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Groton Community Calendar

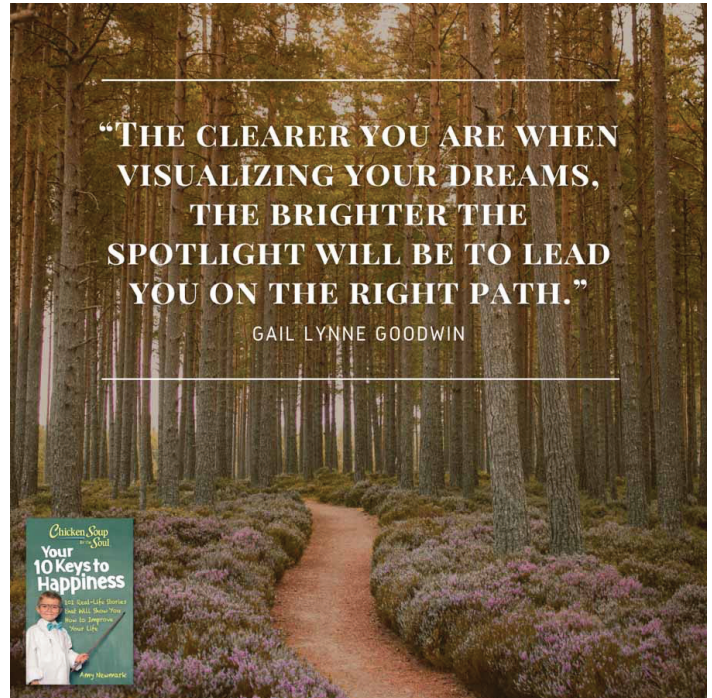
Friday, May 5

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.

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



“THE CLEARER YOU ARE WHEN
VISUALIZING YOUR DREAMS,
THE BRIGHTER THE
SPOTLIGHT WILL BE TO LEAD
YOU ON THE RIGHT PATH.”

GAIL LYNNE GOODWIN

Sunday, May 7

High School Baseball vs. W.I.N./Elkton at Elkton, noon.

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:30 a.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

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

St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m. (Graduation reception); worship with communion at Zion, 11 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion (Senior Milestones & Faith Forever Scholarship Awards), 9 a.m.; Sunday school, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

by Newsweek

JANUARY 24, 2023

World in Brief

- Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas came under fresh scrutiny after a report showed that a billionaire Republican donor paid private school fees for his grandnephew.
- North Carolina lawmakers approved a bill banning nearly all abortions after 12 weeks, a reduction from the current law allowing abortions up to 20 weeks. Gov. Roy Cooper pledged to veto the ban, calling it an "unacceptable attack" on women.
- Singer Ed Sheeran did not copy key elements of Marvin Gaye's 1973 hit "Let's Get It On" for use in his own 2014 song "Thinking Out Loud," a New York jury decided.
- The Treasury Department's Office of Investment Security is set to propose a rule change that would require foreign citizens and companies to seek government approval to buy property within 100 miles of eight military bases.
- Canada is considering the "expulsion" of Chinese diplomats after Beijing was accused of targeting a Canadian lawmaker and his family for his anti-China positions. Chinese Ambassador Cong Peiwu has denied the claims.
- The first test of U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservative party had a disastrous election night, losing more than 220 council seats as results continue to come in.
- In the ongoing war in Ukraine, explosions rocked Kyiv and Sevastopol in Crimea in suspected drone attacks, officials said. Meanwhile, Russia is holding more than 20,000 Ukrainian civilians hostage, according to the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights Dmytro Lubinets.

What to Watch in the Day Ahead

- Focus will shift from the Federal Reserve's rate decision to nonfarm payrolls data today, due at 8:30 a.m. ET. Economists expect payrolls to increase by 180,000 in April following a better-than-expected 236,000 increase in March. Consumer credit is expected at 3 p.m.
- Cinco de Mayo celebrations get underway to commemorate the Mexican Army's victory over the French Empire at the Battle of Puebla (1862).
- The moon passed into the outer shadow of the Earth, creating a penumbral eclipse today. The Blood Moon total lunar eclipse will be visible across North and South America as well as parts of Europe and Africa.
- The new Marvel film 'Guardians of the Galaxy Volume 3,' written and directed by James Gunn, releases in theaters.
- King Charles III's coronation takes place on Saturday at Westminster Abbey in London, formalizing the monarch's new title after ascending to the throne last September. The King will be crowned alongside Queen Consort Camilla. The ceremony will begin at 10 a.m. GMT/6 a.m. ET. Prince Archie, the first child of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, celebrates his 4th birthday on the same day.
- The Eta Aquarid meteor shower peaks between midnight and dawn on Saturday. NASA expects a "significant outburst" this year, with 120-160 meteors expected per hour in the Southern Hemisphere.
- Pussy Riot, a Russian feminist protest and performance art group, will be honored with the 2023 Woody Guthrie Prize in Tulsa. Following the ceremony, the group will perform a multimedia show marking their U.S. debut.
- The 149th running of the Kentucky Derby will take place Saturday evening at Churchill Downs in Lexington. Excitement for this year's race has dimmed after four horses died while racing or training at Churchill Downs over the last week, a series of tragedies the track is investigating.

- Prosecutors investigating Donald Trump's handling of classified documents issued new subpoenas and have reportedly obtained confidential cooperation from a Mar-a-Lago insider who provided pictures of a storage room where documents may have been held.

- The Arizona Supreme Court sanctioned Kari Lake's attorneys, ordering them to pay \$2,000 for making "false factual statements to the Court" that more than 35,000 ballots were improperly added to the total vote count in Maricopa County.

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GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

School Board Meeting

May 8, 2023 – 7:00 PM – GHS Library Conference Room

AGENDA:

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

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of April 10, 2023 and April 24, 2023 school board meetings.
2. Approval of April 2023 District bills for payment.
3. Approval of April 2023 Financial Report, Agency Accounts, and Investments.
4. Approval of April 2023 School Lunch Report.
5. Approval of April 2023 School Transportation Report.

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Continued required review of COVID-19 Learn On Plan.
3. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Preliminary FY2024 Budget.
2. First reading of recommended Job Descriptions for School Nurse and Athletic Director.
3. Approve open enrollment applications #24-01, #24-02, #24-04, #24-05, #24-06, #24-07, #24-08, #24-09, #24-10, #24-12, #24-13.
4. Approve 2023-2024 teacher contracts.
5. Approve hiring Jordan Carson, JH Football Coach, for 2023-2024 school year at 5% of base salary.
6. Approve hiring Alexa Schuring, Athletic Director, for the 2023-2024 school year at 22.5% of base salary.
7. Approve hiring Chantel Duerre, MS/HS Special Education Teacher, for the 2023-2024 school year with salary to be published in July.
8. Issue 2023-2024 auxiliary staff work agreements.
9. Cast ballot for SDHSAA Board of Directors Large School Board of Education Member.
10. Cast ballot for SDHSAA Board of Directors Division III Representative.
11. Cast ballot for SDHSAA Constitutional Amendment #1.
12. Cast ballot for SDHSAA Constitutional Amendment #2.
13. Executive session pursuant SDCL 1-25-2(4) negotiations and SDCL1-25-2(1) personnel.
14. Approve 2023-2024 GTA Negotiated Agreement and 2023-2024 amended teacher contracts.
15. Approve summer employment agreements:
 - a. Connect 4Ed Summer School
 - b. Special Education Extended School Year
 - c. Summer Library
 - d. Summer Custodial
16. Issue off-staff extra-curricular agreements for 2023-2024.

