and he's not anticipating protests that would disrupt events.

Unless, of course, France's president does something else to rile opponents before the July 26 opening ceremony.

"I can't imagine President Macron rolling out a new project or a new law that would make a big noise in the country a month or two before the Olympic Games, to the point of provoking another earthquake," Thibault said. "If that was the case, then nothing could be guaranteed."

More AP coverage of the Paris Olympics: <https://apnews.com/hub/2024-paris-olympic-games> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Sports](https://twitter.com/AP_Sports)

## Showtime! UK readies pomp for King Charles III's coronation

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The crown has been resized. The troops are prepared for the biggest military procession in 70 years. The Gold State Coach is ready to roll.

Now it's time for the show.

King Charles III will be crowned Saturday at Westminster Abbey in an event full of all the pageantry Britain can muster.

Enrobed clergymen will hand over the medieval symbols of power — the rod, the scepter and the orb. Brass bands and soldiers in bearskin hats will troop through the streets. And the new king and queen will presumably end the day on the balcony of Buckingham Palace to wave to the cheering crowds.

But don't be too dazzled. There's purpose behind the pomp: to buttress the crown's foundations and show that the people of the United Kingdom still support their monarch.

Royal historian Robert Lacey compares the event to a U.S. presidential election and an inauguration rolled into one — a celebration as well as a test of how the public sees the new sovereign.

"The king obviously is not subject to the vote and so these big public rituals are the closest royal people get to that sort of test," said Lacey, author of "Battle of Brothers: William & Harry — the Inside Story of a Family in Tumult." "Its basic purpose is to attract the loyalty and interest of British people to demonstrate that crowd outside Buckingham Palace waving at the balcony."

But, while TV screens around the world will be filled with flag-waving fans, Charles' coronation comes

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 39 of 79

at a difficult time for the royals.

Opinion polls show that support for the monarchy has weakened over time. Britain is gripped by double-digit inflation that is eroding living standards and making some people question the expense of the coronation. And the royal family is riven with controversy as Charles' younger son, Prince Harry, lobs criticism from his base in Southern California.

More fundamentally, some in Britain's increasingly diverse society want a re-examination of the monarchy's links to the trade in enslaved Africans and its role in the former British Empire, which ruled over large parts of Asia, Africa and the Caribbean.

Kehinde Andrews, a professor of Black Studies at Birmingham City University, questions whether the people of Britain and the Empire's successor, the Commonwealth, really want a 74-year-old white man as their representative.

"If that isn't the biggest celebration of white supremacy, I can't think of what is, especially when you think about the lengths, the pageantry, the jewels and all this stuff, right?" Andrews said of the coronation. "So if you really were serious about saying, look, we want an anti-racist future, there is absolutely no place for this terrible institution."

The king has tried to address some of those concerns by promising to open the royal archives to researchers studying the family's links with slavery.

But the coronation will be a broader, more symbolic effort to show the monarchy still has a role to play.

The crowning of Charles and Camilla, the queen consort, will feature many of the elements of coronations past — the hymns, the prayers, the anointing with oils — all of which are designed to remind the world of the history, tradition and mystery embodied by the monarchy.

But the festivities have been tailored to better reflect modern Britain, where about 18% of the population describe themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority. That compares with less than 1% when Charles' mother, the late Queen Elizabeth II, was crowned in 1953.

For the first time, religious leaders representing Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh traditions will play an active role in the ceremony. The music will feature pieces written and performed by artists from each of the U.K.'s four nations and throughout the Commonwealth.

Symbolically, Charles will open the service by facing a young choirboy and pledging to serve — not to be served — and he has scrapped the centuries-old tradition of having the most senior members of the aristocracy pledge their loyalty to him. Instead, the congregation and those watching at home will be invited to pledge allegiance to the king.

The ceremony will also be shorter — about two hours, instead of three.

"The coronation is about different people celebrating together," said interfaith leader Aliya Azam, who will represent Muslims when faith leaders greet the king after he is crowned. "I think what's very important is that cohesiveness triumphs over divisiveness, like light triumphing over darkness."

Sylus Toussaint and his wife, Bridgette, will be watching. The couple celebrated Elizabeth's coronation as children on the island of Dominica and moved to England in 1960 to find work. A corner of their home in Preston, northwest England, is festooned with royal photos and souvenirs, including a tin of coronation shortbread.

Toussaint likes Charles' efforts to protect the environment and he's willing to look past the breakdown of his first marriage to the late Princess Diana. He blames the government, not the monarchy, for the immigration crackdown that unfairly targeted him and thousands of other Caribbean migrants in recent years.

"Maybe like the rest of us, he has his faults ... but he's forgiven," Toussaint said. "I think he will do a good job and we rather like him."

The question is whether that allegiance is passed on to younger generations.

While support for the monarchy has softened over the past 30 years, it is much weaker among young people, according to surveys conducted by the polling firm Ipsos.

One of the monarchy's strengths is that many see the benefit in having a neutral head of state at times of instability, said Kelly Beaver, the firm's U.K. chief executive. With Britain facing multiple pressures from inflation to climate change and the war in Ukraine, the king has "a real opportunity to step forward and

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 40 of 79

to demonstrate leadership," she said.

"And so I think, really, for Charles, it's all to play for."

Unfortunately for the king, the coronation will also spotlight the family dramas that have rattled the House of Windsor. Chief among those is Charles' tense relationship with Harry and his wife, Meghan, a biracial American who pundits once thought would help the royal family connect with multicultural Britain.

But those hopes crumbled when the couple gave up front-line royal duties and decamped to California three years ago. Since then, they have aired a series of grievances, including allegations that palace officials were insensitive to Meghan's mental health struggles when she was adjusting to life as a royal, that the Windsors are guilty of unconscious bias in their attitudes on race, and that Camilla leaked unflattering stories about the couple to garner more favorable coverage for herself.

After months of speculation about whether they would be invited to the coronation, the palace announced that Harry would attend but Meghan would remain in California with their two children.

If recent royal gatherings are any indication, attention will now shift to the seat assignments inside the Abbey and whether Harry speaks to his father and Prince William, the heir to the throne.

"Where Harry sits in relation to the rest of his family clearly will be of great importance to the international media," said Joe Little, managing editor of Majesty Magazine. "But, you know, Buckingham Palace and the organizers will be aware of that, and they will, I'm sure, come up with the best possible solution under the circumstances."

All of this — the history of the monarchy, the changes in British society, and even the family drama — will be on people's minds as they watch the coronation unfold.

For Lacey, that's how it should be. At some level, people will process all of these things when they decide whether to cheer or stay away altogether, just like voters on election day.

"One of the interesting things about the coronation and its symbolism is it's not just simple celebration," he said. "It does give Britons a chance to look and think about what matters to us."

## Writers strike looks to be a long fight, as Hollywood braces

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer.

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Hollywood writers picketing to preserve pay and job security outside major studios and streamers braced for a long fight at the outset of a strike that immediately forced late-night shows into hiatus, put other productions on pause and had the entire industry slowing its roll.

The first Hollywood strike in 15 years commenced Tuesday as the 11,500 members of the Writers Guild of America stopped working when their contract expired.

The union is seeking higher minimum pay, more writers per show and less exclusivity on single projects, among other demands — all conditions it says have been diminished in the content boom of the streaming era.

"Everything's changed, but the money has changed in the wrong direction," said Kelly Galuska, 39, a writer for "The Bear" on FX and "Big Mouth" on Netflix, who picketed at Fox Studios in Los Angeles with her 3-week-old daughter. "It's a turning point in the industry right now. And if we don't get back to even, we never will."

The last Hollywood strike, from the same union in 2007 and 2008, took three months to resolve. With no talks or even plans to talk pending between the WGA and the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers, which represents studios and productions companies, there is no telling how long writers will have to go without pay, or how many major productions will be delayed, shortened or scrapped.

"We'll stay out as long as it takes," Josh Gad, a writer for shows including "Central Park" and an actor in films including "Frozen," said from the Fox picket line.

The AMPTP said in a statement that it presented an offer with "generous increases in compensation for writers as well as improvements in streaming residuals" and was prepared to improve its offer "but was unwilling to do so because of the magnitude of other proposals still on the table that the guild continues to insist upon."

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 41 of 79

The writers were well aware that a stoppage was likely. Yet the breakoff of contractual talks hours before a deadline that negotiations in previous years have sailed past for hours or even days, and the sudden reality of a strike, left some surprised, some worried, some determined.

"When I saw the refusals to counter and the refusing to even negotiate by the AMPTP, I was like on fire to get out here and stand up for what we deserve," Jonterri Gadson, a writer whose credits include "A Black Lady Sketch Show," said on a picket line at Amazon Studios as she held a sign that read, "I hate it here."

All of the top late-night shows, which are staffed by writers that pen monologues and jokes for their hosts, immediately went dark. NBC's "The Tonight Show," Comedy Central's "Daily Show," ABC's Jimmy Kimmel Live," CBS' "The Late Show" and NBC's "Late Night" all made plans for reruns through the week.

NBC's "Saturday Night Live," which had been scheduled to air a new episode Saturday, will also go dark and air a rerun, and the two remaining episodes in the season are in jeopardy.

The strike's impact on scripted series and films will likely take longer to notice — though some shows, including Showtime's "Yellowjackets," have already paused production on forthcoming seasons.

If a strike persisted through the summer, fall TV schedules could be upended. In the meantime, those with finished scripts are permitted to continue shooting.

Union members also picketed in New York, where less known writers were joined by more prominent peers like playwright and screenwriter Tony Kushner ("The Fabelmans") and "Dopesick" creator Danny Strong.

Some actors including Rob Lowe joined the picket lines in support in Los Angeles. Many striking writers, like Gad, are hybrids who combine writing with other roles.

Speaking from his acting side, Gad said of his fellow writers, "We are nothing without their words. We have nothing without them. And so it's imperative that we resolve this in a way that benefits the brilliance that comes out of each of these people."

The other side of his hyphenated role could be in the same space soon, with many of the same issues at the center of negotiations for both the actors union SAG-AFTRA and the Directors Guild of America. Contracts for both expire in June.

Streaming has exploded the number of series and films that are annually made, meaning more jobs for writers. But writers say they've been made to make less under shifting and insecure conditions that the WGA called "a gig economy inside a union workforce."

The union is seeking more compensation for writers up front, because many of the payments writers have historically profited from on the back end — like syndication and international licensing — have been largely phased out by the onset of streaming.

Galuska said she is among the writers who have never seen those kind of once common benefits.

"I've had the opportunity to write on great shows that are very, very popular and not really seen the compensation for that, unfortunately," she said.

The AMPTP said sticking points to a deal revolved around so-called mini-rooms — the guild is seeking a minimum number of scribes per writer room — and the duration of employment contracts.

Writers are also seeking more regulation around the use of artificial intelligence, which the WGA's writers say could give producers a shortcut to finishing their work.

"The fact that the companies have refused to deal with us on that fact means that I'm even more scared about it today than I was a week ago. They obviously have a plan. The things they say no to, are the things they're planning to do tomorrow." \_\_\_\_\_

Jake Coyle and David Bauder in New York, and Krysta Fauria and Jonathan Landrum in Los Angeles, contributed.

## IMF says inflation to slow growth across Mideast this year

By NICK EL HAJJ Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Economies across the Middle East and Central Asia will likely slow this year as persistently high inflation and rising interest rates bite into their post-pandemic gains, the International Monetary Fund said Wednesday.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 42 of 79

The IMF's Regional Economic Outlook blamed in part rising energy costs, as well as elevated food prices, for the estimated slower growth. The report said that while oil-dependent economies of the Gulf Arab states and others in the region have reaped the benefits of elevated crude prices, other countries — such as Pakistan — have seen growth collapse after an unprecedented flooding last summer or as economic woes worsened.

The regional slowdown also comes as an explosion of fighting in Sudan between two top rival generals — who only a year ago as allies orchestrated a military coup that upended the African country's transition to democracy — threatens a nation where IMF and World Bank debt relief remains on hold.

Rising interest rates, used by central banks worldwide to try to stem inflation's rise, increase the costs of borrowing money. That will affect nations carrying heavier debts, the IMF warned.

"This year we're seeing inflation again being the most challenging issue for most of the countries," Jihad Azour, the director of the Middle East and Central Asia Department at the IMF, told The Associated Press. "For those who have high level of debt, the challenge of increase in interest rate globally, as well as also the tightening of monetary policy, is affecting them."

The IMF forecast predicts regional growth will drop from 5.3% last year to 3.1% this year. Overall, regional inflation is expected to be at 14.8%, unchanged from last year, as Russia's war on Ukraine continues to pressure global food supplies and affect energy markets.

It will be even worse in Pakistan, where the IMF projected inflation to more than double, to about 27%. Pakistan and IMF officials have held repeated talks over the release of a stalled key tranche of a \$6 billion bailout package loan to Islamabad.

The IMF warned that financial conditions worldwide will tighten this year, brought on in part by two bank failures in the United States in March. The sudden collapse of Credit Suisse before it was purchased by UBS also strained markets.

For Sudan, Azour acknowledged the challenge as the country faces a humanitarian crisis brought on by the weeks of fighting there. The violence has also worsened a debt crisis that has gripped the country for decades as it faced Western sanctions.

"We have worked with the government of Sudan, for the Sudanese people, in order to help them by achieving a debt operation that would allow Sudan to have a debt relief of more than \$50 billion," Azour said.

"But unfortunately, the recent developments ... put in a halt to all of those efforts," he added.

## Quarterbacks come off board at record rate in NFL draft

By JOSH DUBOW AP Pro Football Writer

The Brock Purdy impact was in full effect in this year's NFL draft.

A year after the San Francisco 49ers found their starting quarterback with the final pick of the draft, teams were far more aggressive when it came to drafting quarterbacks in the later rounds.

Three quarterbacks went in the fourth round for the second time in the past 10 drafts and four quarterbacks went in round five for the first time since 2002. That led to a record 12 QBs going in the first five rounds for the first time ever in the common draft era that started in 1967. The previous high was 11 in 1995.

The run on QBs started early with Bryce Young going first to Carolina and C.J. Stroud going second to Houston — marking the ninth time quarterbacks went 1-2 in the common draft era, with five of those coming in the last 12 drafts.

Indianapolis then took Anthony Richardson fourth, marking the fourth time that three quarterbacks were taken with the first four picks.

Things slowed down from there with Will Levis waiting until round two to go to Tennessee and Hendon Hooker being drafted in the third round by Detroit.

Then the run on QBs started late in the fourth round when Fresno State's Jake Haener went 124th overall to New Orleans. Six more quarterbacks followed in the next 37 picks as the philosophy of passing on late-round QBs who historically have little chance of developing into top-flight starters changed.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 43 of 79

Some of that could be because of Purdy, who went from being “Mr. Irrelevant” as the final pick of the 2022 draft to winning his first seven starts as a rookie to help the 49ers reach the NFC title game last season.

While the chances that the QBs that went on day three of the draft will develop into starters are low, the payoff if it happens was high enough to justify the risk.

Two-time national champion Stetson Bennett went to the Rams the pick after Haener, with the Raiders taking Aidan O’Connell with the final pick of the fourth round. The Rams and Raiders had been the only teams not to select a QB in any round the previous six drafts.

The fifth-round run started with Clayton Tune going to Arizona at No. 139, followed by Dorian Thompson-Robinson (140 to the Browns), Sean Clifford (149 to the Packers) and Jaren Hall (164 to the Vikings).

The final two QBs off the board were Tanner McKee to the Eagles in the sixth round and Max Duggan to the Chargers in the seventh.

In all, 14 quarterbacks were drafted last weekend, tied for the second most in the last 2 drafts behind the 15 from 2016.

## TOP TIGHT ENDS

This draft was viewed as a strong one for tight ends and that played out on day two when a record five went off the board in the second round and three more in the third.

It took a while for the first tight end to go with Buffalo trading up to take Dalton Kincaid with the 25th pick.

But that all changed Friday with Detroit taking Sam LaPorta with the third pick of the second round and Las Vegas grabbing Michael Mayer one spot later. Green Bay then took Luke Musgrave 44th, Dallas drafted Luke Schoonmaker 58th and Jacksonville took Brenton Strange 61st.

This marked the first time in the common draft era that five tight ends were taken in round two and the six that went in the first rounds tied 1974 for the most ever.

Tucker Kraft, Darnell Washington and Cameron Latu went in round three with the nine tight ends going in the first three rounds breaking the record of eight reached in 2006 and 2019.

## BY POSITIONS

While the drafts were notable to tight ends and quarterbacks, the volume of picks was focused as usual in the trenches and on the perimeter.