ADJOURN

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Guthmiller places fourth at Roncalli Golf Meet

The Groton Area girls golf team took part in its first meet of the year, Thursday, at Lee Park in Aberdeen. Carly Guthmiller placed fourth with a score of 88, Mia Crank was 12th with a 96, Shaylee Peterson was 17th with a 99, Carlee Johnson was 21st with a 105 and Carly Gilbert was 22nd with a 108. Overall, Groton Area placed third with a score of 388.

Gov. Noem Signs Executive Order Banning Tencent

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Noem signed Executive Order 2023-06 banning Tencent Holding, Ltd. (“Tencent”) for state government agencies, employees, and contractors using state devices. Tencent is a China-based technology and media conglomerate, is one of the world’s largest companies, and poses similar cybersecurity risks to South Dakota as ByteDance and TikTok. Photos of Governor Noem signing the Executive Order can be found [here](#).

“My number one responsibility as Governor is to keep the people of South Dakota safe. South Dakota started the movement that has swept the country to ban TikTok on government devices,” said Governor Noem. “Now, I am extending that ban to Tencent and other Chinese companies that are threats to our security.”

This Executive Order bans the downloading or use of any application or visiting of any website owned or controlled by Tencent Holdings, Ltd. on state devices, networks, etc. by:

Employees of the State of South Dakota;
Agencies of the State of South Dakota; and,
People or entities who contract with the State of South Dakota, including any state agency, commission, or authority agents thereof.

This Executive Order also gives the Commissioner of the Bureau of Information and Telecommunications the power to ban any other application, website, platform, service, or product whose use or access would be detrimental to state security in the same way as Tencent and Bytedance. The Commissioner will keep a publicly accessible list of entities banned under this Executive Order and Executive Order 2022-10.

South Dakota Department of Health Launches New Immunization Information System in Partnership with STChealth

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Health (DOH), in partnership with STChealth, has announced the launch of its new Immunization Information System (SDIIS), a leading provider of health information technology solutions. The new system will improve immunization reporting and coverage throughout the state, making the lives of public health officials, immunization providers, and local communities easier.

“We are excited to launch this brand new system in South Dakota as it will continue to enhance the way we report and track immunizations in South Dakota,” said Cabinet Secretary Melissa Magstadt. “Our partnership with STChealth brings this cutting-edge technology to our state to ensure quality assurance, the highest level of secured data, and ease of use while working to improve and prove awareness on immunization rates.”

The SDIIS is a web-based system that allows healthcare providers to securely report and track immunization records for their patients, reducing the potential for missed immunizations and helping ensure that South Dakota residents receive timely and appropriate vaccinations. The system will also provide DOH with real-time data on immunization coverage rates, allowing the department to quickly identify areas of the state where immunization rates are low and take action to improve vaccination rates.

“We are honored to partner with the South Dakota Department of Health on this important initiative,” said Michael Popovich, CEO of STChealth. “Our goal is to help healthcare providers deliver the best possible care to their patients, and the SDIIS will be an important tool in achieving that goal.”

The launch of the SDIIS is a significant milestone in DOH’s efforts to not only improve immunization reporting and coverage throughout the state but promote the health and wellness of all South Dakotans. With the help of STChealth’s technology, South Dakota residents can look forward to a more efficient, effective, and responsive immunization system.

For more information about the South Dakota Department of Health please visit <https://doh.sd.gov>.

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South Dakota Attractions Honored as “Best of the Midwest”

PIERRE, S.D. – Two South Dakota locations have made Midwest Living magazine’s third annual “Best of the Midwest” list.

Badlands National Park was named “Best National Park,” and Hotel Alex Johnson in Rapid City was named “Best Historic Hotel.”

Midwest Living magazine releases a special “Best of the Midwest” travel issue to celebrate the places that make the Midwest region so rich, promoting the locations and awards online and on their social media platforms.

“Badlands National Park and the Hotel Alex Johnson are beloved by South Dakotans and visitors alike, and it is an honor for them to be recognized by the well-known and respected Midwest Living magazine in this capacity,” said James Hagen, Secretary of Travel South Dakota.

Midwest Living magazine is a women's lifestyle, cooking and home magazine which features recipes, DIY projects, and Midwest travel inspiration.

For more information and to see all award winners, visit MidwestLiving.com.

The South Dakota Department of Tourism is comprised of Travel South Dakota and the South Dakota Arts Council. The Department is led by Secretary James D. Hagen.

BBB says simple passwords give crooks a master key into your finances

World Password Day falls on May 4 this year as an annual reminder of the importance of strong passwords. Much of our financial, social and recreational lives now depends on online transactions — and that means passwords galore. Your Better Business Bureau (BBB) reminds that a few simple keystrokes are all that stand between your most personal information and the untold number of crooks who work to gain entrance into your many accounts.

Yet, millions of Americans seem oblivious to the danger. Using simple and repetitive passwords, they're practically inviting thieves to hack their accounts and steal their money. Here's BBB's advice for securing your online accounts and keeping your finances safe with strong password management.

Strengthen those passwords!

These tips can make your passwords strong enough to rebuff many hackers:

- Instead of "passwords," think in terms of "passphrases." Make them long, strong, and complex. They should be at least 12 characters long. Avoid cliches such as "AnAppleDay." Go instead for a phrase with personal meaning to you, such as, "PlanetSpringsteenIsForMe." Make it less hackable by substituting characters: "Pl@netSpring\$teenIs4Me!"
- Don't use pets' names, relatives, maiden names, hometowns, birthdays, other significant dates, or anything that could be found out about you by an internet snoop.
- Never use easily guessed number sequences like "0000000" or "1234567."
- Dictionary words are easy for hackers to figure out.
- Don't make only slight changes in passwords across different accounts, such as adding a number to the end of a previously used password.

Password managers

Keeping track of passwords is a problem for many. That's where password management apps come in handy. These programs keep all your passwords stored in a "vault" that you can access with a single master password. BBB's advice for selecting a password manager:

- Ask friends which password manager they use and how they like it. Read up on the ones they suggest, searching for reviews of those apps.
- Some password managers only support certain types of devices, so be sure to check out whether the one you're considering works with yours.
- If you need to be able to share your password manager with family or friends, be sure there is a secure way to do so with the one you're considering.
- Look for ones that use multi-factor authentication (MFA). These use more than just a username and password, usually a passcode sent to your phone. All reputable apps should use MFA.
- Check out the features. Some will generate strong passwords for you, flag weak or duplicate passwords, and have autofill capabilities for online forms.
- Check how they handle lockouts. What happens if you forget your master password? See how your password manager would help you in such a case.
- Look for companies that have good customer service. If they only provide support through email, that could be a problem. You will need prompt phone or chat capabilities.
- Use the free trial offer to check them out before you sign up. You need a service that works on all your devices, is easy to use, and is secure.

Passwords can be a hassle and it's easy to just go for the quickest and easiest solution, often meaning you put off regularly changing them. Cybersecurity experts recommend you change them every three months and that you use a password management program. For answers to other questions you may have about your online passwords, check with BBB at (800) 856-2417 or visit our website at BBB.org.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Commission approves more out-of-state duck hunting licenses, despite opposition

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - MAY 4, 2023 7:04 PM

Some South Dakota duck hunters are upset over the Game, Fish and Parks Commission's Thursday decision to increase the number of duck hunting licenses available to hunters from outside the state.

The approved proposal allows for 100 more nonresident licenses, to be used on private land only, in two areas of the northeastern corner of the state. The proposal also allocates another 200 nonresident and resident licenses to a large area in western and southern South Dakota.

Resident hunter and former GF&P commissioner Jeff Olson spoke during a hearing on the proposal at Custer State Park. He alleged that Game, Fish and Parks Department leadership held a meeting with the owner of a private hunting operation prior to the department bringing the proposal forward.

"Just one guy went to Game, Fish and Parks, and here we have a proposal," Olson said. "No stakeholder involvement. They didn't have to come with a petition to the commission."

A spokesman for the department did not immediately respond to a South Dakota Searchlight message seeking a response to Olson's comments.

Department Wildlife Division Director Tom Kirschenmann was questioned at the meeting by Commissioner Stephanie Rissler about Olson's concern with "the process."

Kirschenmann said decisions regarding license allocations are not dependent on petitions from stakeholders.

"We don't bring together stakeholder groups for things like that," Kirschenmann said.

After hearing no proponent testimony and opposition from multiple hunters and the South Dakota Wildlife Federation, the commission unanimously approved the proposal.

Opponents argued that increasing nonresident license sales will exacerbate the already competitive nature of finding a duck hunting spot in northeastern South Dakota – hurting the experience of residents and nonresidents alike.

"It's already not good quality hunting for anybody, and they're going to add to that," retired GF&P wildlife biologist George Vandel told South Dakota Searchlight. "Frankly, it's a debacle up there."

Opponents asked the commission to postpone the decision for one year and work with stakeholders to put together a different plan.

"They should be passing a waterfowl access plan that helps all hunters, and residents," Vandel said. "We've got ideas, too."

Kirschenmann defended the proposal, pointing to declining resident participation. The number of resident duck hunters has fallen from about 25,000 to 11,000 since the late 1990s. The department is unsure what is driving the trend.

The department's arguments did not sway opponents.

"We know it's only 300 licenses, but it's a slippery slope for us," said Mitch Richter, a lobbyist for the South Dakota Wildlife Federation. "And we just don't think enough people were part of this."

Referencing disputes between landowners and hunters over access to land, Commissioner Robert Whitmyre said the reason fewer residents are duck hunting may be that resident hunters are not respecting landowners like him. He said the proposal to allow private hunting operators to sell more licenses to nonresidents could improve relations.

"If access is an issue, I can't help but identify that you reap what you sow," Whitmyre said.

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.

COMMENTARY

Tardiness in recognizing water needs could lead to 'unacceptable consequences'

SETH TUPPER

As recently as nine years ago, I thought Rapid City had enough water for decades to come.

I got that idea from covering an event in 2014 where then-Mayor Sam Kooiker spoke.

"Unlike many other cities in the West, Rapid City does not have a water supply problem," he said, adding that the city of 73,000 had "enough water in this area to serve more than 170,000 people."

Time and new developments have altered that impression.

Four years ago, I reported on a study commissioned by the West Dakota Water Development District. Experts at South Dakota Mines considered the broader Rapid City area and determined that the region had enough water for the next 100 years under average precipitation; however, the study also indicated that demand for water could already exceed supply during a prolonged drought.

That caught me — and I think a lot of other people — by surprise.

After all, the city's water supply includes Rapid Creek and the Deerfield and Pactola reservoirs in the Black Hills. From the looks of it, there's plenty of water.

But the city also uses wells, and the surface water ultimately depends on underground sources. Rapid Creek and its tributaries start as high-elevation springs in what's known as the Limestone Plateau region of the western Black Hills. The springs emanate from underground pockets of water called aquifers, and aquifers are not inexhaustible resources.

When wells dropped 'all around the Black Hills'

Mark Anderson made that last point abundantly clear at the Western South Dakota Hydrology Conference last month in Rapid City. He's the retired former director of the U.S. Geological Survey's Dakota Water Science Center.

During a presentation at the conference, Anderson said something notable happened between 2000 and 2007 to wells that pull from the Madison aquifer: their levels fell, anywhere from a few feet to more than 100 feet.

It's not unusual for well levels to fluctuate, especially as people use the water, and as varying levels of precipitation filter down to recharge aquifers. But this drop in well levels was interesting for a couple of reasons, Anderson said.

First, it happened during a period that was dry, but not historically so.

"I think most of us probably don't really think about it as really a significant drought," Anderson said.

Second, the phenomenon happened "all around the Black Hills." Anderson showed data reflecting drops of 134 feet in a well near Rapid City, 80 feet near Tilford, and 7 to 9 feet in the southern Black Hills.

The level of an observation well near one of Rapid City's underground water-supply sources dropped 37 feet and "was only about 10 feet from going pretty close to zero flow," Anderson said.

The wells have recovered since then, but Anderson said the lesson from the data is clear: "I don't think we should just think we can sustain the growth in the Black Hills area for the next 20 to 40 years on groundwater, without unacceptable consequences."

Anderson said he's "not saying the Madison is going to dry up." But he said the consequences could include drawing the aquifer down so far in the Black Hills that wells start pulling in much poorer-quality

water from the aquifer's eastern reaches.

Changing water needs

In another presentation, Jay Gilbertson, manager of the East Dakota Water Development District, framed water problems more broadly. He explained that for much of South Dakota's history since statehood, it consisted of water users with small needs — independent farmers and ranchers with their own (often poor quality) wells, small towns drawing from local rivers or lakes or aquifers, and small industries with moderate water needs.

In recent decades, those circumstances have changed. Farmers, ranchers and other rural residents have increasingly demanded water systems to improve the availability and quality of their water. As agriculture has consolidated and birthed factory farms, feedlots and ethanol plants, the industry's water needs have grown exponentially. The proliferation of housing developments in Sioux Falls and other cities has sent them searching for additional water sources.

And when South Dakotans need more water, they all eventually go to one place: the Missouri River and its vast reservoirs, the only source big enough to accommodate all the demand. The sprawling Mni Wiconi and Lewis & Clark pipelines are two of the best-known projects already capitalizing on the Missouri's largesse.

According to Gilbertson, projects like those are the model for the future.

"Where we're heading," he said, "is big, regional systems."

Multiple efforts to build additional Missouri River pipelines have recently gotten underway around the state, including the Western Dakota Regional Water System. The nonprofit sprang up in Rapid City from concern about the 2019 study I mentioned earlier.

Unfortunately, as we know from the examples of Mni Wiconi and Lewis & Clark, water pipelines are massive undertakings that require decades of lobbying, congressional funding and construction.

All of which is to say that nine years ago, when I got the impression from listening to Rapid City's then-mayor that there was no need for additional water supplies, the city and the region probably should have already been deeply involved in talks about a Missouri River pipeline.

As it is, current efforts got a late start, leaving open the possibility of those "unacceptable consequences" that Mark Anderson mentioned.

Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.

Rural lenders, crop insurance agents push for bolstered safety net at farm bill hearing

BY: ADAM GOLDSTEIN - MAY 4, 2023 5:50 PM

WASHINGTON — Rural bank executives and crop insurance agents testified at a Thursday Senate hearing in support of a modernized crop insurance market that helps upstart producers manage growing risks, and supports food security.

The witnesses told the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry that crop insurance represents one of the most important financial tools in the agricultural producer's toolbox. They added that efforts to weaken it or tie it to climate provisions in the farm bill would undercut the economies of rural America that depend on it.

"I would submit that it's the only viable risk management tool that our farmers have today," said William Cole, chairman of the Crop Insurance Professionals Association. "It's the underpinning of all of our rural communities, to a certain extent."

The federal crop insurance program, contained in Title XI of the farm bill, helps make insurance coverage available to farmers from private sector insurers to mitigate potential financial consequences of adverse growing and market conditions.

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The finance leaders argued that crop insurance premiums should be lowered to encourage greater participation, which would consequently decrease risk for all producers. They said that given farmers and ranchers are financially invested in the safety net, a strong crop insurance program is more economically efficient to American taxpayers than ad-hoc disaster relief.