There were 56 defensive backs drafted — the most of any position — as the increased of extra DBs in nickel and dime packages have put a premium on depth at that spot.

Teams also combined 43 offensive linemen, as well as 43 defensive linemen. Receivers came in next at 32.

Only six specialists were taken but the 49ers did surprise many by drafting kicker Jake Moody 99th overall — the highest pick for a kicker since Tampa Bay took Roberto Aguayo with the 59th pick in 2016.

## ALMA MATERS

After years of dominating on the field and in recruiting rankings, it was no surprise that Alabama and Georgia led the way with 10 draft picks each.

The Bulldogs have now had 25 players taken in the past two drafts from teams that have won national championships each year. New England sixth-round Ameer Speed played on the 2021 title team before transferring to Michigan State, giving Georgia 26 draft picks from that team that ended a four-decade championship drought.

Fourteen members of that 2021 defense have been drafted with five going to the Eagles: Jordan Davis and Nakobe Dean in 2022, and Jalen Carter, Nolan Smith and Kelee Ringo this year.

Alabama dominated the top of the draft with quarterback Bryce Young becoming the first Crimson Tide player since Harry Gilmer in 1948 to go first and edge rusher Will Anderson going third.

It marked the fourth time since 2000 that college teammates went in the first three picks of the same draft with Ohio State’s Chase Young and Jeff Okudah going at No. 2 and 3 in 2020, Oklahoma’s Sam Bradford and Gerald McCoy going at No. 1 and 3 in 2010, and Penn State’s Courtney Brown and LaVar Arrington going with the top two picks in 2000.

The next schools on the list of most draft picks were two of the other teams to make the College Football Playoff with Michigan having nine players picked and TCU eight.

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

## Sheriff: Suspected Texas gunman caught hiding under laundry

By JUAN A. LOZANO and NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

CLEVELAND, Texas (AP) — A four-day manhunt in Texas for a gunman accused of killing five neighbors ended Tuesday when authorities, acting on a tip, said they found the suspect hiding underneath a pile of laundry in the closet of a house.

Francisco Oropeza, 38, was captured without incident near the community of Conroe, north of Houston and about 20 miles (32 kilometers) from his home in the rural town of Cleveland. That's where authorities say he went next door and shot his neighbors with an AR-style rifle shortly before midnight Friday.

Oropeza had been shooting rounds on his property and the attack occurred after neighbors asked him to go farther away because the gunfire was keeping a baby awake, according to police.

Oropeza will be charged with five counts of murder, San Jacinto County Sheriff Greg Capers said. Bond was set at \$5 million.

"They can rest easy now, because he is behind bars," Capers said of the families of the victims. "He will live out his life behind bars for killing those five."

The arrest ends what had become a widening dragnet that had grown to more than 250 people from multiple jurisdictions and had seen \$80,000 in reward money offered. As recently as Tuesday morning, the FBI said that Oropeza "could be anywhere," underlining how investigators for days struggled to get a sense of his whereabouts and candidly acknowledged they had no leads.

The tip that finally ended the chase came at 5:15 p.m., and a little more than an hour later, Oropeza was in custody, said FBI Assistant Special Agent in Charge Jimmy Paul. The alleged shooter is a Mexican national who has been deported four times between 2009 and 2016, according to U.S. immigration officials.

Connor Hagan, an FBI spokesman, said they would not disclose the identity of the person who called in the tip — one of more than 200 tips he says investigators received. Authorities did not say who owned the house, whether Oropeza knew them or if anyone else was inside when he was found.

They also would not say whether friends or family had helped Oropeza evade capture, or where he had been since fleeing the scene in Cleveland, which authorities previously said was likely on foot.

Hagan said the three agencies that went in to arrest Oropeza were the U.S. Marshals, Texas Department of Public Safety and US Border Patrol's BORTAC team.

Drones and scent-tracking dogs had been used during the widening manhunt, which included combing a heavily wooded forest a few miles from the scene. Republican Gov. Greg Abbott offered a \$50,000 reward as the search dragged late into the weekend, while others offered an additional \$30,000 in reward money.

Capers said that prior to Friday's shooting deputies had been called to the suspect's house at least one other time previously over shooting rounds in his yard.

All of the victims were from Honduras. Wilson Garcia, who survived the shooting, said friends and family in the home tried to hide and shield themselves and children after Oropeza walked up to the home and began firing, killing his wife first at the front door.

The victims were identified as Diana Velazquez Alvarado, 21; Julisa Molina Rivera, 31; Jose Jonathan Casarez, 18; Sonia Argentina Guzman, 25; and Daniel Enrique Laso, 9.

A government official in Honduras said the remains of four of the victims would be repatriated. Velásquez Alvarado will be buried in the United States at the request of her sister and her husband, said Wilson Paz, general director of Honduras' migrant protection service.

Osmán Velásquez, Diana's father, said Tuesday that his daughter had recently gotten residency and had traveled to the United States without documents eight years ago with the help of a sister, who was already living there.

"Her sister convinced me to let her take my daughter. She told me the United States is a country of opportunities and that's true," he said. "But I never imagined it was just for this."

In offering the reward, Abbott called the victims "illegal immigrants," a partially false statement that his

office walked back and apologized for Monday after drawing wide backlash over drawing attention to their immigration status. Abbott spokesperson Renae Eze said they had since learned that one of the victims may have been in the country legally.

Merchant reported from Washington. Associated Press reporters Jake Bleiberg in Dallas, Paul J. Weber in Austin, Texas, and Marlon González in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, contributed to this report.

## Washington state to decriminalize drugs unless lawmakers act

By GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Washington Gov. Jay Inslee is calling lawmakers back to work after they rejected a bill setting out a new statewide drug policy — a development that has put the state on the brink of decriminalizing possession of fentanyl and other drugs while also depriving it of much-needed investments in public health.

Lawmakers adjourned their regular session late last month after voting down a bill that would keep drug possession illegal and boost services for people struggling with addiction. Many liberal Democrats objected to criminalizing drugs, while conservative Democrats and Republicans insisted they must be to provide incentive for people to enter treatment.

Inslee has called that unacceptable, and on Tuesday he set a special legislative session beginning May 16 to give them another chance.

"Cities and counties are eager to see a statewide policy that balances accountability and treatment, and I believe we can produce a bipartisan bill that does just that," Inslee said.

A temporary law that makes possession of small amounts of drugs a misdemeanor expires on July 1, so if lawmakers fail to pass a bill, Washington would become the second state — after neighboring Oregon — to decriminalize drug possession. Cities and counties would be free to adopt their own approaches to drug possession and paraphernalia, creating a patchwork of laws that could undermine efforts to treat addiction as a public health issue.

Lawmakers said Tuesday they were increasingly optimistic they can reach a compromise to avoid those consequences.

"I've cleared my schedule," said state Rep. Roger Goodman, D-Kirkland. "I'm working day and night on this."

Like other states, Washington has wrestled with what to do with an overdose crisis worsened by the widespread availability of cheap, deadly fentanyl. Public drug use is rampant in cities around the state, and deaths have soared.

Several Washington cities have already contemplated or passed new drug laws in the absence of legislative action. Seattle City Attorney Ann Davison and two City Council members, Sara Nelson and Alex Pedersen, have proposed a ban on public use.

"Our hands-off approach to people using illegal drugs in public has resulted in rampant street crime and a death toll rivaling that of COVID-19 in Seattle," Nelson said in a statement. "Complacency is no longer an option."

The Washington Supreme Court in 2021 struck down the state law making drug possession a felony. The court said it was unconstitutional because it did not require prosecutors to prove that someone knowingly had the drugs. Washington was the only state in the country without that requirement.

In response, lawmakers that year made intentional drug possession a misdemeanor and required police to refer offenders to evaluation or treatment for their first two offenses — but there was no obvious way for officers to track how many times someone had been referred, and availability of treatment remained inadequate.

Lawmakers made the measure temporary — having it expire July 1, 2023 — to give themselves two years to come up with a long-term policy.

But as this year's session ended late last month, a measure billed as a compromise was voted down in



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 46 of 79

the Democratic-controlled House 55-43. It would have increased potential penalties for drug possession, making it a gross misdemeanor punishable by up to a year in jail, rather than a misdemeanor punishable by up to 90 days.

It also would have eliminated the requirement that police refer a person's first two offenses for treatment rather than prosecution, enabling officers to arrest someone for a first offense if they thought it appropriate, while also encouraging police and prosecutors to divert cases. Judges could impose jail time for people who refuse treatment or repeatedly fail to comply.

It would have made clear that public health workers could not be prosecuted for giving out drug paraphernalia, such as clean glass tubes for smoking fentanyl.

And it would have included funding for drug crisis centers; a pilot program for health engagement hubs where users could access clean drug paraphernalia and connect with other services; and expanded access to withdrawal medication in jails and prisons.

Without those provisions of the bill being passed, the state's approach to drugs amounts to "an entire diversion system with nothing to divert people to," said Caleb Banta-Green, a research professor at the University of Washington School of Medicine.

"We need \$50 million to \$100 million statewide and a health engagement hub in each county, and we could cut deaths in half in a year," he said. "We know what to do."

Democratic and Republican lawmakers agree on the need to increase services, with many saying they have no intention of returning to the punitive approach of the war on drugs.

But Republicans objected that the bill did not do enough to ensure accountability for offenders; would preempt local bans on drug paraphernalia; and would create recovery residences where those trying to maintain sobriety might stay with those who continue to use drugs.

"I want these people to get better," said Rep. Greg Cheney, R-Battle Ground, a lawyer with experience in drug courts, said during a floor debate last month. "But not requiring them to acknowledge they have a problem is not the right path to go."

Many liberal Democrats, meanwhile, said they were opposed to making drug possession a crime at all. Rep. Tarra Simmons, of Bremerton, who spent time in prison on drug charges before becoming a lawyer and a lawmaker, said she was willing to vote to make it a misdemeanor as part of a compromise that would increase services.

But a gross misdemeanor is actually worse than its old status as a felony, she suggested, because the felony came with a sentencing recommendation of zero to six months for the first three offenses; the gross misdemeanor is up to a year in jail. Judges in municipal courts around the state could keep punishing those struggling with addiction, she said.

"It was really hard for me not to vote for all the good things in that bill," Simmons said. "But we don't need to cause people more pain in order to help them."

## History, civics scores of US students dipped amid pandemic

By CHEYANNE MUMPHREY AP Education Writer

Test scores in history and civics have declined slightly for eighth grade students in the U.S., according to results that show an increasing number of children lack a basic understanding of either subject.

The scores were released Wednesday by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. The same assessment reported in October that every single state had seen a decline in math or reading scores amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The latest scores, officials said, reflect more of the impact of the disruptions from the virus that shuttered schools across the country.

At a time of some pessimism about the state of the U.S. democracy, the test results suggest many young people are struggling to understand how government works and the importance of civic participation. Nearly one-third of eighth grade students cannot describe the structure or function of government, according to the results.

Many U.S. schools aren't doing enough to reverse the trend, history and civics educators say.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 47 of 79

About 68% of eighth graders said they are taking classes mainly focused on U.S. history. That's compared with 72% of students in 2018. And only about half of eighth graders report taking a class mainly focused on civics and or government, which remains mostly unchanged compared to 2018, according to the report.

"We're not putting a value there, and we're not saying this is something that they really need to be active, informed and engaged in as they grow," said Kerry Sautner, chief learning officer at the National Constitution Center, a nonprofit organization in Pennsylvania.

The CivXNow Coalition, a civics education advocacy group, reported last year that 38 states require a stand-alone civics course to graduate high school and only seven states require civics in middle school.

Patrick Kelly, a government teacher in South Carolina, said he has seen a growing emphasis on ensuring students are doing well in reading and math, and rightfully so.

"But every minute that you redirect to one place, it's got to come from somewhere else. And so if literacy interventions don't have a connection to social studies, then we lose ground in social studies instruction," he said.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress — known as the "nation's report card" — tested about 7,800 students across the country in civics, and 8,000 students in U.S. history between January and March 2022. The test had last been given in 2018.

On a point scale of 0 to 500, the average U.S. history score dropped 5 points to 258, continuing a downward trend that began in 2014. Just 13% of eighth graders scored at or above the proficient level. The latest average score was one point lower than the results of the first U.S. history assessment in 1994.

In civics, the average score dropped 2 points to 150 between 2018 and 2022. Just 22% of eighth graders scored at or above the proficient level. The results, which are on a point scale of 0 to 300, are the first drop since 1998. The average score at its highest was 154 in 2014.

U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona said the scores also highlight a need to provide more opportunities to learn about America's history and government.

"Banning history books and censoring educators from teaching these important subjects does our students a disservice and will move America in the wrong direction," Cardona said, referring to conservative efforts to impose new restrictions on how topics related to race and gender are taught.

According to the results, 40% of eighth grade students are performing below basic proficiency in history, meaning they likely cannot identify simple historical concepts in primary or secondary sources. Thirty-one percent are performing below basic proficiency in civics.

---

Data journalist Sharon Lurye contributed reporting from New Orleans.

---

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

## Rising turmoil is making Fed's rate decisions more perilous

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Poised to raise interest rates Wednesday for a 10th time, Federal Reserve officials are facing two competing economic trends that could make their future rate decisions more difficult and treacherous.

On the one hand, turmoil in the banking sector and political battles over the government's borrowing limit could weaken the economy if banks restrict lending and financial markets tumble on fears of a default on the nation's debt. Such anxieties would argue against further rate hikes, at least for now.

On the other hand, inflation, while slowing, is persisting at a level far above the central bank's 2% target rate, raising concerns that the Fed might have to further tighten credit to slow price increases. Additional rate hikes would follow — a trend that would lead to ever-higher borrowing rates and heighten the risk of a recession.

The wide range of potential outcomes could provoke divisions among Fed officials, even as they're ex-

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 48 of 79

pected on Wednesday to raise their benchmark rate to 5.1%, the highest level in 16 years. The big question is whether the Fed will also signal Wednesday that it's now inclined to pause its rate increases — barring any re-acceleration of inflation — and keep its key rate unchanged for the rest of 2023 as it assesses its progress in cooling inflation.

"There clearly is some division (among Fed officials), which is reasonable, given that we don't know where we are, and we've got these things going in the wrong direction," said Diane Swonk, chief economist at KMPG.

Austan Goolsbee, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, last month cited the banking turmoil and the likelihood that many banks will tighten credit for consumers and businesses as a reason to potentially forgo a rate hike this week.

"I think we need to be cautious," Goolsbee said. "We should gather further data and be careful about raising rates too aggressively."

Likewise, Patrick Harker, president of the Philadelphia Fed, warned against overdoing rate hikes and possibly derailing the economy.

Other regional Fed bank presidents, including James Bullard of the St. Louis Fed and Neel Kashkari of the Minneapolis Fed, have said they would prefer that the central bank remain steadfast and lift its key rate to at least 5.4%, which would require additional rate hikes after this week.

That divergence reflects the fraught path confronting the Fed. When inflation was spiking to a peak of 9.1% last June, the Fed was mostly united in its support for fast and aggressive rate increases. Now that its key rate is at a level that should restrict growth and inflation has slowed to 5% as of March, unanimity could be harder to maintain.

The Fed is meeting this week against an increasingly cloudy economic backdrop. Turmoil has re-erupted in the nation's banking sector after regulators seized and sold off First Republic Bank over the weekend. It was the second-largest U.S. bank failure ever and the third major banking collapse in the past six weeks. Investor anxieties about whether other regional banks may suffer from problems similar to First Republic's sent stocks sharply lower Tuesday.

Wall Street traders were also unnerved by Monday's announcement from Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen that the nation could default on its debt as soon as June 1 unless Congress agrees to lift the debt limit before then. The debt limit caps how much the government can borrow, and Republicans in Congress are demanding steep spending cuts as the price of agreeing to lift the borrowing cap.

Both developments could weigh on an already slowing economy. The Fed wants the economy to cool somewhat, because less borrowing and spending should also help rein in inflation. But particularly if political battles around the debt ceiling worsen, the economy could fall into a deep enough recession that the Fed might be forced to cut interest rates sometime this year — even if inflation isn't fully in check.

Goldman Sachs estimates that a widespread pullback in bank lending could cut U.S. growth by 0.4 percentage point this year. That could be enough to cause a recession. In December, the Fed projected growth of just 0.5% in 2023.

The Fed's likely rate hike Wednesday comes as other major central banks are also tightening credit. European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde is expected to announce another interest rate increase Thursday, after inflation figures released Tuesday showed that price increases ticked up last month.

Consumer prices rose 7% in the 20 countries that use the euro currency in April from a year earlier, up from a 6.9% year-over-year increase in March.