The witnesses also testified in favor of increasing the payment limits and efficiency of the Department of Agriculture's guaranteed loan programs to keep up with rising farm operating expenses. They said that with rising interest rates, tax exemptions and loan flexibility will be key for farmers to meet their financial obligations.

The program offers insurance coverage for most field crops, many specialty crops, certain livestock and animals, and grazing lands. Outlays are estimated to be close to \$53.5 billion between 2018 and 2023 by the USDA Office of the Inspector General. This number does not account for the more than \$90 billion in ad-hoc emergency aid the USDA delivered to farmers in that same five-year period, mostly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The agency's farm credit and guaranteed loan programs are located in Title V of the farm bill, and are designed to help farmers access the financial credit they need to grow and sustain their farming operations, via direct loans and loan guarantees.

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

Ag business leaders defend crop insurance

The agriculture business leaders on the panel unanimously agreed on the need to maintain a robust crop insurance program, so producers can obtain lines of credit to expand operations, and maintain a functional safety net amid outdated reference prices for Title I commodity programs.

"I think it's extremely important to note that the coverage does not just help farmers recover after a natural disaster," Cole said. "It means so much more than that."

Gus Barker, a witness and the president and CEO of First Community Bank in Newell, Iowa, said that bank regulators insist borrowers have crop insurance to repay their loans, and it allows producers to qualify for operating loans with extremely tight margins and high risk.

James Korin, the president of NAU Country Insurance in Ramsey, Minnesota, said that it is more efficient for taxpayers to put money into the crop insurance program, where the farmer is shouldering some of the cost, than in ad-hoc aid.

Jason Meador, head of Rural Community Insurance Services, said that crop insurance is currently farmers' "first line of defense" against climate change, and has a track record of delivering assistance in a predictable and timely fashion compared to ad-hoc aid.

Korin and Meador both said integration of climate-related practices in the program must be incentive-based, "actuarially sound," and funded separately from the broader crop insurance program.

"It is important that the formula provides enough return to cover our costs, and a reasonable long-term rate of return on the billions of dollars of capital we invest," Korin said.

Republican Sen. John Hoeven of North Dakota asked what would happen if Congress attempted to weaken crop insurance through cuts.

"Without the safety net for our farmers and ranchers, grocery shelves could quickly empty after a bad growing season across America's heartland," Korin said.

"It's so important to our small rural communities, not just the farmers relying on it," Cole said. "These vendors here rely on it heavily — the tractor dealerships, the seed and chemical dealerships."

Republican Sen. John Boozman of Arkansas asked the panelists about the importance of crop insurance for producers in the face of high interest rates and inflation.

Phillip D. Morgan, a witness and the CEO of Southern AgCredit, said that as producers see their balance sheets decline with high input costs, the safety net crop insurance provides is a guarantee that they will

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be able to keep farming into the future.

Democrats worry about ag economy

Democrats on the committee asked panelists for their perspectives on the state of the agricultural economy and its structures, amid recent external shocks like bank failures and the risk of a national default if the debt ceiling is not raised.

Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand of New York asked if recent banking disruptions — fueled by three of the largest bank collapses in U.S. history — pose a risk to rural lenders and creditors.

Korin said that the change in the banking industry has “no doubt” affected the cost of capital for NAU Country Insurance, which has seen reinsurance costs go up 40%.

Jase Wagner, the president and CEO of Compeer Financial in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, said that financial risk to farmers from these bank failures is “not real acute right now.” Still, he said the aftershocks are something his company is monitoring with its district bank, AgriBank, to minimize risk for newer producers.

Sen. Debbie Stabenow of Michigan, the chair of the committee, asked how the availability of credit and interest rates on farm loans would be affected if the country were to default on its debts.

Morgan said that the rapid hikes in interest rates from the Federal Reserve have farm operators looking at operating loan interest rates twice that of the previous year, and could worsen. He said that while producers will feel the impacts of those cost increases, NAU Country Insurance is “well-equipped” to weather potential adversity.

Wagner added that the risk-free rate, linked to the cost for a bank to borrow money, would be adversely impacted by a default. He said the impacts would compound across loans for inputs like fertilizer and seed, and make it harder for producers to pay them off.

Barker said that his organization is pushing a bill in Congress that would exempt taxes on the interest of all rural agricultural loans and real estate in towns of 2,500 people or fewer, which would lower already-high rates by a measure of 1.5 to 2.5 percentage points.

“So it’s safe to say that no one thinks that the U.S. defaulting is a good idea for farmers and ranchers,” Stabenow asked, eliciting nods and chuckles from the panelists.

Increasing loan limits

The panelists also angled to increase loan payment limits on Farm Service Agency loans in Title V, noting that they have not kept pace with current prices.

Morgan cited that the cost of building a modern poultry house in Louisiana or Mississippi is up 37% from three years ago. He said that the Farm Credit Council supports an increase to a \$3.5 million limit for a building loan, which is currently at just over \$2 million, and a \$3 million limit for an operating loan.

Wagner said that in some cases, younger producers may get help from outside parties on the land loan, but not the operating loan, and with the rising costs of input and land, “you hit that limit real quickly.”

Barker said that while his organization “could live with those numbers,” they would like to keep it indexed with inflation to keep up in the future.

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.

U.S. default could begin June 8 without agreement, top economist tells Congress

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - MAY 4, 2023 4:00 PM

WASHINGTON — Unless Congress can strike a deal, the U.S. Treasury will likely default on the nation's bills starting June 8, triggering major consequences for the economy, according to Mark Zandi of Moody's Analytics.

The risk assessment organization's chief economist testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on the Budget Thursday and urged lawmakers to suspend the debt ceiling as soon as possible, and to ensure it is addressed long enough to make it to the other side of the 2024 presidential election.

Congress has eight working days with both chambers in session before Memorial Day, and negotiations appear non-existent. On Monday, President Joe Biden called Senate and House leaders and scheduled a White House meeting for May 9. Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy last met about the debt ceiling in early February.

"This is an especially inopportune time to have a political debate over the debt limit. Recession risks are uncomfortably high," Zandi warned lawmakers.

"I'd say a majority of economists, many CEOs and investors firmly believe that a recession is likely over the next 12 to 18 months. The economy is struggling with the increase in interest rates. The (Federal) Reserve raised rates again yesterday, they've raised rates over 5 percentage points, all (in) over a year. That's created tremendous pressure on the economy and of course on the banking system."

Zandi, and other witnesses, did not dispute that the U.S. is on an "unsustainable" spending path, but they pressed lawmakers to disentangle long-term work on reducing the nation's deficit from the immediate need to raise the debt limit.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, which is tasked with calculating costs and savings of federal legislation, projects a deficit of \$1.4 trillion in 2023 and \$2 trillion each year thereafter until 2033.

"We need both additional tax revenue and we need spending restraint. Both of those things need to happen, but we can't do that in the current environment. So this is not the time to do it," Zandi said. "We need to end this drama as quickly as possible. If we don't, we're going to go into recession and our fiscal challenges will be made even worse."

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen warned in a letter to lawmakers Monday that the country could meet its X-date, or default, as soon as June 1.

House vote

McCarthy, a California Republican, has vowed that his party will not raise the nation's borrowing cap without simultaneous budget reductions.

Republicans pushed through a debt ceiling bill April 26 by a slim margin, 217-215, to temporarily raise the limit by \$1.5 trillion or until March 31, 2024, whichever comes first.

They tied the measure to massive discretionary spending cuts and changes in federal programs, including dismantling new climate provisions passed in last year's Inflation Reduction Act and increasing work requirements for recipients of government food and medical benefits.