In the United States, although overall inflation has tumbled as the cost of gas and many goods has eased, "core" inflation — which excludes volatile food and energy costs — has remained chronically high. According to the Fed's preferred measure, core prices rose 4.6% in March from a year earlier, the same as in December.

## Oklahoma woman: Sex offender controlled my daughter's family

By SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

HENRYETTA, Okla. (AP) — As law enforcement officials went silent Tuesday while investigating what led to the killing of seven people in rural Oklahoma, family members of those slain recalled the domineering nature of one of the dead, who was a registered sex offender.

Since announcing the bodies were found Monday, authorities have released scant information on who was dead, how they died and who killed them. But grieving relatives working to piece together the horror story that started with two teenagers being reported missing, said law enforcement told them all the victims were shot to death in slayings that have stunned the community of Henryetta.

Janette Mayo was the first to say publicly that her daughter and three teenage grandchildren were among the dead. Her daughter was married to Jesse McFadden, a sex offender who Okmulgee County Sheriff Eddy Rice said Monday had also been killed and linked to two other teenagers reported missing this week.

McFadden had been controlling, Mayo said, which had concerned her. But the family didn't learn about her son-in-law's criminal history until a few months ago.

"He lied to my daughter, and he convinced her it was all just a huge mistake," Mayo, of Westville, told The Associated Press. "He was very standoffish, generally very quiet, but he kept my daughter and the kids basically under lock and key. He had to know where they were at all times, which sent red flags up."

On Monday, Rice said the bodies were found on the property where McFadden lived near Henryetta, a town of about 6,000 about 90 miles (145 kilometers) east of Oklahoma City. The dead bodies included two teens who had been reported as missing and in danger — Ivy Webster, 14, and Brittany Brewer, 16 — and who were last seen with McFadden. Rice said the state medical examiner would have to confirm the victims' identities.

Mayo, 59, of Westville, Oklahoma, near the Arkansas border, said the sheriff's office notified her late Monday that the other four victims were her daughter, Holly Guess, 35, and her grandchildren, Rylee Elizabeth Allen, 17; Michael James Mayo, 15; and Tiffany Dore Guess, 13. Mayo said Tiffany was close friends with Ivy and Brittany, who were spending the weekend with the family.

While Rice declined to provide details of how they died, Mayo said the sheriff's office told her that her daughter and grandchildren were all found shot to death in various locations on McFadden's property.

Ivy's father, Justin Webster, said he filed a missing person report with the local sheriff's office when she didn't return home Sunday night after spending the weekend with McFadden, Guess and her children. Justin Webster said he thought the children went with McFadden to spend some time on a ranch where he was working near McAlester.

He said law enforcement officials also told him that all of the victims suffered gunshot wounds, that some had been lined up and were located across the property.

Webster echoed descriptions of McFadden as controlling and unusual, but said he had no idea about McFadden's criminal background.

"I would say he was weird," Webster said. "He was always getting into his kids' phones and reading all their snap messages and all that. It wasn't in a way of a concerned parent. It was more of keeping tabs on the kids."

The missing endangered person advisory issued early Monday said Webster and Brewer had been seen traveling with McFadden, who was on the state's sex offender registry. Oklahoma Department of Corrections prison records show he was convicted of first-degree rape in 2003 and released in October 2020.

McFadden had been scheduled to appear in court Monday for the start of a jury trial on charges of soliciting sexual conduct with a minor and possession of child pornography. Court records show he was communicating with a then-16-year-old girl using a contraband cellphone while he was incarcerated at a state prison near Muskogee. The teen's grandfather reported their communications to prison officials, according to an affidavit from a Department of Corrections investigator.

Webster hopes this whole ordeal leads to harsher criminal penalties for sex offenders, especially those who target children.

"The sexual (offender) registry doesn't work," he said. "I think there needs to be action taken. There needs



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 50 of 79

to be repercussions, and someone needs to be held accountable. They let a monster out. They did this."

McFadden's attorney in that case has not responded to a phone message left Monday evening.

The grim discovery in Oklahoma keeps the U.S. on a torrid pace for mass killings in 2023 and could push the number of people slain in mass killings past 100 for the year, according to a database maintained by The Associated Press and USA Today in a partnership with Northeastern University.

In speaking to reporters Monday, Rice acknowledged another gruesome homicide case last fall in in Okmulgee County. The bodies of four men were found Oct. 14 in the Deep Fork River in Okmulgee, a small town about 15 miles (24 kilometers) north of Henryetta. Joseph Kennedy, 68, has been charged with four counts of first-degree murder.

"We've had our share of troubles and woes, but this one is pretty bad," the sheriff said.

Lisa Thomas, who runs Bear Bottom Antiques on Main Street in downtown Henryetta, said the killings sent a shock wave through the tight-knit community.

"It is truly like a Mayberry here," she said as she arranged sunflowers in a barrel outside her shop. "All the people that come into my shop are just wonderful. We are just in shock, absolute shock."

Brittany Brewer's father told KOTV in Tulsa that one of the bodies discovered was his daughter.

"Brittany was an outgoing person. She was actually selected to be Miss Henryetta ... coming up in July for this Miss National Miss pageant in Tulsa. And now she ain't gonna make it because she's dead. She's gone," Nathan Brewer said.

At a Monday night vigil, Brewer told hundreds of people: "It's just a parent's worst nightmare, and I'm living it."

He said his daughter had aspired to be a teacher or a veterinarian.

"I am just lost," he said.

Ivy Webster's mother, Ashleigh, described her daughter as a great kid who loved animals.

"She loved softball. She loved people, animals. She was just a genuine good person. She really was," Ashleigh Webster said.

Mayo described her daughter, Holly Guess, as a doting parent.

"She was a fantastic mother. She loved her children beyond belief. She was overprotective," Mayo said. "She was supportive if they wanted to do something. She'd go out 100%."

Granddaughter Rylee Allen "had a talent with a paint brush," she said. "Rylee wanted to be an artist and wanted to be a doctor so she could help people."

Michael Mayo ran track and cross-country, and when he wanted to play football, his mother went out and bought the family T-shirts and sweatshirts to support the team, Mayo said. Tiffany Guess also ran cross-country, she performed in the choir and had just tried out for the cheerleading squad.

"She was the sweetest, most loving girl you'd ever met," Mayo said. "We called her 'Tiffasaurus' because when she'd get mad at you, she'd growl."

Henryetta Public Schools said the community is grieving the loss of several students.

"Our hearts are hurting, and we have considered what would be best for our students in the coming days," the district said in a message posted online.

---

Associated Press data journalist Larry Fenn and researcher Rhonda Shafner in New York contributed to this report.

## Argentina's Fernandez seeks dollar relief from Brazil's Lula

By CARLA BRIDI and DANIEL POLITI Associated Press

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP) — Argentine President Alberto Fernández and his Brazilian counterpart, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, vowed Tuesday to keep working to come up with a mechanism that would allow them to avoid using the U.S. dollar in trade between the neighboring nations.

Argentina's economy is looking particularly fragile after a run on the peso in the financial markets caused a sharp devaluation of the local currency late last month as well as a drain of U.S. dollars from central bank reserves in part due to a devastating drought that has slashed exports.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 51 of 79

There was lots of anticipation Tuesday that the two countries would unveil a mechanism allowing Argentine firms to continue trading with Brazil without draining precious dollars from the country's reserves. Yet after a nearly four-hour meeting the two presidents made clear they were still fine tuning the details.

"The meeting was long, difficult and we will carry out many more meetings," Lula said alongside Fernández as the two left-leaning presidents spoke to the press. "I made a commitment to my friend Alberto Fernández that I will do every and any sacrifice so we can help Argentina in this difficult moment."

The proposed plan involves a line of credit to finance Brazilian companies that export to Argentina with the intention of avoiding use of the dollar, said the finance ministry's executive secretary, Gabriel Galípolo.

On Tuesday morning, Finance Minister Fernando Haddad told reporters the two governments are studying possible guarantees in order for Brazil's government to provide such financing.

"They've made the decision to help make sure that Brazilian companies continue exporting to Argentina and they had asked us to do some homework, which we have already done, and have to do with the necessary guarantees," Fernández said, adding that Economy Ministry officials will be meeting with their Brazilian counterparts next week to fine tune the details.

"Now what we have to do is find these points of agreement ... to get those credits operating that guarantee the production of Brazilian companies that export to Argentina," the Argentine president said.

Brazil is Argentina's largest trade partner and the deal could afford Argentina some breathing room at a time when it is suffering from a shortage of dollars.

Argentina struck a deal with China that allows its companies to pay for Chinese imports with yuan. Lula, for his part, hailed an agreement between Brazil and China to use the yuan in their bilateral commerce while in Shanghai last month, while also taking swipes at the dominance of the dollar in international trade and at the International Monetary Fund.

"We aren't having a discussion to help Argentina," Lula said. "We need to help Brazilians who export to Argentina and finance Brazilian exports, just like China does with Chinese products."

Lula also said he was in talks with China to change the regulation of BRICS — the group of countries made up of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — to assist countries who are not part of the group, including Argentina.

Argentina's Economy Minister Sergio Massa has said his country is renegotiating aspects of its agreement signed with the IMF in 2022 to restructure some \$44 billion in debt taken on by the center-right government of Fernández's predecessor, Mauricio Macri.

"We're renegotiating the program we committed to with the IMF ... because the conditions have indeed changed," Fernández said, referring to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the drought. Lula said Brazil would also negotiate with the IMF on behalf of Argentina.

Fernández's visit to Brazil comes weeks after he announced he will not seek reelection in the election this October. He was joined in Brasilia by Massa and Argentina's ambassador to Brazil, Daniel Scioli, both of whom are considered possible contenders for the presidency.

Politi reported from Buenos Aires.

## 3 imprisoned Iranian female journalists win top UN prize

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The United Nations announced Tuesday night that its premier prize for press freedom has been awarded to three imprisoned Iranian female journalists "for their commitment to truth and accountability."

The winners are Niloufar Hamedani who broke the news that 22-year-old Mahsa Amini died last September while being held by the morality police for wearing her headscarf too loosely, and Elahe Mohammadi who wrote about her funeral.

Amini's death touched off months-long protests in dozens of cities across Iran. The demonstrations posed one of the most serious challenges to the Islamic Republic since the 2009 Green Movement protests drew millions to the streets.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 52 of 79

The third winner is Narges Mohammadi, who has worked for many years as a journalist and is one of Iran's most prominent activists.

The U.N. Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization World Press Freedom Prize is named for Guillermo Cano, a Colombian journalism who was assassinated in front of the offices of his newspaper El Espectador in Bogota on Dec. 17, 1986. UNESCO has awarded the prize to coincide with World Press Freedom Day on May 3 since 1997.

UNESCO Director General Audrey Azoulay announced the winners at a ceremony in New York, saying: "Now more than ever, it is important to pay tribute to all women journalists who are prevented from doing their jobs and who face threats and attacks on their personal safety."

Zainab Salbi, chair of the international jury of media professionals that chose the winners, said the brave work of the three winners "led to a historical women-led revolution."

"They paid a hefty price for their commitment to report on and convey the truth," Salbi said. "And for that, we are committed to honoring them and ensuring their voices will continue to echo worldwide until they are safe and free."

In late April, Iran's judiciary acknowledged that two reporters who broke news on Amini's death, Hamedi and Elaheh Mohammadi, had been indicted on charges of collaborating with the United States, acting against national security, and creating "propaganda against the system."

While nearly 100 journalists have been arrested amid the demonstrations, Hamedi and Elaheh Mohammadi's reporting was crucial in the days after Amini's death to spread word about the anger that followed. Hamedi works for the reformist newspaper Shargh, while Mohammadi works for the reformist newspaper Ham-Mihan.

Their detentions have sparked international criticism over the bloody security force crackdown that lasted months after Amini's death. According to UNESCO, both Hamedi and Mohammadi have been in Iran's Evin Prison since September, and Hamedi has been in solitary confinement.

Since the protests began, at least 529 people have been killed in demonstrations, according to Human Rights activists in Iran. Over 19,700 others have been detained by authorities amid a violent crackdown trying to suppress the dissent. Iran for months has not offered any overall casualty figures, while acknowledging tens of thousands had been detained.

Narges Mohammadi has been repeatedly detained and imprisoned by authorities, and UNESCO said she is currently serving a 16-year prison sentence in Evin Prison. She's won recognition abroad for her work, including her activism against the death penalty in Iran, which remains one of the world's top executioners.

UNESCO said she is vice director of the Tehran-based civil society organization, Defenders of Human Rights Center. She also continues to report in print from prison and has interviewed other women prisoners which were included in her book "White Torture," the U.N. agency said.

## **Suspected gunman in Texas mass shooting caught: What to know**

CLEVELAND, Texas (AP) — A man suspected of opening fire at his neighbor's home and killing five people was arrested Tuesday after a four-day manhunt, authorities in Texas said.

The hunt for 38-year-old Francisco Oropeza began Friday after he fled from the scene of the deadly shooting in the rural town of Cleveland, about 45 miles (72.42 kilometer) north of Houston.

The shooting happened after Oropeza's neighbors asked him to stop firing off rounds in his yard because a baby was trying to sleep. The baby's mother and 9-year-old brother were among the five people killed, who were all originally from Honduras.

Here are some things to know about the case:

### **WHAT HAPPENED DURING THE MANHUNT?**

An FBI agent acknowledged Monday that authorities had little to go on in the widening search for Oropeza. More than 250 law enforcement officers from multiple agencies, including the U.S. Marshals, took part in the manhunt, which had come up empty despite additional manpower, scent-tracking dogs, drones and \$80,000 in reward money being offered.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 53 of 79

On Monday, a heavy presence of police converged in Montgomery County after a possible sighting, but the sheriff's office later said Oropeza wasn't among the people who were questioned.

Montgomery County Sheriff Rand Henderson confirmed Tuesday that Oropeza was arrested without incident near Conroe, roughly 20 miles (32.19 kilometers) from the home where the shooting happened.

## WHO IS OROPEZA?

Oropeza is a Mexican national who has been deported four times, according to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Oropeza was deported in March 2009, September of that same year, January of 2012 and most recently in July 2016.

The FBI in Houston tweeted Sunday that it was referring to the suspect as Oropesa, not Oropeza, to "better reflect his identity in law enforcement systems." His family lists their name as Oropeza on a sign outside their yard, as well as in public records.

## WHAT HAPPENED THE NIGHT OF THE SHOOTING?

Neighbors frequently fire guns in the rural community to unwind. But Wilson Garcia said his baby was struggling to sleep through it, so he and two other people asked Oropeza to move his shooting farther away from their home.

After Oropeza rejected the request, the family repeatedly called law enforcement, Garcia recalled Sunday.

He said while waiting for help to arrive, Oropeza ran toward him and reloaded. Garcia's house was packed with 15 people, several of them friends who had been there to join Garcia's wife on a church retreat.

Garcia's 25-year-old wife, Sonia Argentina Guzman, and 9-year-old son, Daniel Enrique Laso, were killed, along with Diana Velazquez Alvarado, 21; Julisa Molina Rivera, 31; and Jose Jonathan Casarez, 18. Two of the victims were shot while shielding Garcia's baby and 2-year-old daughter.

## WHAT ARE THE ISSUES WITH IMMIGRATION?

Republican Gov. Greg Abbott has faced criticism for drawing attention to the victims' immigration status.

Abbott offered a \$50,000 reward over the weekend for any tips that might lead to the gunman's arrest, and while doing so, he described the victims as "illegal immigrants" — a potentially false statement that his office walked back and apologized for on Monday.

Critics accused Abbott, who has made immigration reform a signature issue in Texas, of injecting politics into the tragic shooting.

"We've since learned that at least one of the victims may have been in the United States legally," Abbott spokesperson Renae Eze said in a statement. "We regret if the information was incorrect and detracted from the important goal of finding and arresting the criminal."

Eze said information provided by federal officials after the shooting indicated that the suspect and victims were in the country illegally. Her statement did not address why Abbott mentioned their status and she did not immediately respond to questions about the criticism.

## Muslim mayor blocked from White House decries "watch list"

By BRUCE SHIPKOWSKI Associated Press

A New Jersey mayor who was blocked from attending a White House celebration this week with President Joe Biden to belatedly mark the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan called Tuesday for the administration to end the federal "watch list" that he said illegally targets Muslims and others.

During a news conference held Tuesday in South Plainfield by the New Jersey chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-NJ), Prospect Park Mayor Mohamed Khairullah and several other speakers condemned the list as illegal, discriminatory and unconstitutional. They also called on the U.S. Secret Service and other federal agencies to stop using and distributing the list, which the group says has more than 1.5 million names, a majority of which are "Arab or Muslim sounding."

CAIR has called on the Biden administration to cease the FBI's dissemination of information from what is known as a Terrorist Screening Data Set that includes hundreds of thousands of individuals. The group informed Khairullah that a person with his name and birthdate was in a dataset that CAIR attorneys obtained in 2019.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 54 of 79

Shortly before he was set to arrive at the White House for the Eid-al-Fitr celebration on Monday, Khairullah said he received a call from the White House stating that he had not been cleared for entry by the Secret Service and could not attend the celebration where Biden delivered remarks to hundreds of guests.

Khairullah said Tuesday that he has no idea why his information is on the list and that no one in the federal government will tell him, adding that there's "no reason to believe I'm an unsafe person." Khairullah noted that he has been detained a few times and questioned while traveling, experiences that he called "humiliating."

"I'm not upset about not being at the White House," said Khairullah, who was elected to a fifth term as his town's mayor in January. "I'm about human rights. I have a platform to address this issue, but about 1.5 million others don't ... an incident like this makes me question the progress I thought we had made."

Selaedin Maksut, the CAIR chapter's executive director, said there is no transparency in how or why people are added to or removed from the list, and there is no remedy people can seek to have their names removed.

"Two decades after 9/11, we continue to see the harm of the watch lists. We continue to see how it causes difficulties for American Muslims and Americans at large, infringing on their civil rights," Maksut said.

A Secret Service spokesman confirmed that Khairullah was not allowed into the White House complex, but he declined to detail why. The White House also declined comment.

In a statement issued Tuesday night, New Jersey's two U.S. senators — Bob Menendez and Cory Booker, both Democrats, and Rep. Bill Pascrell Jr., a Democrat who represents the district where Khairullah lives — announced that they have formally asked the Secret Service and the Biden administration for an explanation of why the mayor was blocked from attending. The trio also asked that he be notified about the "substantive reasons he was denied admission" and that his status be reviewed so he may be able to attend such events in the future.

Khairullah was an outspoken critic of President Donald Trump's travel ban that limited entry to the U.S. of citizens from several predominantly Muslim countries. He also has travelled to Bangladesh and Syria to do humanitarian work with the Syrian American Medical Society and the Watan Foundation.

Khairullah said he was stopped by authorities in 2019 and interrogated at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York for three hours and questioned about whether he knew any terrorists. The incident happened when he was returning to the United States after a family visit to Turkey, where his wife has family.

On another occasion, he said he was briefly held at the U.S.-Canada border as he traveled back into the country with family.

CAIR said Khairullah helped the New Jersey Democratic Party compile names of local Muslim leadership to invite to the White House Eid celebration and over the weekend was a guest at an event at the New Jersey governor's mansion.

Khairullah was born in Syria, but his family was displaced in the midst of the government crackdowns by Hafez al-Assad's government in the early 1980s. His family fled to Saudi Arabia before moving to Prospect Park in 1991. He has lived there since.

He became a U.S. citizen in 2000 and was elected to his first term as the town's mayor in 2001. He also spent 14 years as a volunteer firefighter in his community.

Khairullah said he made seven trips to Syria with humanitarian aid organizations between 2012 and 2015 as a civil war ravaged much of the country.

## Why Hollywood writers are striking and the immediate impact

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The union representing 11,500 writers of film, television and other entertainment forms are now on strike. It's the first writers' strike — and the first Hollywood strike of any kind — in 15 years. Here's a look at the storylines the fight has spawned.

WHY ARE THE WRITERS STRIKING?

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 55 of 79

Streaming and its ripple effects are at the center of the dispute. The guild says that even as series budgets have increased, writers' share of that money has consistently shrunk.

Streaming services' use of smaller staffs — known in the industry as "mini rooms" — for shorter stints has made sustained income harder to come by, the guild says. And the number of writers working at guild minimums has gone from about a third to about half in the past decade. Writers of comedy-variety shows for streaming have no minimum protections at all, the guild says.

"On TV staffs, more writers are working at minimum regardless of experience, often for fewer weeks," the guild said in a March report.

The lack of a regular seasonal calendar in streaming has depressed pay further, the report says. And scheduled annual pay bumps under the current contract have fallen well short of increases in inflation.

The weekly minimum for a staff writer on a television series in the 2019-2020 season was \$4,546, according to industry trade outlet Variety. They work an average of 29 weeks on a network show for \$131,834 annually, or an average of 20 weeks on a streaming show for \$90,920. For a writer-producer, the figure is \$6,967 per week.

The Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers, which represents Hollywood's studios, streamers and production companies, say their priority is "the long-term health and stability of the industry" and they are dedicated to reaching "a fair and reasonable agreement."

## HOW DID WE GET HERE?

Months of negotiations still left considerable distance between writers and the AMPTP. The Writers Guild of America — whose East and West versions are technically two unions that act as a unit in these negotiations.

Talks, which often extend for hours or days past a contract deadline, instead ended hours before the most recent contract expired Monday night. By that point writers, who voted overwhelmingly to authorize their leaders to call a strike, had already begun making signs for picket lines, which they promptly put to use Tuesday.

The AMPTP said that it had offered "generous increases in compensation for writers as well as improvements in streaming residuals" and would improve its offer but couldn't due to the multitude of demands by the writers.

## WHAT SHOWS WILL BE AFFECTED FIRST?

Late-night talk shows, heavily dependent on same-day, current-events-based comedy writing, were the first to feel the strike's effect. The shows have been the de facto frontline during previous writers strikes. NBC's "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon," ABC's "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" and CBS's "The Late Show With Stephen Colbert" all went immediately into hiatus and will air reruns. James Corden's Thursday night farewell to his "Late Late Show" was well-timed.

"Saturday Night Live," nearly as dependent on last-minute writing, has already axed this week's episode with host Pete Davidson. The final two episodes in the season that follow it are in serious jeopardy.

The status of daytime talk shows, which lean more into host chats and interviews, are less certain. ABC's "The View" was uninterrupted during the last strike, which began late in 2007 and ended early in 2008.

## HOW WILL THE STRIKE AFFECT SCRIPTED SERIES AND MOVIES?

The strike's impact on scripted series could take far longer to manifest, though some, including Showtime's "Yellowjackets" are already pausing production. Noticeable effects on the movie release calendar could take even longer.

Production on finished screenplays can proceed as planned (without the benefit of last-minute rewrites). In general, Hollywood's other unions — including guilds for actors and directors, both of which face expiring deals with AMPTP in the coming months — are forbidden by their contracts to join the current strike and must continue working, though both members and leaders have expressed solidarity with the WGA.

Productions, long aware of the looming deadline, sought to wrap before it arrived. FilmLA, which hands out location permits for the Los Angeles area, say that none have been requested for television dramas or sitcoms this week.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 56 of 79

Depending on their media consumption methods, many viewers and moviegoers may not notice the effects of a strike until long after it's over, if at all. The menus on Netflix and Amazon Prime Video will look no different next week, but because this would be the first writers' strike of the streaming era, there is no template for how they will look months down the line.

During the last strike, when broadcast and cable networks with well-established seasonal schedules were still predominant, many shows, including "30 Rock," "CSI," and "Grey's Anatomy," shortened their seasons.

Unscripted reality television grew in strength at the time. "Big Brother" and "The Amazing Race" both increased their output. "The Apprentice," hosted by Donald Trump, got new life when a celebrity version of the shelved show was created to help fill the scripted void.

## WHAT HAPPENS NOW FOR THE WRITERS?

The full stop to work will mean major economic losses for screenwriters, though many say it's worth it to fight the day-to-day dwindling of income.

Guild strike rules prevent members from striking new deals, making new pitches, or turning in new scripts. They are allowed to accept payment for any writing that's already been done.

Those known in the industry as "hyphenates," including showrunners who act as head writer-producers, performer-writers, and people like Quinta Brunson of "Abbot Elementary" who do all the above, are allowed to do the non-writing parts of their jobs under union rules, though that work may be minimal as they seek solidarity with their writing staffs. (At Monday's Met Gala, Brunson said "I'm a member of the WGA and support WGA and ... We, us, us getting what we need. ... No one wants a strike, but I hope that we're able to rectify this, whatever that means")

## HOW PREVIOUS WRITERS STRIKES HAVE PLAYED OUT

Writers have gone on strike six times, more than any group in Hollywood.

The first came in 1960, a Writers Guild walkout that lasted nearly five months. Strikes followed in 1973, 1981, and 1985. The longest work stoppage, lasting exactly five months, came in 1988.

The 2007-2008 strike was resolved after three months. Among the main concessions the writers won were requirements that fledgling streaming shows would have to hire guild writers if their budgets were big enough. It was an early harbinger of nearly every entertainment labor fight in the years that followed.

## Kevin Costner and wife of nearly 19 years begin divorce

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Kevin Costner and his wife of nearly 19 years, Christine Baumgartner, are divorcing, a representative for the actor said Tuesday.

"It is with great sadness that circumstances beyond his control have transpired which have resulted in Mr. Costner having to participate in a dissolution of marriage," Costner's publicist Arnold Robinson said in a statement.

Costner and Baumgartner, a model and handbag designer, began dating in 1998 before getting married at his Colorado ranch in 2004.

They have two sons, ages 14 and 15, and a 12-year-old daughter together.

It was the second marriage for Costner, 68, the Oscar and Emmy winning star of TV's "Yellowstone" and films including "Dances With Wolves," "The Bodyguard" and "Bull Durham."

Costner also has four adult children from previous relationships.

## NBA MVP: 76ers' Embiid wins league's top individual honor

By DAN GELSTON AP Sports Writer

Joel Embiid began the long process toward NBA MVP as a towering soccer prospect in Africa who never picked up a basketball until he was a teenager.

Once he changed sports for good, Embiid became a generational — albeit often-injured — talent. And, the affable center quickly became the face of the Philadelphia 76ers' rebuilding effort more commonly known as The Process.

He embraced the nickname and is introduced before every home game as Joel "The Process" Embiid.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 57 of 79

Embiid can now add MVP.

The All-Star center and two-time league scoring champion, Embiid, who had long lobbied for the award, earned his first NBA MVP trophy Tuesday night, topping two-time winner Nikola Jokic of the Denver Nuggets.

The 29-year-old from Yaoundé, Cameroon, averaged 33.1 points to win his second straight scoring title, averaged 10.2 rebounds and tied a career high with 4.2 assists per game. Embiid has been sidelined with a sprained right knee that cost him one game of the playoff sweep against Brooklyn and the opening game of the Eastern Conference semifinals against Boston, which was won by Philadelphia on Monday night.

Jokic finished runner-up in the MVP voting, and Giannis Antetokounmpo of the Milwaukee Bucks was third. Embiid received 73 first-place votes. Jokic received 15 first-place votes, and Antetokounmpo got 12.

"It's been a long time coming," Embiid said. "A lot of hard work. I've been through a lot. I'm not just talking about basketball. I'm talking about my life. My story. Where I come from. How I got here and what it took for me to be here."

The 76ers watched on TV in Boston and erupted in applause and started chanting "MVP! MVP!" as the big man buried his head in his hands as he sat in a chair in the team hotel. Embiid was in tears as teammates James Harden, Tobias Harris and Tyrese Maxey mobbed him in celebration.

Embiid then vowed "I'll be back" for the playoff series against the Celtics.

But as for Game 2 on Wednesday night?

"We shall see," Embiid said.

Play or not, there will be raucous celebration for Embiid once the 76ers return home Friday night for Game. 3.

Embiid has been determined to win -- and campaigned for -- the MVP trophy for years. The third overall pick of the 2014 draft, Embiid missed his first two full seasons with injuries before settling in as one of the top big men of his generation. He was at his best this season when he totaled three 50-point games, including a career-high 59 against Utah in November. He had 13 total 40-point games.

When Embiid totaled 52 points and 13 rebounds in a win against the Celtics in April, coach Doc Rivers boldly declared, "The MVP race is over."

Embiid certainly didn't argue that night with his coach or Sixers teammates who stumped on his behalf. "They're probably right," Embiid said. "But we have bigger goals in mind."

His durability played a factor in the vote. Embiid played in 66 games, the second-highest total of his career, even though he has again has been hit with injuries in the playoffs.

Embiid is the first 76er to win league MVP since Allen Iverson in 2001. Julius Erving in 1981, Moses Malone in 1983 and Wilt Chamberlain from 1966-1968 are other 76ers to win NBA MVP awards.

Embiid's injury, though, could be the deciding factor in the 76ers' chase for the NBA championship. The Sixers are trying to win their first NBA title since 1983 and advance past the second round for the first time since 2001 — which was the last time a Sixer won the MVP award.

Allen Iverson was named league MVP in 2001. Other 76ers to capture the league's top individual award: Julius Erving, 1981; Moses Malone, 1983; and Wilt Chamberlain, 1966-1968.

Embiid, who graduated from a Florida high school and played a season in college at Kansas, has been every bit the dominant force in the NBA over the past seven seasons. Once the poster child for load management, Embiid has played 134 regular-season games the last two seasons and his 30.6 points last season made him the first international player ever to win an NBA scoring title. He's a six-time All-Star and was runner-up each of the last two seasons to Jokic.

Antetokounmpo won in 2019 and 2020. Jokic in 2021 and 2022.

Now, the award belongs to Embiid, who didn't pick up a basketball until he was a teenager in Africa, when a friend informed him that very few 7-footers succeed in soccer.

A few months later, Embiid was lured to a basketball camp in the capital of Yaounde run by NBA veteran Luc Mbah a Moute, one of just two players from Cameroon to have played in the NBA. Mbah a Moute persuaded Embiid's parents to let him move 6,000 miles to Florida, and helped enroll him at Montverde Academy, one of the best high school programs in the country. He played just 28 games in his lone season



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 58 of 79

at Kansas before leaving for the NBA.

"I am absolutely thrilled for Joel on winning the MVP award. He is the real deal and deserves every bit of recognition that comes his way," Rivers said. "He embodies everything that the honor stands for. His drive to improve is unmatched, and like the saying 'a dream doesn't become reality through magic, it takes hard work', he's put in the work."

Embiid, who became an American citizen last year, was known early in his career for sucking down Shirley Temples but has worked with sports dietitians to develop healthier eating habits and streamlined his workouts.

Sixers fans can enjoy him for years. Embiid's four-year, \$196 million contract extension doesn't kick in until next season and takes him through 2026-27.

Billboards went up around Philadelphia of Embiid with the slogan "MVPIID" and Sixers fans serenaded him with "MVP!" chants from pregame introductions all the way to his final free throw attempts.

Embiid, who shares with his long-time girlfriend a son named in the honor of his late brother, holds career averages of 27.2 points and 11.2 rebounds in 394 career starts. He's a four-time All-NBA selection and three-time All-Defensive Team selection.

This is the fifth consecutive year an international player has been MVP, extending the longest streak in NBA history. It's also the second time that international players finished 1-2-3 in MVP voting; the first time was last season.

Embiid becomes the second winner from Africa, joining Hakeem Olajuwon, the Nigerian who won for Houston in 1994.

"His impact on both sides of the ball places him in rarified air among all-time greats such as Hakeem, Kareem (Abdul-Jabbar) and Wilt," 76ers President Daryl Morey said. "It has been a privilege to watch Joel over the last three seasons and I know this won't be his last accomplishment as we continue to strive toward our ultimate goal of winning an NBA championship."

Philly is enjoying a banner run of elite athletes rising to the moment. Phillies slugger Bryce Harper won the 2021 NL MVP and 2022 NLCS MVP while Eagles QB Jalen Hurts was an NFL MVP finalist and led them to the Super Bowl.

They both fell short of the final championship goal.

He may be hobbling along in the postseason, but Embiid still has a shot to get his ring.

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

## 300 arrested in global crackdown on dark web drug market

By MIKE CORDER and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Authorities in the U.S. and Europe arrested nearly 300 people, confiscated over \$53 million, and seized a dark web marketplace as part of an international crackdown on drug trafficking that officials say was the largest operation of its kind.

The operation targeting the "Monopoly Market" is the latest major takedown of sales platforms for drugs and other illicit goods on the so-called dark web, a part of the internet hosted within an encrypted network and accessible only through specialized anonymity-providing tools.

Most of the arrests were made in the U.S., which is in the grips of an overdose crisis. Synthetic opioids, mostly fentanyl, kill more Americans every year than died in the Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan wars combined.

"Our message to criminals on the dark web is this: You can try to hide in the furthest reaches of the internet, but the Justice Department will find you and hold you accountable for your crimes," said U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland. The number of arrests and money seized was the highest for any international Justice Department-led drug trafficking operation, he said.