The bill largely received support from the bipartisan fiscal watchdog the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget — except for a provision to slash new Internal Revenue Service funding meant to increase tax revenue collection.

The CBO projected that the GOP's bill — titled the Limit, Save, Grow Act — would reduce the federal deficit by a projected \$4.8 trillion over the next decade.

Stalemate

Biden and Democrats have panned the bill, nicknaming it the Default on America Act, or DOA Act. They have pledged to refuse to negotiate on the legislation and liken it to taking the U.S. economy "hostage," as Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer repeated on the Senate floor Thursday.

Senate Democrats subtitled their Thursday panel as a hearing about "Blackmail, Brinkmanship and Bil-

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lionaire Backroom Deals.”

“MAGA Republicans’ dangerous bill proposes a terrible choice: Default on our financial obligations, cause widespread pain and wreck our economy. Or gut basic federal programs essential to our economic strength, cause widespread pain and wreck our economy,” said Budget Committee Chair Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island.

Democrats highlighted a recent Moody’s analysis that projects the GOP bill — when compared to a standalone bill to raise the debt ceiling — would slow the nation’s Gross Domestic Product and cost the economy 780,000 jobs by the end of next year.

“(The Limit, Save, Grow Act) entails significant cuts to government spending beginning in fiscal year 2024, which begins at the end of this year, right at the point in time when the economy is going to be most vulnerable to going into recession. By my calculation, the act will shave spending equal to about a half a percent of GDP in 2024. And that’s a half a percent that the economy does not have,” Zandi told the panel.

Ranking member Chuck Grassley of Iowa maintained that House Republicans “have acted responsibly” in passing their bill to address the debt limit and spending together.

“In contrast, President Biden and Biden Senate Democrats have sat idly by watching the clock get down to default by not thoughtfully engaging. They hope to avoid a substantive debate on a very serious fiscal issue,” Grassley said Thursday.

Minority Leader Mitch McConnell has so far stayed on the sidelines of the debate, reiterating this week that there is “no solution in the Senate.”

“The only solution is for presidential leadership. President Biden has been sleepwalking towards this crisis,” the Kentucky Republican said on the floor Wednesday.

The White House meanwhile has been hammering the talking points this week that McCarthy’s deal will threaten health care for 21 million Americans, potentially cut veterans’ benefits and pull 2,000 Customs and Border Patrol agents off the job.

“This President has not backed away. The problem is who you value in this country. Is it a special interest, or do you want to save (money) on the backs of people who can least afford it?” said Shalanda Young, director of the Office of Management and Budget, at the White House press briefing Thursday.

Finding a new path

Witnesses testifying before Thursday’s Senate panel also called for Congress to find an altogether new path for fiscal negotiations rather than repeating down-to-the-wire politically fraught fights each time the U.S. edges toward a fiscal cliff.

“It is critically important for the U.S. to avoid future debt ceiling brinkmanship,” said Jason Fitchner, the Bipartisan Policy Center’s vice president and chief economist.

The organization suggests a framework going forward to align the debt limit with the annual budget process along with an off-ramp to trigger a debt ceiling suspension if the U.S. comes within 60 days of reaching its statutory borrowing limit.

Congress has approved 102 separate adjustments to the debt ceiling since the end of World War II.

The body raised the debt ceiling three times under the Trump administration. Under Biden in December 2021, Congress increased the debt limit by \$2.5 trillion to \$31.38 trillion.

The U.S. hit its borrowing limit on Jan. 19, triggering the Treasury Department to invoke “extraordinary measures,” or special accounting maneuvers, to continue paying the nation’s bills.

Adding to its budgeting maneuvers, the Treasury has begun suspending the issuance of State and Local Government Series securities — special securities offered to state and local governments that count against the debt ceiling. The maneuver was also used in the 2014 and 2015 debt ceiling debates as a way to delay the U.S. from reaching its borrowing limit.

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

Bernie Sanders unveils push for \$17-an-hour federal minimum wage, citing state increases

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - MAY 4, 2023 1:46 PM

WASHINGTON — U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders on Thursday announced Democrats' plans to mark up legislation to increase the federal minimum wage to \$17 an hour, pointing to an increase in the cost of living.

Outside the U.S. Capitol, Sanders, a Vermont independent and chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, said the panel will vote June 14 on a bill that would increase the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour to \$17 an hour over a five-year period.

That goal is a \$2-an-hour increase from labor organizers' past campaign of "Fight for \$15."

"Frankly, it is embarrassing for us to be here today and have to talk about a reality where people need to work two or three jobs to put food on the table for the kids," Sanders said, surrounded by advocates for a higher minimum wage. "You have billionaires who don't know what to do with their money, buying yachts and going off into outer space, so the time is long overdue."

Sanders argued that the idea is popular regardless of party affiliation and cited Nebraska, a deep red state that approved an increase in the state minimum wage to \$15 an hour, and Florida, which leans red but has also passed an increase in its minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2026.

He said the U.S. Senate "is going to push it as quickly and hard as we can," but did not specify if it would be brought to the Senate floor for a vote. There is also the hurdle of the 60-vote threshold when Democrats have a slim 50-seat majority.

And with a Republican-controlled House, it's unlikely to be brought up by House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, a California Republican.

Heidi Shierholz, the president of the left-leaning Economic Policy Institute, said at the press conference that the economic impact of an increase to the federal minimum wage is one of the most-studied subjects in economics.

"The weight of that evidence shows that (when the) minimum wage increases, they raise the wages of our lowest wage-workers, they reduce inequality, they reduce poverty, they reduce child poverty, they reduce gender wage gaps, they reduce racial wage gaps because Black and brown workers, due to the broad impacts of structural racism on our labor markets, are disproportionately concentrated in the lowest-wage jobs," Shierholz said.

Workers in the South

Economic researchers have found that an increase to the federal minimum wage would particularly benefit low-income workers in the South.

A report from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office found that a boost to a \$15-an-hour wage by 2025 would nearly lift a million people out of poverty and more than 17 million workers would experience a wage increase by 2025.

Shierholz said because of inflation, a \$15 minimum wage isn't sufficient.

"So just to give you an idea, \$17 today has roughly the same purchasing power as \$15 did just two years ago," she said.

A 40-hour work week with a minimum wage of \$15 an hour comes out to an annual salary of about \$31,000, before taxes. That is just above the poverty line for a family of four, which is \$30,000. A 40-hour work week of \$17 an hour would come out to an annual salary of about \$35,000 before taxes.

"Mama Cookie" Bradley, a longtime labor organizer from Durham, North Carolina, who attended the press conference, said that a \$17-an-hour wage in her city would mean residents would be able to afford rent, food and child care costs.

"It would make life a lot more easier," she said.

Bradley said she's fighting for an increase in the federal minimum wage not only for herself, but for the next generation.

"They need it," she said, adding that her advice for the younger generation is to "keep fighting, keep

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unionizing and keep organizing.”

The last time the federal minimum wage was raised was in 2009, to \$7.25 an hour. Efforts to increase the federal minimum wage have stalled several times in Congress.

When Democrats held control in both chambers in 2021 they tried to include a gradual increase of the federal minimum wage in the \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief package through a process known as reconciliation that requires only a simple majority, but not all Senate Democrats were on board.