One defendant in California led an organization that bought fentanyl in bulk, pressed it into pills with methamphetamine and sold millions of pills to thousands of people on the dark web, he said.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 59 of 79

Investigators also got leads from local police investigating overdose deaths, including a 19-year-old man in Colorado who loved learning languages and building his own computers, said FBI Deputy Director Paul Abbate.

"But some of the packages his family thought were full of computer parts actually contain drugs he had purchased off the dark net," he said. "Because of those drugs, that promising young man sadly died of an overdose last year."

For the first time, FBI agents from all the bureau's field offices also visited buyers to tell them about the overdose danger of pills sold online, which are often disguised to look like prescription drugs.

The largest number of arrests — 153 — were made in the United States, followed by the United Kingdom with 55 and Germany with 52, according to the European Union law enforcement agency Europol, which coordinated the worldwide operation.

"Our coalition of law enforcement authorities across three continents proves that we all do better when we work together," Europol's executive director, Catherine De Bolle, said in a statement. "This operation sends a strong message to criminals on the dark web: International law enforcement has the means and the ability to identify and hold you accountable for your illegal activities, even on the dark web."

It seized 50.8 million euros (\$53.4 million) in cash and virtual currencies, 850 kilograms of drugs, and 117 firearms were seized in a series of raids in several countries.

In the Netherlands, where authorities arrested 10 suspects, police said the operation was made up of "separate but complementary actions that took place in nine countries over the past 18 months."

The Dutch national police's Cyber Enabled Crime Team was involved in the operation, codenamed SpecTOR.

"The intelligence that Europol shared with us, such as transaction data and virtual currency addresses, helped us to start new investigations and to enrich existing investigations. In this way we have identified and apprehended a number of important Dutch sellers," said the Dutch team's leader, Nan van de Coevering. "The success of this operation again shows that international cooperation is essential in combating crime on the dark web."

The seized drugs include 64 kilograms (141 pounds) of fentanyl or fentanyl-laced narcotics; over 258 kilograms (569 pounds) of amphetamines; 43 kilograms (95 pounds) of cocaine; 43 kilogram (95 pounds) of MDMA; and over 10 kilograms (22 pounds) of LSD and ecstasy pills, authorities said.

"A number of investigations to identify additional individuals behind dark web accounts are still ongoing," Europol said. "As law enforcement authorities gained access to the vendors' extensive buyer lists, thousands of customers across the globe are now at risk of prosecution as well."

The agency, based in The Hague, built intelligence based on evidence from Germany, which it said seized the marketplace's "criminal infrastructure" in December 2021.

Leading up to the operation announced Tuesday, German and U.S. authorities took down the "Hydra" dark web market in April last year.

Whitehurst reported from Washington.

## Autopsy: Stab wounds to heart, lungs killed Cash App founder

By OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Cash App founder Bob Lee died during surgery from stab wounds that pierced his heart and a lung, according to an autopsy report released Tuesday that also shows he had alcohol and drugs in his system.

Doctors at San Francisco General Hospital tried for hours to close the wounds in Lee's heart and save his life, but they declared him dead at 6:49 a.m. April 4, according to an 18-page autopsy report by the San Francisco Medical Examiner.

A toxicology test found Lee, 43, had alcohol, cocaine, ketamine and allergy medication in his system, Assistant Medical Examiner Dr. Ellen Moffatt wrote.

Moffatt concluded Lee's cause of death was multiple stab wounds, and that the manner and method of

death was homicide by sharp injury.

Tech consultant Nima Momeni, 38, was charged with murder with a sentencing enhancement of using a knife in the April 4 stabbing death of Lee. If convicted, he faces 26 years to life in prison.

A plea hearing on Tuesday was continued until May 18 after Momeni's defense attorney, Paula Canny, asked for more time.

Outside the courtroom, Canny emphasized Lee's drug use could have led him to make bad decisions.

"There's a lot of drugs in Bob Lee's system. I mean, Bob Lee's system is like the Walgreens of recreational drugs," Canny said.

"What happens when people take drugs? Generally, they act like drug people, and what drug people act like is not themselves, not happy-go-lucky," she said. "Just kind of illusory and make bad decisions and do bad things."

She wouldn't say whether Momeni did drugs with Lee, who police said was his acquaintance.

San Francisco District Attorney Brooke Jenkins said defense attorneys often smear a homicide victim's character as a defense strategy. "Whether or not someone has or has not done drugs — that does not give someone a license to kill him," Jenkins said.

Prosecutors say Momeni drove Lee to a secluded spot and stabbed him over a dispute related to Momeni's sister. They said in court documents that surveillance video and testimony from a friend of Lee who was with him the afternoon and evening before he died led investigators to Momeni.

A friend of Lee, who was not identified, told investigators the two of them met with Momeni's sister, Khazar Elyassnia, at an apartment where she was drinking with another unidentified man, according to court documents. The friend said he and Lee left the apartment and went to Lee's hotel room where he witnessed a conversation in which Momeni was questioning Lee over whether his younger sister "was doing drugs or anything inappropriate," prosecutors said.

The friend and Lee parted ways around 12:30 a.m. Minutes later, Lee can be seen on video surveillance entering the high-end Millennium Tower, where public records show Elyassnia and her husband, Dino Elyassnia, own a unit. The video also shows Lee and Momeni leaving the building shortly after 2 a.m. and driving off in Momeni's BMW.

Prosecutors say that Momeni drove to a dark and secluded spot, parked his car and after the two got out of the car, attacked Lee with a kitchen knife, stabbing him three times, including once in the heart. He then sped away "and left victim to slowly die," according to a motion to detain. Police recovered a knife with a 4-inch (10-centimeter) blade at the scene.

Lee is known for creating the widely used mobile payment service Cash App while working as chief technology officer of the payment company Square, now known as Block.

## Woman testifies that she too was sexually attacked by Trump

By LARRY NEUMEISTER and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A woman testified Tuesday that Donald Trump molested her with what seemed like "40 zillion hands" on an airline flight in the late 1970s — years before writer E. Jean Carroll says the former president sexually assaulted her at a Manhattan department store.

Meanwhile, Trump's lawyer said the former president has decided against testifying, answering the biggest outstanding question about the closely watched case. Trump has given sworn deposition testimony, and excerpts could be played for the jury.

Jessica Leeds, 81, of Asheville, North Carolina, told jurors at a civil trial arising from Carroll's lawsuit that Trump grabbed her chest and ran his hand up her skirt as they sat side by side in first class on a New York City-bound jet. After a few seconds, she said, she wriggled free of Trump, told him "I don't need this" and stormed to the back of the plane.

"There was no conversation. It was like out of the blue. It was like a tussle," Leeds testified. "He was trying to kiss me, trying to pull me towards him. He was grabbing my breasts. It was like he had 40 zillion hands. It was like a tussling match between the two of us."

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 61 of 79

Carroll's lawyers called Leeds to the witness stand in an attempt to show that Trump has a history of assaulting women and that Carroll's claims were part of a pattern, not a one-off incident. Another woman is expected to testify at the trial that she too was victimized by Trump.

Trump, a Republican, has repeatedly denied the women's claims. He contends the allegations are politically motivated attempts to smear his reputation and deny him the White House. He has said Carroll lied to sell books and that she's not his "type."

Trump used similar language in denying Leeds' allegations, telling supporters at a 2016 rally, "Believe me, she would not be my first choice."

Leeds first went public with her account of the alleged airplane assault in the final weeks of Trump's 2016 campaign, telling jurors that she decided to do so because she was "furious" about Trump's claim at a debate that he had never touched women against their will.

Carroll, a former magazine advice columnist, publicly aired her allegations against Trump in 2019, when she published a memoir. She testified over three days ending Monday that Trump raped her in the dressing room of Bergdorf Goodman, a luxury department store.

Lisa Birnbach, a longtime friend of Carroll, testified that an emotional and hyperventilating Carroll telephoned her minutes after her encounter with Trump to report what occurred. She said she told Carroll that Carroll had been raped and urged her to go to the police, but Carroll refused, leading them to argue before Birnbach agreed never to speak of it again.

Leeds said she was in her late 30s, working in sales and sitting in coach aboard a Braniff Airways flight from Dallas or Atlanta to New York's LaGuardia Airport, likely in 1979, when a flight attendant invited her to sit in the only empty aisle seat in the first-class cabin, next to Trump.

Trump introduced himself, Leeds said, but she didn't know who he was at the time. Working then as a real estate developer, Trump had not yet achieved the heights of his fame and was still a few years from opening Trump Tower in Manhattan.

Leeds said she sat with Trump for several hours and ate a nice, first-class meal, but that their conversation was otherwise forgettable. Then, she said, "all of a sudden Trump decided to kiss me and grope me."

Leeds said she fought back as Trump seemed to get more aggressive, pressing his weight into her, jostling her seat and pinning her in it. No passengers intervened, and no employees from the now-defunct airline came to her rescue, she said.

"It was when he started putting his hand up my skirt that gave me strength. I managed to wriggle out of my seat and storm back to my seat in coach. I don't think there was a word or a sound made by either one of us," Leeds recalled. She said the encounter, "seemed like forever, but it probably was just a few seconds."

After landing in New York, Leeds said she stayed on the plane until everyone else left to avoid running into Trump again. She said she kept the incident to herself, regarding it as one of the "rigors of travel."

She did not report it to the airline, the police or her boss because, she said, it was an era when "women didn't complain about things in the workplace."

A few years later, Leeds said she saw Trump at a Manhattan gala with his first wife, Ivana, who was pregnant. But Leeds didn't say anything. Instead, she told jurors it was Trump who piped up. She recalled him using a crass word in recognizing her as the woman "from the airplane."

The Associated Press typically does not name people who say they have been sexually assaulted unless they come forward publicly, as Carroll and Leeds have done.

---

On Twitter, follow Larry Neumeister at <https://twitter.com/lneumeister> and Michael Sisak at <https://twitter.com/mikesisak>. Send confidential tips by visiting <https://www.ap.org/tips/>.



## Biden sending 1,500 troops for Mexico border migrant surge

By COLLEEN LONG, AAMER MADHANI and TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration will send 1,500 active-duty troops to the U.S.-Mexico border starting next week, ahead of an expected migrant surge following the end of coronavirus pandemic-era restrictions.

Military personnel will do data entry, warehouse support and other administrative tasks so that U.S. Customs and Border Protection can focus on fieldwork, White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre said Tuesday. The troops "will not be performing law enforcement functions or interacting with immigrants, or migrants," Jean-Pierre said. "This will free up Border Patrol agents to perform their critical law enforcement duties."

They will be deployed for 90 days, and will be pulled from the Army and Marine Corps, and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will look to backfill with National Guard or Reserve troops during that period, Pentagon spokesman Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder said. There are already 2,500 National Guard members at the border.

The COVID-19 restrictions have allowed U.S. officials to turn away tens of thousands of migrants crossing the southern border, but those restrictions will lift May 11, and border officials are bracing for a surge. Even amid the restrictions, the administration has seen record numbers of people crossing the border, and President Joe Biden has responded by cracking down on those who cross illegally and by creating new pathways meant to offer alternatives to a dangerous and often deadly journey.

For Biden, who announced his Democratic reelection campaign a week ago, the decision signals his administration is taking seriously an effort to tamp down the number of illegal crossings, a potent source of Republican attacks, and sends a message to potential border crossers not to attempt the journey. But it also draws potentially unwelcome comparisons to Biden's Republican predecessor, whose policies Biden frequently criticized. Congress, meanwhile, has refused to take any substantial immigration-related actions.

Then-President Donald Trump deployed active-duty troops to the border to assist border patrol personnel in processing large migrant caravans, on top of National Guard forces that were already working in that capacity.

Jean-Pierre downplayed any similarity between Biden's immigration management and Trump's use of troops during his term. "DOD personnel have been supporting CBP at the border for almost two decades now," Jean-Pierre said. "So this is a common practice."

But some in Biden's own party objected to the decision.

"The Biden administration's militarization of the border is unacceptable," said Senate Committee on Foreign Relations chair Bob Menendez, D-N.J. "There is already a humanitarian crisis in the Western Hemisphere, and deploying military personnel only signals that migrants are a threat that require our nation's troops to contain. Nothing could be further from the truth."

It's another line of defense in an effort to manage overcrowding and other possible issues that might arise as border officials move away from the COVID-19 restrictions. Last week, administration officials announced they would work to swiftly screen migrants seeking asylum at the border, quickly deport those deemed as not being qualified, and penalize people who cross illegally into the U.S. or illegally through another country on their way to the U.S. border.

They will also open 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 Pentagon on Tuesday approved the request for troops by Homeland Security, which manages the border.

The deployments have a catch: As a condition for Austin's previous approval of National Guard troops to the border through Oct. 1, Homeland Security had to agree to work with the White House and Congress to develop a plan for longer-term staffing solutions and funding shortfalls, "to maintain border security and the safe, orderly, and humane processing of migrants that do not involve the continued use of DOD personnel and resources," said Pentagon spokesman Air Force Lt. Col. Devin Robinson.

As part of the agreement, the Pentagon has requested quarterly updates from Homeland Security on

how it would staff its border mission without servicemembers. It was not immediately clear if those updates have happened or if border officials will be able to meet their terms of the agreement — particularly under the strain of another expected migrant surge.

Homeland Security said it was working on it. "U.S. Customs and Border Protection is investing in technology and personnel to reduce its need for DOD support in coming years, and we continue to call on Congress to support us in this task," the agency said in a statement.

Associated Press writers Zeke Miller, Rebecca Santana, Lolita Baldor and Michael Balsamo contributed to this report.

## Man arrested outside Buckingham Palace with suspected weapon

By SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — London police said a controlled explosion was carried out as a precaution outside Buckingham Palace late Tuesday after a man was arrested there on suspicion of possessing an offensive weapon.

The Metropolitan Police said officers arrested the man after he approached the palace gates and threw items suspected to be shotgun cartridges into the palace grounds. A bag that police deemed suspicious was found in the suspect's possession, the police force said.

Police said the incident was not being treated as terrorism-related.

"Officers worked immediately to detain the man and he has been taken into police custody," Chief Superintendent Joseph McDonald said in a statement. "There have been no reports of any shots fired, or any injuries to officers or members of the public."

King Charles III and Camilla, the queen consort, were not at Buckingham Palace at the time of the arrest. Palace officials declined to comment, saying the incident was a police matter.

Cordons were erected in the area late Tuesday. Police said officers remained at the scene and investigations were ongoing.

The incident took place just days ahead of Charles' coronation ceremony, which is scheduled to take place at nearby Westminster Abbey on Saturday.

In recent days Buckingham Palace has seen a flurry of activity as tourists and international media begin to descend for the coronation — the first to take place in the country since Queen Elizabeth II was crowned in 1953.

Dozens of foreign royals, dignitaries and heads of state are expected to travel to the U.K. to attend the event, set to be a huge policing operation.

On Saturday Charles and Camilla will ride in a gilded coach from the palace to Westminster Abbey, where they will be crowned in a ceremony steeped in history. The pair will then return to the palace, escorted by a spectacular military procession featuring thousands of ceremonial troops, before they appear on the palace balcony to greet well-wishers.

## Vermont allows out-of-staters to use assisted suicide law

By LISA RATHKE Associated Press

Vermont on Tuesday became the first state in the country to change its medically assisted suicide law to allow terminally ill people from out of state to take advantage of it to end their lives.

Republican Gov. Phil Scott signed the bill that removes the residency requirement for the decades-old law.

Last year in a court settlement, Oregon agreed to stop enforcing the residency requirement of its law allowing terminally ill people to receive lethal medication. It also agreed to ask the Legislature to remove it from the law.

Before Vermont removed its residency requirement Tuesday, it had reached a settlement with a Connecticut woman who has terminal cancer to allow her to take advantage of its law, provided she complies

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 64 of 79

with other aspects of it.

"We are grateful to Vermont lawmakers for recognizing that a state border shouldn't determine if you die peacefully or in agony," said Kim Callinan, president and CEO of Compassion & Choices, a nonprofit advocacy organization, in a statement. "Patients routinely travel to other states to utilize the best healthcare options. There is no rational reason they shouldn't be able to travel to another state to access medical aid in dying if the state they live in doesn't offer it."

Vermont is one of 10 states that allow medically assisted suicide. Critics of such laws say without the residency requirements states risk becoming assisted suicide tourism destinations.

Mary Hahn Beerworth, executive director of the Vermont Right to Life Committee, testified before a legislative committee in March that the practice "was, and remains, a matter of contention."