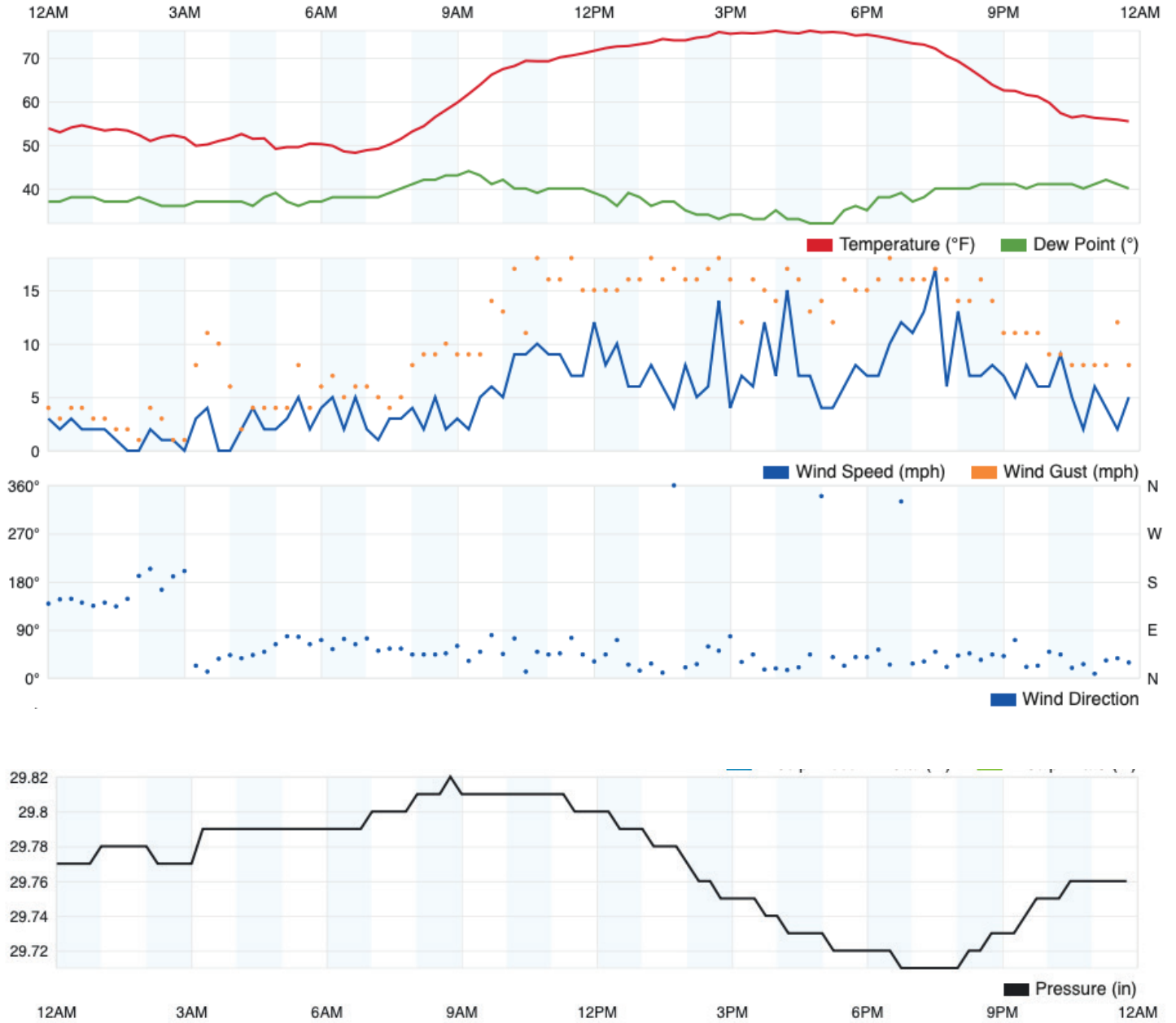
The Biden administration issued an executive order in April 2021 to raise the minimum wage for federal contract workers to \$15 an hour, which includes nursing assistants at Veterans Administration hospitals, maintenance workers, cleaning staff and food service workers.

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

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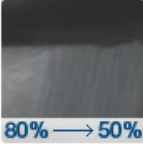



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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
						
Sunny	Partly Cloudy then Chance Showers	Showers and Breezy	Showers then Chance Showers	Slight Chance Showers	Slight Chance Showers	Chance Showers
High: 74 °F	Low: 49 °F	High: 59 °F	Low: 45 °F	High: 65 °F	Low: 43 °F	High: 68 °F

Warm With The Best Rain Chances Tonight Through Saturday Night, And Again By Thursday

Maximum Temperature Forecast

	5/5	5/6	5/7	5/8	5/9	5/10	5/11
	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu
Aberdeen	74	60	66	69	74	78	72
Britton	72	58	62	64	69	73	70
Brookings	71	68	70	70	73	76	72
Chamberlain	76	73	72	74	76	79	76
Eagle Butte	70	58	63	64	72	73	68
Eureka	71	56	63	68	72	75	70
Gettysburg	71	58	64	65	73	75	70
Huron	77	71	71	73	77	80	75
Kennebec	74	71	70	74	78	78	75
McIntosh	70	57	61	66	71	73	67
Milbank	71	63	67	69	72	76	72
Miller	72	64	67	69	75	77	72
Mobridge	76	61	66	71	76	78	73
Murdo	71	69	69	69	78	74	72
Pierre	77	69	70	71	76	77	75
Redfield	74	65	67	70	74	78	72
Sisseton	73	59	64	66	71	75	72
Watertown	70	64	67	68	72	75	70
Webster	68	58	62	64	69	73	68
Wheaton	70	57	62	64	69	73	70

*Table values in °F
 **Created: 4 am CDT Fri 5/5/2023
 ***Values are maximums over the period beginning at the time shown.

Minimum Temperature Forecast

	5/5	5/6	5/7	5/8	5/9	5/10	5/11
	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu
Aberdeen	42	50	44	44	45	49	54
Britton	39	45	43	43	45	49	54
Brookings	49	53	50	46	48	52	57
Chamberlain	51	54	47	47	48	52	55
Eagle Butte	46	49	44	44	47	50	53
Eureka	43	48	42	42	44	48	52
Gettysburg	40	48	43	43	45	49	52
Huron	47	53	46	46	48	51	55
Kennebec	49	53	45	45	47	50	54
McIntosh	40	48	43	43	45	48	52
Milbank	44	49	46	46	48	51	55
Miller	43	50	44	44	46	49	55
Mobridge	42	49	44	44	45	49	52
Murdo	49	51	45	46	47	50	54
Pierre	47	52	46	46	48	51	55
Redfield	45	51	44	44	46	49	54
Sisseton	47	49	47	47	48	51	55
Watertown	42	52	45	45	47	51	55
Webster	42	46	43	43	45	49	54
Wheaton	40	47	48	44	45	48	53

*Table values in °F
 **Created: 4 am CDT Fri 5/5/2023
 ***Values are minimums over the period beginning at the time shown.