"To be clear, Vermont Right to Life opposed the underlying concept behind assisted suicide and opposes the move to remove the residency requirement as there are still no safeguards that protect vulnerable patients from coercion," said Beerworth, adding she had a number of concerns including what liability Vermont could incur if the drugs failed to end a patient's life.

Supporters of Vermont's medically assisted suicide law say it has stringent safeguards, including a requirement that those who seek to use it be capable of making and communicating their health care decision to a physician. Patients are required to make two requests orally to the physician over a certain timeframe and then submit a written request that they signed in the presence of two or more witnesses who aren't interested parties. Witnesses must sign and affirm that patients appeared to understand the nature of the document and were free from duress or undue influence at the time.

Lynda Bluestein, 75, of Bridgeport, Connecticut, and Diana Barnard, a physician from Middlebury, sued Vermont in federal court last summer, claiming its residency requirement violated the Constitution's commerce, equal protection, and privileges and immunities clauses. Barnard specializes in hospice and palliative care and has patients from neighboring New York state, which, like Connecticut, doesn't allow medically assisted suicide.

Bluestein said Tuesday that the change in Vermont means that so many other people in the Northeast can take advantage of the state's law.

"I'm thinking even more importantly that this is going to cause other states, the other jurisdictions that have medical aid in dying, to look at their residency requirement, too," she said.

For Cassandra Johnston, 38, of Clifton Park, New York, the news was "such a relief." She was diagnosed with stage 3 breast cancer last year and lives a 40-minute drive from Vermont.

"It gives me such a peace of mind to know that if I need that peaceful and compassionate option that it's right next door," Johnston said. "And it's life-changing for someone like me. It really is."

---

Rathke reported from Marshfield, Vt.

## **No charges for ex-officer who hit Tyre Nichols with stun gun**

MEMPHIS, Tenn.. (AP) — A former Memphis police officer who hit Tyre Nichols with a stun gun during a traffic stop that preceded Nichols' brutal beating by other officers won't be charged criminally, a prosecutor said Tuesday.

Nichols' slaying was one in a string of violent encounters between police and Black people that have spurred protests and renewed debate about police brutality.

Five officers were charged with second-degree murder in Nichols' death and his family has sued the officers and the city of Memphis.

Shelby County District Attorney Steve Mulroy said his office did a thorough investigation of Preston Hemphill's role in the arrest, reviewing hours of body camera footage and interviewing witnesses multiple times.

"By no means do we endorse the conduct of Officer Hemphill at that first traffic stop ... but we do not believe that criminal charges are appropriate," Mulroy said.

Attorneys for Nichols' family said in a statement that they are supportive of the decision not to pursue

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 65 of 79

charges because of Hemphill's cooperation. Mulroy said Hemphill has cooperated fully with the investigation into Nichols' death.

Hemphill was fired Feb. 3 after an internal Memphis Police Department investigation showed he violated multiple department policies for his role in the Jan. 7 arrest of Nichols, who died in a hospital three days later. Five other officers have pleaded not guilty to criminal charges in Nichols' death.

The officers who have been fired and charged are Black, as was Nichols. Hemphill is white.

Nichols was beaten after police stopped him for what they said was a traffic violation and he fled the stop. Video released after pressure from Nichols' family shows officers holding him down and repeatedly punching, kicking and striking him with a baton as he screamed for his mother.

Hemphill was not present for the initial traffic stop nor when other officers forcibly removed Nichols, 29, from his vehicle and put him on the ground, Mulroy said.

"He had to make his decisions based on what he knew, or what he thought was happening, and following the lead and in support of the other officers," Mulroy said. "He acted on limited information in a matter of seconds at the direction and in support of the other officers. He did not pursue Mr. Nichols, was not present at the second incident where the actual beating took place that led to Mr. Nichols death."

Hemphill's body camera showed that from the very beginning of the traffic stop he and two other officers approached Nichols with force that was disproportionate for the alleged offense of reckless driving, according to a statement from the disciplinary hearing that took place before he was fired.

Along with breaking rules regarding the use of a stun gun, Hemphill was also fired for violations of personal conduct and truthfulness, police have said.

Hemphill's Lawyer, Lee Gerald, said the decision "did not come as a surprise."

"As we all know, Mr. Hemphill was not present at the second scene," Gerald said. "However, as we prepared a defense our investigation brought to light evidence showing that Officer Hemphill's actions did not violate Tennessee or federal law."

## Almost half of midterm voters cast ballots early or by mail

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

Almost half of all voters in the 2022 midterm elections cast their ballots before Election Day either by mail or through early voting, with Asian and Hispanic voters leading the way, according to new data the U.S. Census Bureau released Tuesday.

The heavy use of both early voting and voting by mail occurred even as Republican-led states have tightened rules on both voting methods over the last two years, and it marked a steep rise from the two previous midterm elections in 2018 and 2014. Only the 2020 presidential election, during the worst part of the COVID-19 pandemic, had a greater share of of U.S. voters who cast ballots early or by mail — more than two-thirds of voters did so.

In the 2022 midterm elections, two-thirds of Asian voters and almost three-fifths of Hispanic voters cast ballots by mail or at early-voting sites, while less than half of white and Black voters did so, according to Census Bureau survey data.

Unusual dynamics drove midterm turnout last year including the U.S. Supreme Court decision earlier in the year allowing states to ban abortion and the repudiation of deniers of the 2020 election results in political swing states.

In fact, 52.2% of people eligible to vote in the U.S. cast their ballots, a midterm mark surpassed in the past 20 years only by the 2018 congressional elections which had 53.4% turnout. More than 69% of voting-age citizens were registered to vote, the highest rate for a midterm election in two decades, according to the survey.

More than a quarter of registered voters who failed to cast their ballots in 2022 said they were too busy or had a work or school conflict, the most common excuse given in the survey. Asian and Hispanic registered voters gave that reason at a higher rate than Black and white registered voters.

The next most-common reason for registered voters failing to cast their ballots was "not interested, felt



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 66 of 79

my vote wouldn't make a difference," at more than 17%, an increase of more than 2 percentage points from 2018. White voters, Hispanic voters and voters identifying as some other race had higher rates of this response than Asian and Black voters, according to the survey.

Colorado had the highest turnout rate for registered voters at 95%. Colorado joined with Hawaii, Oregon and Washington in having 95% or more of its voters cast ballots by mail or early voting.

West Virginia had the lowest registered turnout rate at 61.4%, while Alabama had the lowest share of citizens casting ballots early or by mail at 3.6%.

Republican-led states have tightened voting rules as former President Donald Trump and his allies continue to baselessly claim his defeat in 2020 was due to widespread election fraud. Republican lawmakers and their allies say the new laws are meant to ensure election integrity. But Democrats and voting rights activists say they are based on conspiracy theories and will end up disenfranchising voters, especially young people and minorities.

Some of the measures in GOP-controlled states have banned 24-hour polling places and drive-thru voting, restricted the use of drop boxes for mailed ballots and reduced the number of ballot drop boxes.

Follow Mike Schneider on Twitter at @MikeSchneiderAP

## Loneliness poses risks as deadly as smoking: surgeon general

By AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Widespread loneliness in the U.S. poses health risks as deadly as smoking up to 15 cigarettes daily, costing the health industry billions of dollars annually, the U.S. surgeon general said Tuesday in declaring the latest public health epidemic.

About half of U.S. adults say they've experienced loneliness, Dr. Vivek Murthy said in an 81-page report from his office.

"We now know that loneliness is a common feeling that many people experience. It's like hunger or thirst. It's a feeling the body sends us when something we need for survival is missing," Murthy told The Associated Press in an interview. "Millions of people in America are struggling in the shadows, and that's not right. That's why I issued this advisory to pull back the curtain on a struggle that too many people are experiencing."

The declaration is intended to raise awareness around loneliness but won't unlock federal funding or programming devoted to combatting the issue.

Research shows that Americans, who have become less engaged with worship houses, community organizations and even their own family members in recent decades, have steadily reported an increase in feelings of loneliness. The number of single households has also doubled over the last 60 years.

But the crisis deeply worsened when COVID-19 spread, prompting schools and workplaces to shut their doors and sending millions of Americans to isolate at home away from relatives or friends.

People culled their friend groups during the coronavirus pandemic and reduced time spent with those friends, the surgeon general's report finds. Americans spent about 20 minutes a day in person with friends in 2020, down from 60 minutes daily nearly two decades earlier.

The loneliness epidemic is hitting young people, ages 15 to 24, especially hard. The age group reported a 70% drop in time spent with friends during the same period.

Loneliness increases the risk of premature death by nearly 30%, with the report revealing that those with poor social relationships also had a greater risk of stroke and heart disease. Isolation also elevates a person's likelihood for experiencing depression, anxiety and dementia, according to the research. Murthy did not provide any data that illustrates how many people die directly from loneliness or isolation.

The surgeon general is calling on workplaces, schools, technology companies, community organizations, parents and other people to make changes that will boost the country's connectedness. He advises people to join community groups and put down their phones when they're catching up with friends; employers to think carefully about their remote work policies; and health systems to provide training for doctors to

recognize the health risks of loneliness.

Technology has rapidly exacerbated the loneliness problem, with one study cited in the report finding that people who used social media for two hours or more daily were more than twice as likely to report feeling socially isolated than those who were on such apps for less than 30 minutes a day.

Murthy said social media is driving the increase in loneliness in particular. His report suggests that technology companies roll out protections for children especially around their social media behavior.

"There's really no substitute for in-person interaction," Murthy said. "As we shifted to use technology more and more for our communication, we lost out on a lot of that in-person interaction. How do we design technology that strengthens our relationships as opposed to weaken them?"

This story has been updated to show that the surgeon general said loneliness poses health risks as deadly as smoking up to 15 cigarettes daily, not 12.

## The balloon that flew over Hawaii? US says it's not China's

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Defense Department and the Federal Aviation Administration have been tracking a balloon that was flying off the coast of Hawaii last week, but a defense official said Tuesday there's no indication it is connected to China or any other adversary, and it presents no threats to aviation or national security.

The balloon was first detected by radar on Friday and "Pacific Air Forces launched three F-22s to assess the situation and visually identified a spherical object," U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said. "We monitored the transit of the object and assessed that it posed no threat."

The defense official said the balloon was floating at about 36,000 feet (11,000 meters), and it did not fly over any critical defense infrastructure or sensitive sites. After determining that the balloon presented no threat to people on the ground or to aviation over Hawaii, the military took no action to bring it down, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss military operations.

It's not clear who owns the balloon, which has now passed out of Hawaii's airspace, the official said.

The latest balloon sighting comes about three months after the U.S. military shot down what officials said was a Chinese spy balloon that crossed Alaska and part of Canada before returning to the U.S. and triggering widespread interest as it flew across the country. It was shot down over the Atlantic off the South Carolina coast on Feb. 4. Large portions of the balloon were recovered by the U.S. military.

U.S. officials said it was equipped to detect and collect intelligence signals as part of a huge, military-linked aerial surveillance program that targeted more than 40 countries. Beijing insisted the balloon was just an errant civilian airship used mainly for meteorological research that went off course due to winds and had only limited "self-steering" capabilities.

The U.S. military acknowledged there have been several other balloons that have been tracked over and near the U.S. in recent years, but none lingered over America for as long as that one did. The incident further eroded relations between the U.S. and China.

## Inside the Met Gala: A furry feline star, a tardy Cinderella

By JOCELYN NOVECK AP National Writer

Jared Leto was looking for a place to hang his hat. Er, actually his head.

Leto was walking around the cocktail reception at the Met Gala, not long after his big entrance on the carpet as Choupette, designer Karl Lagerfeld's famous cat, in a full-on white fur suit with very real-looking eyes. Once inside cocktails, it was too hot to keep the whole suit on, but he would not abandon the head.

Some friends wanted to check out the head, carried like a war trophy. Rami Malek, for example, and director Taika Waititi, who tried it on.

But what would happen at dinner? Leto said he was going to "find a nice quiet seat, so that Chou Chou can take a little rest."

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 68 of 79

And so it went at the Met Gala, where an Oscar-winning actor carrying a huge cat head seeking a nap still had to compete with lots of other things, and people, and clothes, for attention.

Here are some moments and scenes from inside Monday's Met Gala:

## A LOT TO RECYCLE

As guests entered the Metropolitan Museum's Great Hall, they passed a towering centerpiece — flanked by an orchestra playing tunes — and then climbed the huge staircase up to the receiving line, with hosts Anna Wintour, Michaela Coel, Penélope Cruz, Dua Lipa and Roger Federer awaiting. Last year, the centerpiece and staircase were carpeted with bright pink roses — 275,000 of them. This time it was recycled water bottles. Met officials estimated the number at 100,000, obtained from a recycling plant — and headed back to a recycling plant. It was the inspiration of exhibit designer Tadao Ando.

## REMEMBERING KARL

Often, celebrity guests skip the exhibit and head straight to cocktails. This year, museum officials really wanted them to see the sumptuous show on Lagerfeld — so they helped things along by routing the crowd from the receiving line to the exhibit, with cocktails and dinner down one floor.

The exhibit was indeed more crowded than usual during the gala, and one of the first to visit was Baz Luhrmann. The Australian director had worked with Lagerfeld on a Chanel No. 5 commercial starring Nicole Kidman and had fond memories, saying the designer was constantly working, learning, and creating. He also praised his smarts: "Too often we don't celebrate the intellect." The director was wearing a high-collared, starched white shirt, part of Lagerfeld's personal uniform, with his Thom Browne ensemble. He recalled visiting Lagerfeld at his home in Biarritz, where, he said, "there was a whole entire room of these shirts."

## THE DINNER BELL, AKA DAVID BYRNE

It's a challenge every year, getting hundreds of guests to leave cocktails and walk through the museum to dinner. One year a team of buglers did the trick. Last year, multiple Grammy winner Jon Batiste came through cocktails with his band, playing the melodica. This year, David Byrne took up the challenge, leading his own band (with a megaphone) and snaking through the room like a pied piper. (Byrne also rode his bicycle to the gala, which would have come in handy for the long trek to the Temple of Dendur for dinner.)

## BROADWAY REUNION

The Met Gala is filled with stars of film, music, sports, fashion and more, but Wintour also has a fondness for Broadway, and often invites actors from shows she loves to the gala. At cocktails, a spot on one side of the airy Charles Engelhard Court became the site of a joyous gaggle of Broadway actors, like a summer camp reunion. Among the group gathering, laughing and hugging were Josh Groban ("Sweeney Todd"), Phillipa Soo, Jordan Donica and Andrew Burnap ("Camelot"), Ben Platt and Micaela Diamond ("Parade"), J. Harrison Ghee ("Some Like it Hot") and Jonathan Groff ("Merrily We Roll Along"). Soo called the party "wonderful and whimsical. I feel so lucky to be here with these artists and celebrate another artist."

For Platt, it was his fifth Met Gala, and he looked like he couldn't believe his luck. "Anna is a huge champion of the theater!" he said. He added that this was his favorite gala because he was able to enjoy it with Diamond, his friend and co-star in "Parade."

## AN EDUCATION IN FASHION

Platt got a big greeting from Groban, who plays the murderous barber in "Sweeney Todd." He was at his second Met Gala, and said he appreciated learning about Lagerfeld, the German-born designer who worked in luxury fashion for 65 years until his death in 2019. "It's impossible when you get to an exhibit like this not to appreciate the impact and the inspiration and influence that he's had on all forms of fashion," he said. "This is very educational for me."

## TENNIS, ANYONE?

It's also no secret that Wintour also loves tennis. She's a fixture at the U.S. Open, and is especially close to Federer, the Swiss superstar who recently retired. A host this year, Federer said he was having a much more relaxed experience at his second Met Gala. "It's a much more relaxed lifestyle now so you can also get really into it," he said. "I could really look forward to it, prepare for it." Federer strolled to dinner from cocktails alongside Serena Williams, who also recently stepped back from tennis, and announced her pregnancy at the gala along with husband Alexis Ohanian. Also at the gala was former women's star (and

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 69 of 79

current commentator) Mary Joe Fernandez, who'd brought her daughter as her date.

## AND SOME BASKETBALL

NBA star Russell Westbrook, attending his third gala, said it was still amazing to meet "so many style icons" on fashion's biggest night. But a key new face from the sport this year was Brittney Griner, who smiled at the cocktail reception when expressing how happy she was to be attending. On the carpet, the WNBA star spoke about helping support families working to free Americans jailed in foreign prisons through the organization Bring Our Families Home.