Probability of Precipitation Forecast

	5/5		5/6		5/7		5/8		5/9		5/10		5/11	
	12am	12pm	12am	12pm	12am	12pm	12am	12pm	12am	12pm	12am	12pm	12am	12pm
Aberdeen	0	0	0	75	45	20	20	20	30	20	35	20	40	40
Britton	0	0	0	80	60	25	25	20	35	20	40	20	35	35
Brookings	20	5	35	80	35	25	15	15	25	20	25	25	30	30
Chamberlain	20	10	50	65	25	10	15	20	25	25	35	25	45	45
Eagle Butte	0	0	25	75	35	20	20	30	30	30	35	20	50	50
Eureka	0	0	5	70	50	30	20	25	35	30	40	20	45	45
Gettysburg	0	0	20	75	35	15	25	25	30	25	40	20	50	50
Huron	10	5	25	80	35	20	15	20	25	25	35	25	40	40
Kennebec	10	15	55	65	25	10	20	20	25	20	40	20	50	50
McIntosh	0	0	10	75	60	35	30	30	40	30	40	20	55	55
Milbank	0	0	20	70	50	20	20	15	30	20	35	25	30	30
Miller	10	0	15	75	35	15	20	25	30	25	40	25	45	45
Mobridge	0	0	15	75	45	25	20	25	30	25	35	15	45	45
Murdo	5	20	70	60	25	5	25	25	30	20	40	20	55	55
Pierre	5	0	40	75	25	10	25	25	30	25	40	20	55	55
Redfield	0	0	15	75	40	15	20	20	30	20	40	20	45	45
Sisseton	0	0	15	80	55	20	20	15	30	20	35	20	30	30
Watertown	0	0	15	80	40	25	20	20	30	20	35	25	30	30
Webster	0	0	5	80	50	20	20	20	35	20	40	20	35	35
Wheaton	0	0	10	75	60	20	20	15	30	20	35	20	30	30

*Table values in %
 **Created: 4 am CDT Fri 5/5/2023

Temperatures should average out to near normal or above normal throughout the seven day forecast. There are rain chances littered throughout the forecast. But, a good portion of the period will end up being dry. Right now, timing out the best chances for precipitation appears to be later tonight through Saturday night and then again much later this week.

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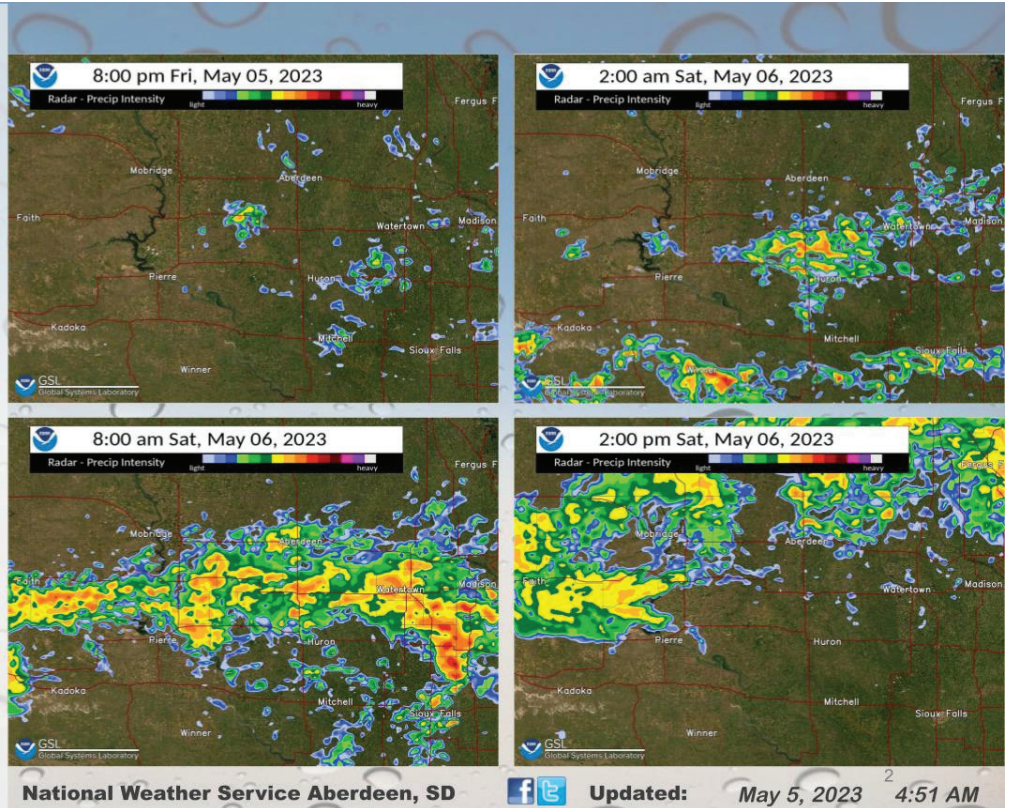
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Tonight Into Saturday:

An isolated shower or thunderstorm developing by early this evening, expanding and spreading north into Saturday.

Showers and thunderstorms exiting the area to the north by Saturday evening, with the potential for some additional rainfall moving up into the Missouri River valley Saturday night.



There should be a few showers and thunderstorms developing across the region by late this evening. Convection is then forecast to gradually increase in areal coverage on Saturday, while slowly spreading northward. It's possible for some additional showers and storms to develop out across portions of central and western South Dakota Saturday evening into Saturday night as well.

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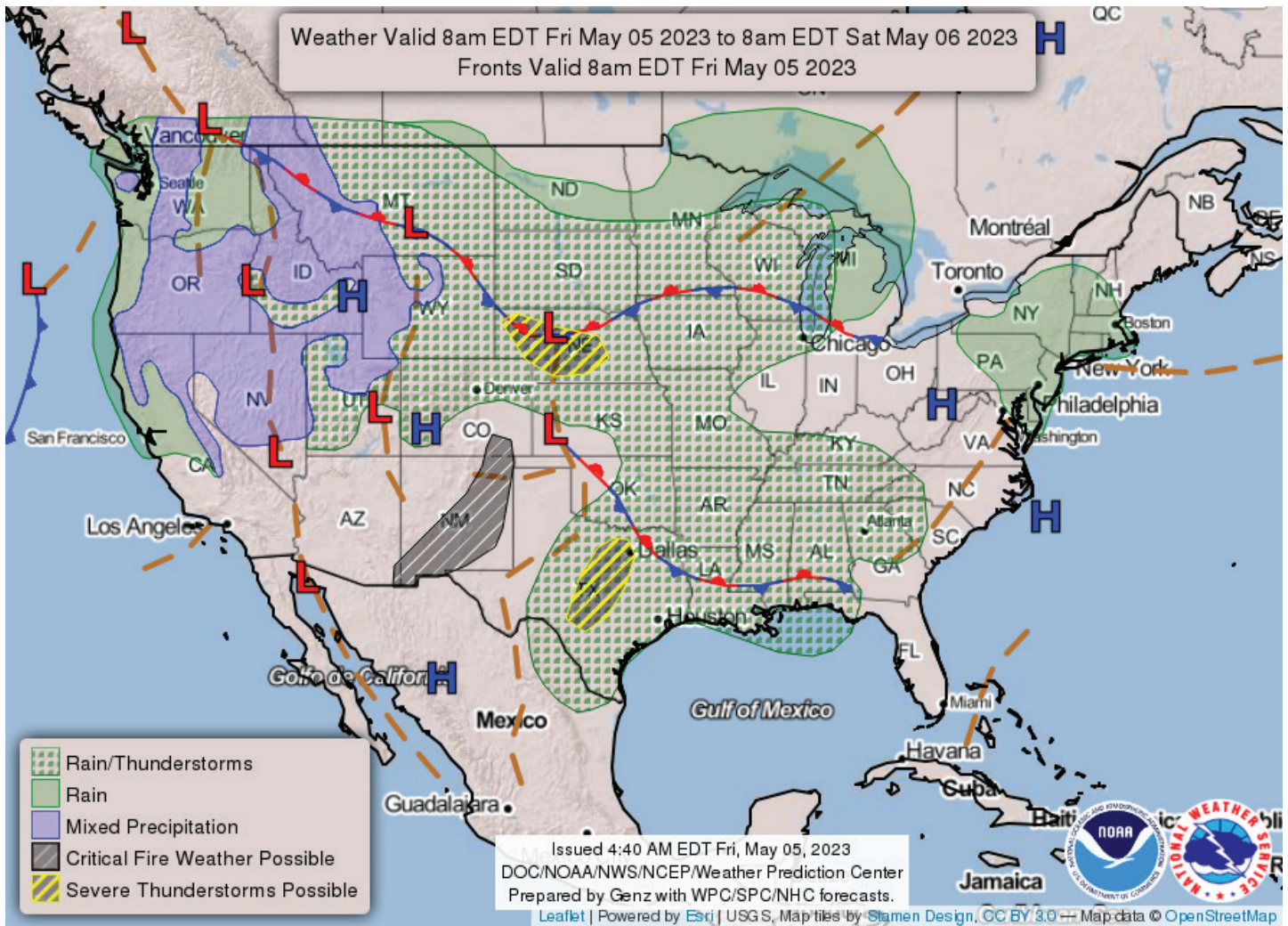
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 77 °F at 4:37 PM
Low Temp: 48 °F at 6:36 AM
Wind: 20 mph at 1:35 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 14 hours, 32 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 92 in 2000
Record Low: 24 in 1968
Average High: 66
Average Low: 39
Average Precip in May.: 0.54
Precip to date in May.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 4.51
Precip Year to Date: 5.72
Sunset Tonight: 8:45:15 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:11:31 AM