## LETO, STILL CARRYING THE CAT'S HEAD

Actor Leto, never letting go of Choupette's head, explained that his attachment to Lagerfeld (and the cat) was both personal and professional. "It was done with a lot of love," he said of the costume. "I knew Karl. And one of the first times I met him I said 'I am going to have to play you in a movie,' and he said, 'ONLY you my love, only you.' And now we're developing a film. I just feel that if Karl were here, and I saw Karl, in full Choupette glory, he would have the biggest smile on his face."

## A CHANCE MEETING IN THE RAIN

Many guests reflected on past associations with Lagerfeld — some of them only one-time encounters. Hugh Jackman explained while sampling the exhibit that he'd met the designer at a dinner and was struck by a man who never stopped, whose ethos was "Keep creating, keep creating, keep creating." Also describing a one-time meeting was rapper Pusha T, like many decked out in Thom Browne, who said he encountered Lagerfeld in Paris, walking out of his store. "He was walking in, I was walking out. I was like 'OMG Karl, I gotta take a picture.' He was nice. He took the picture — and then said 'Its raining on me, I've got to go!'"

## WAITING ON CINDERELLA

The clock was soon to strike midnight, and Cinderella was yet to arrive at the ball. Well, it felt like midnight. It wasn't just the crowds outside on Fifth Avenue or the crews on the red carpet that were waiting for Rihanna to show up. Inside the museum, while most guests were well into dinner, a hardy crew of wait staff, photographers, and museum staffers were waiting, too. They listened to screams outside, hoping it signaled Rihanna's arrival — but in one case, it was a roach that caused the commotion.

Finally, the singer showed up, past 10 p.m. as some guests were already leaving dinner. She posed inside in her dramatic Valentino ensemble in white, accompanied by partner A\$AP Rocky in a kilt-type layer over jeans, then vanished down a hallway. But Cinderella had finally arrived, and everyone else could consider turning into pumpkins.

## 'Godfather of AI' leaves Google, warns of tech's dangers

By MATT O'BRIEN and WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Reporters

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sounding alarms about artificial intelligence has become a popular pastime in the ChatGPT era, taken up by high-profile figures as varied as industrialist Elon Musk, leftist intellectual Noam Chomsky and the 99-year-old retired statesman Henry Kissinger.

But it's the concerns of insiders in the AI research community that are attracting particular attention. A pioneering researcher and the so-called "Godfather of AI" Geoffrey Hinton quit his role at Google so he could more freely speak about the dangers of the technology he helped create.

Over his decades-long career, Hinton's pioneering work on deep learning and neural networks helped lay the foundation for much of the AI technology we see today.

There has been a spasm of AI introductions in recent months. San Francisco-based startup OpenAI, the Microsoft-backed company behind ChatGPT, rolled out its latest artificial intelligence model, GPT-4, in March. Other tech giants have invested in competing tools — including Google's "Bard."

Some of the dangers of AI chatbots are "quite scary," Hinton told the BBC. "Right now, they're not more intelligent than us, as far as I can tell. But I think they soon may be."

In an interview with MIT Technology Review, Hinton also pointed to "bad actors" that may use AI in ways that could have detrimental impacts on society — such as manipulating elections or instigating violence.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 70 of 79

Hinton, 75, says he retired from Google so that he could speak openly about the potential risks as someone who no longer works for the tech giant.

"I want to talk about AI safety issues without having to worry about how it interacts with Google's business," he told MIT Technology Review. "As long as I'm paid by Google, I can't do that."

Since announcing his departure, Hinton has maintained that Google has "acted very responsibly" regarding AI. He told MIT Technology Review that there's also "a lot of good things about Google" that he would want to talk about — but those comments would be "much more credible if I'm not at Google anymore."

Google confirmed that Hinton had retired from his role after 10 years overseeing the Google Research team in Toronto.

Hinton declined further comment Tuesday but said he would talk more about it at a conference Wednesday.

At the heart of the debate on the state of AI is whether the primary dangers are in the future or present. On one side are hypothetical scenarios of existential risk caused by computers that supersede human intelligence. On the other are concerns about automated technology that's already getting widely deployed by businesses and governments and can cause real-world harms.

"For good or for not, what the chatbot moment has done is made AI a national conversation and an international conversation that doesn't only include AI experts and developers," said Alondra Nelson, who until February led the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and its push to craft guidelines around the responsible use of AI tools.

"AI is no longer abstract, and we have this kind of opening, I think, to have a new conversation about what we want a democratic future and a non-exploitative future with technology to look like," Nelson said in an interview last month.

A number of AI researchers have long expressed concerns about racial, gender and other forms of bias in AI systems, including text-based large language models that are trained on huge troves of human writing and can amplify discrimination that exists in society.

"We need to take a step back and really think about whose needs are being put front and center in the discussion about risks," said Sarah Myers West, managing director of the nonprofit AI Now Institute. "The harms that are being enacted by AI systems today are really not evenly distributed. It's very much exacerbating existing patterns of inequality."

Hinton was one of three AI pioneers who in 2019 won the Turing Award, an honor that has become known as tech industry's version of the Nobel Prize. The other two winners, Yoshua Bengio and Yann LeCun, have also expressed concerns about the future of AI.

Bengio, a professor at the University of Montreal, signed a petition in late March calling for tech companies to agree to a 6-month pause on developing powerful AI systems, while LeCun, a top AI scientist at Facebook parent Meta, has taken a more optimistic approach.

---

AP Technology Reporter Matt O'Brien reported from Cambridge, Massachusetts.

## Ex-officer Thao convicted of aiding George Floyd's killing

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A former Minneapolis police officer who held back bystanders while his colleagues restrained a dying George Floyd has been convicted of aiding and abetting manslaughter.

Tou Thao, who already had been convicted in federal court of violating Floyd's civil rights, was the last of four former officers facing judgment in state court in Floyd's killing. He rejected a plea agreement and, instead of going to trial, let Hennepin County Judge Peter Cahill decide the verdict based on written filings by each side and evidence presented in previous cases.

"There is proof beyond a reasonable doubt that Thao's actions were objectively unreasonable from the perspective of a reasonable police officer, when viewed under the totality of the circumstances," Cahill wrote in a 177-page ruling that was filed Monday night and released Tuesday.

Floyd, a Black man, died May 25, 2020, after officer Derek Chauvin, who is white, pinned him to the

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 71 of 79

ground with his knee on Floyd's neck for 9 1/2 minutes as he pleaded for air. The killing, captured on bystander video, touched off protests around the world and prompted a national reckoning with police brutality and racism.

Chauvin, the senior officer at the scene, was convicted of murder and manslaughter in April 2021 and later pleaded guilty in the federal case. Two other officers — J. Alexander Kueng and Thomas Lane — pleaded guilty to state charges of aiding and abetting manslaughter and were convicted with Thao in their federal case.

Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison, who led the prosecution team, said Thao's conviction "brings one more measure of accountability in the tragic death of George Floyd" while calling on Congress to enact a sweeping police overhaul named for Floyd.

"While we have now reached the end of the prosecution of Floyd's murder, it is not behind us." Ellison said. "There is much more that prosecutors, law-enforcement leaders, rank-and-file officers, elected officials, and community can do to bring about true justice in law enforcement and true trust and safety in all communities."

Defense attorney Robert Paule did not immediately return messages seeking comment.

Lawyers for the Floyd family called the verdict "another measure of accountability for his death."

"Nearly three years after George was killed, the family and Minneapolis community continue to heal as the criminal justice system prevails. With each of these measures of justice, it is even more so demonstrated that police brutality is an illegal — and punishable — act," civil rights attorney Ben Crump and his team said in a statement.

The judge set sentencing for Aug. 7. Minnesota guidelines recommend four years on the manslaughter count, which Thao would serve concurrently with his 3 1/2-year federal sentence.

Unlike the other three former officers, Thao maintained he did nothing wrong. When he rejected a plea deal in state court last August, he said "it would be lying" to plead guilty.

Cahill based his decision on exhibits and transcripts from Chauvin's murder trial, which he presided over, and the federal civil rights trial of Thao, Kueng and Lane. Thao was specifically convicted then of depriving Floyd of his right to medical care and of failing to intervene and stop Chauvin. Cahill wrote that he focused on the evidence that pertained to Thao and not on the other officers or their pleas and guilty verdicts.

Thao is Hmong American, Kueng is Black and Lane is white.

Thao testified during his federal trial that he was relying on the other officers to care for Floyd's medical needs while he served as "a human traffic cone" to control a group of about 15 bystanders and traffic outside a Minneapolis convenience store where Floyd had tried to pass a counterfeit \$20 bill.

Thao said that when he and Chauvin arrived, the other officers were struggling with Floyd. He said it was clear to him, as the other officers tried to put Floyd into a squad car, "that he was under the influence of some type of drugs."

His body camera video showed he told onlookers at one point, "This is why you don't do drugs, kids." When an off-duty, out-of-uniform Minneapolis firefighter asked if officers had checked Floyd's pulse, he ordered her, "Back off!"

Thao acknowledged he heard onlookers becoming more anxious about Floyd's condition and that he could hear Floyd saying, "I can't breathe." But Thao said he didn't know there was anything seriously wrong with him even as an ambulance took him away.

Cahill wrote that he found that key parts of Thao's testimony, and his justifications for his actions, were "not credible."

The judge wrote that under Minneapolis Police Department policies, "it was objectively unreasonable to (among other things): encourage fellow officers to engage in a dangerous prone restraint for 9 minutes and 24 seconds; encourage those officers not to use a hobble; actively assist their restraint by acting as a 'human traffic cone'; and prevent bystanders from rendering medical aid."

"Thao's actions were even more unreasonable in light of the fact that he was under a duty to intervene to stop the other officers' excessive use of force and was trained to render medical aid," the judge added.

In keeping with an agreement between the prosecution and defense, Cahill dismissed a more serious

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 72 of 79

aiding and abetting second-degree murder count with a presumptive sentence of 12 1/2 years.

Vice President Kamala Harris and others have called for reviving the the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act this year after it stalled in the Senate amid Republican opposition in 2020 and 2021. The legislation aims to eliminate misconduct, racial discrimination and excessive force in policing nationwide. It would ban the use of chokeholds and end the "qualified immunity" that protects officers from lawsuits, among other things.

\_\_\_ For more of AP's coverage on the death of George Floyd: <https://apnews.com/hub/death-of-george-floyd>

## Apple, Google partner to combat creepy tracking tactics

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Apple and Google are teaming up to thwart unwanted tracking through Bluetooth devices that were created to help people find lost keys, keep tabs on luggage or to locate other things that have a tendency to be misplaced or lost.

The two companies behind the iPhone and the software that powers Android phones on Tuesday submitted a proposal to set standards for combatting secret surveillance on Apple's AirTag trackers and similar gadgets. The concept also has the backing of Samsung, which sells the most Android smartphones worldwide, as well as tracking products similar to the AirTag such as Tile, Chipolo, and Pebblebee.

The \$30 AirTag has become a popular item since its 2021 release, helping users pinpoint the locations of a wide variety of lost property. But stalkers have also deployed AirTags and similar products to shadow former love interests and other people who don't realize they are being tracked.

"Bluetooth trackers have created tremendous user benefits, but they also bring the potential of unwanted tracking, which requires industrywide action to solve," said Dave Burke, Google's vice president of Engineering for Android.

Apple and AirTag hope to have a plan in place by the end of this year to thwart stealth tracking. The solution would be distributed through software updates to iPhones and Android phones.

Erica Olsen, the senior director of National Network to End Domestic Violence's Safety Net Project, applauded the effort to set an industry standard that she believes will help protect survivors of abusive relationships and other people that have been targets of stealth technology. "These new standards will minimize opportunities for abuse of this technology and decrease the burden on survivors in detecting unwanted trackers," Olsen said.

## No cancer risk found at nuclear bases so far, Air Force says

By TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A review of a Montana nuclear missile base where an unusual number of troops have been diagnosed with blood cancer has found no current risk factors that could explain it, the Air Force says.

The service has been investigating the issue since reports surfaced in January of at least nine missileers who had served at Malmstrom Air Force Base who were diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma. In the months since, more than 30 cancer cases at Malmstrom and the nation's other nuclear missile facilities, including F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming, Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota and Vandenberg Air Force Base in California have come to light.

But the medical review found that "overall, there were no factors identified that would be considered immediate concerns for acute cancer risks," the Air Force's 711th Human Performance Wing said in a report obtained by the Associated Press.

"Additionally, there was nothing specifically noted at Malmstrom's main base or operational missile sites that would indicate a specific reason for increased cancer," the report said.

The findings by the Air Force — which do not mean it will stop investigating the issue — are bringing both frustration and renewed grief to the families whose service members are fighting cancer, or have already died.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 73 of 79

But some also hope a spotlight on the issue will at least result in the Air Force carrying out a full cancer study of all the men and women who have worked with the nation's nuclear warheads, and hopefully an easier path to medical care.

Rhonda Wesolowski's son Air Force Capt. Jason Jenness was a senior missile launch officer in the 1990s with the now-deactivated 564th missile squadron at Malmstrom. He died from non-Hodgkin lymphoma in 2001 at the age of 31.

Even back then, his mother says, she was concerned his cancer had to do with his service, "and his friends were concerned, because there were rumors." But when she reached out to the Air Force, "I got a form letter," she said. To her, the letter left her feeling that the cancers were "being swept under the rug."

Her son, Jason Jenness, died five months after his diagnosis.

"I knew it was too big. Too big a fight," she said of trying to push the Air Force to figure out why her son and other missileers were getting sick. "I still think it's too big a fight. I'm very happy that there's some spotlight being put on it, because then it will make people more aware, and kids who are going into the service may ask more questions, and it may help in that regard."

Jeff Fawcett Jr.'s father also served with 564th missile squadron at Malmstrom, from 1988 to 1992. He died in 2016 at Walter Reed Army Medical Center of acute lymphoblastic leukemia and chronic myelomonocytic leukemia, both types of blood cancers. He was 56.

Jeff Fawcett Sr. served for 25 years — and if he was alive now, "would never be able to bring himself to the conclusion" that his missileer service might have been connected to his cancer, his son said. "He loved the military," Fawcett Jr. said.

But the son is hoping the Air Force will do more to look for possible causes. Because the elder Fawcett served a 20-year military career, he received lifetime military medical care. Walter Reed doctors said his six-month battle could have cost more than \$1 million if the family had to go through a private hospital and insurance, Fawcett Jr. said.

"His care didn't bankrupt my family," the son said. "But what if you're a young lieutenant who did four years and got out, and 15 years later you have an awful blood cancer and you are paying God knows how much?"

Missileers are young military officers who monitor, operate and stand ready to fire the nation's nuclear warheads — sitting alert in underground launch control centers for shifts that can last from 24 to 48 hours.

But both the launch control centers and the missile silos they oversee were built more than 60 years ago. In the decades since, as the facilities have aged, former and current missileers have worried about asbestos in the hardened facilities, about ventilation of the air they have breathed from old duct systems while underground, about the water they have drunk and emissions from equipment they used.

The review did make recommendations to address some of those concerns, including that the Air Force consider a deep clean of each launch control center, that it clearly mark safe boundaries for radio frequency sources, and to cease the practice of burning classified documents while locked inside the launch control center.

The Air Force is committed to continuing to investigate the issue and will conduct an epidemiological study of cancers within the missile community, the service said.

To conduct the initial review, the Air Force sent medical teams to Malmstrom, to F.E. Warren and to Minot from Feb. 27 to March 7 to talk to crews and assess each facility.

Dean Shockley was a young enlisted man at Malmstrom serving in the base's 341st maintenance group, where he worked on the missile silos from 1987 to 1989 — the same time frame that Fawcett Sr. was an officer there. In 2022, also at the age of 56, Shockley was diagnosed with an inoperable glioblastoma, a brain tumor.

Shockley, like most enlisted members, did not serve a full 20-year military career. He left after five years of military service.

It took his wife Garlanda Shockley "a month of constant calls daily, several times a day" to get the Department of Veterans Affairs to cover some of the medical costs, she said. Their insurance to date has covered most of the rest. But the potential that the coverage could stop, and the costs that would create,



weighs on her.

"I have so much to worry about, I would like to know that he is cared for," Garlanda Shockley said.

## **Scooby doobie don't: Discarded joints pose hazards for dogs**

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Bondi, an 8-month-old toy poodle, had just returned from a walk when he began stumbling. His head wobbled and soon he could barely stand, so his owner, Colleen Briggs, rushed him to the vet.

The good doctor quickly made a diagnosis: Bondi was stoned.

On his walk, a sniff must have led Bondi to a discarded joint, which he ate.

"He was just doing his usual — exploring everything, sniffing everything," said Briggs, who began to notice the pot shops sprouting up around New York City, the frequent whiffs of marijuana while circling her Manhattan neighborhood and the unfinished joints now littering sidewalks.

In places like New York City, where the first legal recreational pot dispensary opened last year, users can smoke it in the open. As a result, more dogs are coming across — and eating — discarded joints and edibles, prompting alarm among veterinarians and pet owners who blame the steep rise in poisonings on smokers oblivious to the harm they can do by littering.

Marijuana poisonings, which are almost never fatal, were once rare among pets, even when medical dispensaries started opening, according to Dr. Amy Attas, a New York City veterinarian. Until recently, many occurred at home, when pets got into their owners' stashes.

"The reason we're seeing so many cases is that people are using marijuana on the street and then discarding the unwanted ends of their joints," Attas said. "And that's a real problem because dogs will eat those."

In the first three months of the year, she had already seen six cases, which is about the same number she's treated over the past three decades. Multiply that by the number of vets working in New York City, she said, and the result underscores the widening problem.

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals said cases are rising nationwide. Last year, there was an 11% increase from the roughly 6,200 cases reported in 2021, and over the past five years, there has been a 300% increase.

"To me, it is unbelievable how prevalent this now is," said Attas.

Twenty-one states have legalized the recreational use of cannabis, and in large urban areas like New York, there's no escaping the whiff of pot in public.

In many cases, owners are unaware that their dogs have eaten a leftover joint until they begin showing signs of toxicity. Even then, owners might not understand what is ailing their pets.

Sue Scott was in a panic when her 9-month-old fawn pug, Circe, collapsed after a recent walk. Circe's paws splayed out on the floor, her head shook to-and-fro and she drooled.

"A million things were running through my head," said Scott, 68. Marijuana poisoning was not among them. "I would never had thought that," she said.

Scott made a video call to Dr. Attas, who said Circe was showing all the signs of being high. She now keeps Circe on a shorter leash, mindful of where she pokes her nose.

"I don't know if you know pugs — they're constantly on the lookout for their next morsel," said Scott, who has owned four other pugs, none of whom ever returned home stoned. "But sometimes it's pretty tough to control them because they are so fast. They'll just dart at something."

Although dogs rarely die from marijuana poisoning, treatment can be expensive, sometimes requiring a trip to the animal emergency room, a stomach pump and intravenous fluids.

The stress on the patient and its owner is also enormous.

Bondi has been poisoned three times, the first time last fall, said his owner, Briggs.

Even as Briggs grew more vigilant when walking her pup, she acknowledged that she must have gotten distracted when Bondi became sick a second time. That time, she let Bondi ride out his high.

"Walking him ... it's just a really intense situation. So I'm always looking on the ground, and it's just

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 75 of 79

everywhere now," she said of the spent joints that she and Bondi come across on walks.  
"One time," Briggs said, "I caught him and grabbed it out of his mouth."

## Crown comes to Parliament in pre-coronation Charles visit

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Before the glory of his coronation weekend, King Charles III visited Parliament Tuesday, to get a reminder that the monarch's power has limits.

Charles and Camilla, the queen consort, attended a reception for lawmakers, most of whom haven't been able to snag a ticket to Saturday's coronation ceremony at Westminster Abbey. The royal couple also had the chance to see a 300-year-old gilded coach that ferried the speakers of the House of Commons to coronations and royal weddings.

But not anymore. On Saturday, the carriage will remain in Parliament's Westminster Hall, where it's on public display. Commons Speaker Lindsay Hoyle will walk the few hundred yards (meters) to the abbey for the coronation, clad in full ceremonial dress including lace jabot and cuffs, and preceded by a sergeant-at-arms carrying the ornamental mace from the House chamber.

Hoyle said the presence of the mace "shows, this is the elected House, represented."

"Constitutionally, it is so important the elected House is represented as we see the monarch being crowned," he said ahead of Tuesday's royal visit.

While Britain's elected lawmakers take a back seat during royal events, the monarch faces restrictions in Parliament.

The king can visit Westminster Hall – the oldest part of the Houses of Parliament, remnant of the medieval palace that once stood here – but may not enter the House of Commons. Ever since King Charles I tried to arrest lawmakers in 1642 and ended up deposed, tried and beheaded, the monarch has been barred from the Commons chamber.

The Speaker's State Coach tells its own story.

Built after the 1689 "Glorious Revolution," when Parliament asserted its rights over the monarchy, the coach features a mix of royal and parliamentary symbolism. A painted panel on its side shows the monarch being presented with Magna Carta and the Bill of Rights, pillars of Britain's democratic system.

"That is a reminder to the royal family and others: That is what we fought for. That is what we expect," Hoyle said.

While the monarch still formally gives assent to every piece of legislation, Hoyle said he had "never known the monarch to object to what the House of Commons does."

"I never, ever see that happening," he said. "What I see is a grown-up recognition of democracy in this country, that we still have a monarch that plays his part."

The speaker's coach – slightly smaller than the Gold State Coach that Charles will use on coronation day – took previous speakers to the coronations of George V, George VI and Queen Elizabeth II. Its last official outing was for Charles' wedding to Princess Diana in 1981.

It has spent the past decade in a carriage museum in southwest England, and has now returned to Westminster, a reminder of links between Parliament and crown.

Inside the speaker's official residence on the grounds of Parliament is another: the State Bed, where monarchs traditionally slept on the night before their coronations. The last to do so was King George IV in 1821. Hoyle said Charles would be welcome to use it.

"If he wants to stay on the night of the coronation, the bed is made up," he said.

## Folk singer-songwriter Gordon Lightfoot dies at 84

TORONTO (AP) — Gordon Lightfoot, the folk singer-songwriter known for "If You Could Read My Mind" and "Sundown" and for songs that told tales of Canadian identity, died Monday. He was 84.

Representative Victoria Lord said the musician died at a Toronto hospital. His cause of death was not immediately available.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 76 of 79

One of the most renowned voices to emerge from Toronto's Yorkville folk club scene in the 1960s, Lightfoot recorded 20 studio albums and penned hundreds of songs, including "Carefree Highway," "Early Morning Rain" and "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald."

In the 1970s, Lightfoot garnered five Grammy nominations, three platinum records and nine gold records for albums and singles. He performed in well over 1,500 concerts and recorded 500 songs.

He toured late into his life. Just last month he canceled upcoming U.S. and Canadian shows, citing health issues.

"We have lost one of our greatest singer-songwriters," Prime Minister Justin Trudeau tweeted. "Gordon Lightfoot captured our country's spirit in his music – and in doing so, he helped shape Canada's soundscape. May his music continue to inspire future generations, and may his legacy live on forever."

Once called a "rare talent" by Bob Dylan, Lightfoot has been covered by dozens of artists, including Elvis Presley, Barbra Streisand, Harry Belafonte, Johnny Cash, Anne Murray, Jane's Addiction and Sarah McLachlan.

Most of his songs are deeply autobiographical with lyrics that probe his own experiences in a frank manner and explore issues surrounding the Canadian national identity. "Canadian Railroad Trilogy" depicted the construction of the railway.

"I simply write the songs about where I am and where I'm from," he once said. "I take situations and write poems about them."

Lightfoot's music had a style all its own. "It's not country, not folk, not rock," he said in a 2000 interview. Yet it has strains of all three.

"The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald," for instance, is a haunting tribute to the 29 men who died in the 1975 sinking of the ship in Lake Superior during a storm.

While Lightfoot's parents recognized his musical talents early, he didn't set out to become a renowned balladeer.

He began singing in his church choir and dreamed of becoming a jazz musician. At age 13, the soprano won a talent contest at the Kiwanis Music Festival, held at Toronto's Massey Hall.

"I remember the thrill of being in front of the crowd," Lightfoot said in a 2018 interview. "It was a stepping stone for me..."

The appeal of those early days stuck and in high school, his barbershop quartet, The Collegiate Four, won a CBC talent competition. He strummed his first guitar in 1956 and began to dabble in songwriting in the months that followed. Perhaps distracted by his taste for music, he flunked algebra the first time. After taking the class again, he graduated in 1957.

By then, Lightfoot had already penned his first serious composition — "The Hula Hoop Song," inspired by the toy that was sweeping the culture. Attempts to sell the song went nowhere so at 18, he headed to the U.S. to study music for a year. The trip was funded in part by money saved from a job delivering linens to resorts around his hometown.

Life in Hollywood wasn't a good fit, however, and it wasn't long before Lightfoot returned to Canada. He pledged to move to Toronto to pursue his musical ambitions, taking any job available, including a position at a bank before landing a gig as a square dancer on CBC's "Country Hoedown."

His first gig was at Fran's Restaurant, a downtown family-owned diner that warmed to his folk sensibilities. It was there he met fellow musician Ronnie Hawkins.

The singer was living with a few friends in a condemned building in Yorkville, then a bohemian area where future stars including Neil Young and Joni Mitchell would learn their trade at smoke-filled clubs.

Lightfoot made his popular radio debut with the single "(Remember Me) I'm the One" in 1962, which led to a number of hit songs and partnerships with other local musicians. When he started playing the Mariposa Folk Festival in his hometown of Orillia, Ontario that same year, Lightfoot forged a relationship that made him the festival's most loyal returning performer.

By 1964, he was garnering positive word-of-mouth around town and audiences were starting to gather in growing numbers. By the next year, Lightfoot's song "I'm Not Sayin'" was a hit in Canada, which helped spread his name in the United States.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 77 of 79

A couple of covers by other artists didn't hurt either. Marty Robbins' 1965 recording of "Ribbon of Darkness" reached No. 1 on U.S. country charts, while Peter, Paul and Mary took Lightfoot's composition, "For Lovin' Me," into the U.S. Top 30. The song, which Dylan once said he wished he'd recorded, has since been covered by hundreds of other musicians.

That summer, Lightfoot performed at the Newport Folk Festival, the same year Dylan rattled audiences when he shed his folkie persona by playing an electric guitar.

As the folk music boom came to an end in the late 1960s, Lightfoot was already making his transition to pop music with ease.

In 1971, he made his first appearance on the Billboard chart with "If You Could Read My Mind." It reached No. 5 and has since spawned scores of covers.

Lightfoot's popularity peaked in the mid-1970s when both his single and album, "Sundown," topped the Billboard charts, his first and only time doing so.

During his career, Lightfoot collected 12 Juno Awards, including one in 1970 when it was called the Gold Leaf.

In 1986, he was inducted into the Canadian Recording Industry Hall of Fame, now the Canadian Music Hall of Fame. He received the Governor General's award in 1997 and was ushered into the Canadian Country Music Hall Of Fame in 2001.

## Bride dies at beach when speeding DUI driver slams golf cart

FOLLY BEACH, S.C. (AP) — A bride leaving her wedding reception was killed when a woman driving under the influence and well over twice the speed limit slammed into the back of a golf cart on a South Carolina beach road, authorities said.

Data retrieved from Jamie Lee Komoroski's rental car indicated she was driving 65 mph (105 kph) and only briefly hit the brakes before she hit the golf cart around 10 p.m. Friday on Folly Beach, investigators said.

The speed limit on the island near Charleston is 25 mph (40 kph).

Samantha Miller, 34, of Charlotte, North Carolina, died in the wreck, according to the Charleston County Coroner's Office.

Miller had just got married hours earlier, Folly Beach Public Safety Department Director Andrew Gilreath said.

Three others in the golf cart including the groom were injured. Gilreath said the golf cart had lights and was legal to drive at night.

The groom's mother created an online fund to pay for her daughter-in-law's funeral and her son's medical bills. It included a photo of the newlyweds running under sparklers just before the crash.

It also had a photo of groom Aric Hutchinson in the hospital, where he was recovering from a brain injury and numerous broken bones after the golf cart rolled over several times and was thrown 100 yards (91 meters).

At the hospital, Annette Hutchinson wrote that she was handed a bag with her son's wedding band five hours after his now-dead wife put it on his finger.

Komoroski, 25, is charged with reckless vehicular homicide and three counts of driving under the influence causing death. She faces one to 25 years in prison on each DUI count.

Komoroski remained in the Charleston County jail Monday afternoon and records did not indicate if she had a lawyer.

## Today in History: May 3, Margaret Thatcher elected

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, May 3, the 123rd day of 2023. There are 242 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 78 of 79

On May 3, 1979, Conservative Party leader Margaret Thatcher was chosen to become Britain's first female prime minister as the Tories ousted the incumbent Labour government in parliamentary elections.

On this date:

In 1802, Washington, D.C., was incorporated as a city.

In 1937, Margaret Mitchell won the Pulitzer Prize for her novel, "Gone with the Wind."

In 1947, Japan's postwar constitution took effect.

In 1948, the Supreme Court, in *Shelley v. Kraemer*, ruled that covenants prohibiting the sale of real estate to Blacks or members of other racial groups were legally unenforceable.

In 1960, the Harvey Schmidt-Tom Jones musical "The Fantasticks" began a nearly 42-year run at New York's Sullivan Street Playhouse.

In 1987, The Miami Herald said its reporters had observed a young woman spending "Friday night and most of Saturday" at a Washington townhouse belonging to Democratic presidential candidate Gary Hart. (The woman was later identified as Donna Rice; the resulting controversy torpedoed Hart's presidential bid.)

In 2006, a federal jury in Alexandria, Virginia, rejected the death penalty for al-Qaida conspirator Zacarias Moussaoui (zak-uh-REE'-uhs moo-SOW'-ee), deciding he should spend life in prison for his role in 9/11; as he was led from the courtroom, Moussaoui taunted, "America, you lost."

In 2009, Mexican President Felipe Calderon told state television that a nationwide shutdown and an aggressive informational campaign appeared to have helped curtail an outbreak of swine flu in Mexico.

In 2011, Chicago's Derrick Rose became at age 22 the NBA's youngest MVP.

In 2015, two gunmen were shot and killed by a police officer in Garland, Texas, after they opened fire outside a purposely provocative contest for cartoon depictions of the Prophet Muhammad.

In 2016, in a stunning triumph for a political outsider, Donald Trump all but clinched the Republican presidential nomination with a resounding victory in Indiana that knocked rival Ted Cruz out of the race.

In 2018, a federal grand jury in Detroit indicted former Volkswagen CEO Martin Winterkorn on charges stemming from the company's diesel emissions cheating scandal. (Under Germany's constitution, he could not be extradited to the U.S. to face charges.)

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama cast Mexico as a nation ready to take "its rightful place in the world" and move past the drug battles and violence that had defined its relationship with the United States; the president then headed to Costa Rica, where he told a press conference he didn't foresee any circumstance requiring the U.S. to send ground troops into Syria. Gunmen killed Chaudhry Zulfikar, Pakistan's lead prosecutor investigating the assassination of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, as he drove to court in the capital.

Five years ago: President Donald Trump insisted that his reimbursement of a 2016 hush payment to porn actress Stormy Daniels had nothing to do with his election campaign. Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey signed a plan to give striking teachers pay raises totaling 20 percent, ending a six-day walkout. In a reversal, House Speaker Paul Ryan announced that the chaplain of the House of Representatives would stay in his job; Ryan had sparked an uproar when he asked the Rev. Patrick Conroy to resign and said he was dissatisfied with Conroy's pastoral care to lawmakers.

One year ago: President Joe Biden blasted as "radical" a leaked Supreme Court draft opinion throwing out the *Roe v. Wade* abortion rights ruling after 50 years. Chief Justice John Roberts said he had ordered an investigation into what he called an "egregious breach of trust." Russian forces began storming the steel mill containing the last pocket of resistance in Mariupol, just as scores of civilians who evacuated the bombed-out plant reached relative safety in Ukrainian-held territory. Ron Galella, a photographer known for his visceral celebrity shots and his dogged pursuit of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, who sued him and won a restraining order, died at age 91.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Frankie Valli is 89. Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho, is 80. Sports announcer Greg Gumbel is 77. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., is 74. Pop singer Mary Hopkin is 73. Singer Christopher Cross is 72. Rock musician David Ball (Soft Cell) is 64. Country singer Shane Minor is 55. Actor Amy Ryan is 55. Actor Bobby Cannavale (ka-nuh-VAL'-ee) is 53. Music and film producer-actor Damon Dash is 52. Country musi-

# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, May 3, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 299 ~ 79 of 79**

cian John Driskell Hopkins (Zac Brown Band) is 52. Country-rock musician John Neff is 52. Actor Marsha Stephanie-Blake is 48. TV personality Willie Geist (TV: "Today") is 48. Actor Christina Hendricks is 48. Actor Dule (doo-LAY') Hill is 48. Country singer Eric Church is 46. Actor Tanya Wright is 45. Dancer Cheryl Burke is 39. Soul singer Michael Kiwanuka is 36. Actor Zoe De Grand Maison is 28. Rapper Desiigner is 26.