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Today in Weather History

May 5, 1964: A two-state, F3 tornado moved northeast from 4 miles WNW of Herreid to the south of Streeter, North Dakota, a distance of about 55 miles. Blacktop was ripped for 400 yards on Highway 10, five miles north of Herreid, South Dakota. Two barns were destroyed northeast of Hague, North Dakota, with a dozen cattle killed on one farm. The F3 damage occurred at one farm about midway between Wishek and Hogue. Other barns were destroyed south of Burnstad.

May 5, 1986: A tight pressure gradient produced winds over 60 mph in west central Minnesota. City officials in Browns Valley estimated a quarter of the city suffered damage. The roof of a grandstand was blown off and landed a quarter of a block away. Seventy-five homes and six businesses sustained roof damage. In nearby Dumont, Minnesota, the wind ripped a large grain bin off its foundation and tore open the top of another.

May 5, 2007: A north to south frontal boundary, powerful low-level winds, and abundant gulf moisture resulted in training thunderstorms across parts of central and northeast South Dakota. The training thunderstorms produced torrential rains from 3 to over 10 inches resulting in widespread flash flooding across Brown, Buffalo, Hand, Spink, Clark, Day, Marshall, and Roberts Counties. The counties of Brown, Buffalo, Clark, Day, Marshall, and Spink were declared disaster areas by President Bush. The Governor also declared a state of emergency for the flooded counties with Senator John Thune and Representative Stephanie Herseth surveying the flood damage. Eight damage assessment teams from local, state, and FEMA came to Brown and other counties.

Dozens of cities were affected by the flooding with several hundred homes, businesses, and countless roads affected and damaged or destroyed by the flooding. Aberdeen received the most extensive damage, especially the north side of Aberdeen. Seventy-five percent of the homes in Aberdeen received some water in their basements. Basement water levels ranged from a few inches to very deep water all the way up to the first floor of homes. Many homes had the basement walls collapse. The overwhelming load on the drainage systems caused sewage to back up into many homes across the region. Also, many vehicles stalled on the roads with many others damaged by the flooding. Power outages also occurred across the area. Many families were displaced from their homes with many living in emergency shelters. Countless homes were condemned across the region with many considered unlivable. Thousands of acres of crops were also flooded and damaged with many seeds, and large quantities of fertilizer washed away.

Rainfall amounts from this historic event included 3.65 inches in Miller, 3.82 inches in Britton, 4 inches in Eden, 4.47 inches in Andover, 4.90 inches in Webster, 5.68 inches west of Britton, 5.7 inches in Garden City, and 5.82 inches in Conde. Locations with 6 or more inches of rain included, 6 inches in Langford, 6.33 inches in Gann Valley, 6.72 inches in Clark, 7.41 inches in Ashton, 7.49 inches in Stratford, 7.55 inches near Mellette, 7.97 inches in Aberdeen, 8.02 inches in Redfield, 8.73 inches in Columbia, and 8.74 inches in Groton. The 8.74 inches of rainfall in Groton set a new 24-hour state rainfall record. Adding in the rainfall for the previous day, Aberdeen received a total of 9.00 inches; Columbia received a total of 10.19 inches; Groton received an astonishing two-day total rainfall of 10.74 inches.

1933: An estimated F4 tornado cut a 35-mile path from near Brent into Shelby County, Alabama. The town of Helena, AL was especially hard hit, as 14 people died. The tornado roared through Helena at 2:30 am.

1987: Unseasonably hot weather prevailed in the western U.S. A dozen cities in California reported record high temperatures for the date. Afternoon highs of 93 degrees at San Francisco, 98 degrees at San Jose, 100 degrees at Sacramento, and 101 degrees at Redding were the warmest on record for so early in the season. The high of 94 degrees at Medford, Oregon was also the warmest on record for so early in the season.

1995: A supercell thunderstorms brought torrential rains and large hail up to four inches in diameter to Fort Worth, Texas. This storm also struck a local outdoor festival known as the Fort Worth Mayfest. At the time the storm was the costliest hailstorm in the history of the US, causing more than \$2 billion in damage.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

ME, MY MOP, AND THE DOCTOR

Early one morning Jim Belasco, a noted writer, went to the Methodist Hospital in Houston, to interview the world-famous heart surgeon, Dr. Michael DeBakey. As he made his way toward the operating room, he met a custodian with a smile as large as life and singing happily with all his heart as he mopped the floor.

Curious to see such enthusiasm at such an early hour, the writer asked, "Why are you so happy?"

Came the quick reply, "Me and the Doc are going to save some lives today."

We all form partnerships for many different reasons. There are occasions when partnerships are formed for leisure activities or social events, and other times for work or special projects. But imagine a partnership that included a mop and a scalpel, a doctor and a janitor. Unbelievable! But that is what Paul had in mind when he said, "We work together as partners who belong to (and bring glory to) God!" Who's your partner?

Prayer: Father, May all our "partnerships" be formed with the simple purpose of pleasing You. May we join with others and work to honor You! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: For we are both God's workers. And you are God's field. You are God's building. 1 Corinthians 3:9



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

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2023 Community Events

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.02.23

3 15 16 32 41 9

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$68,000,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 2 Mins 25
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.03.23

8 9 31 43 44 1

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,700,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 2
DRAW: Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.04.23

8 9 13 19 43 17

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 15 Hrs 32 Mins 25
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.03.23

9 21 25 30 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$47,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 2
DRAW: Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.03.23

11 35 57 60 64 22

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 1
DRAW: Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.03.23

21 26 30 45 47 23

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$87,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 1
DRAW: Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the  Associated Press

Reporter charged with prank call using S.D. governor's cell

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A broadcast reporter has been charged with making a prank phone call using South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem's personal cellphone number.

Stanley County Sheriff Brad Rathbun said Austin Goss, who has been fired from his job as the capitol bureau reporter for Dakota News Now, surrendered Thursday and was released on a personal recognizance bond.

The misdemeanor count of making threatening, harassing, or misleading contacts carries a maximum penalty of one year's imprisonment and \$2,000 in fines.

Online court documents indicate that he is representing himself, and he didn't immediately respond to text or voicemail messages from The Associated Press seeking comment. Noem's spokesman, Ian Fury, declined to comment.

Dakota News Now and KOTA Territory News said in a joint statement that they had terminated Goss' employment with the stations, saying they were "unaware of Mr. Goss' activities and deeply regret the lack of judgment he showed."

The recipient of the "harassing phone call" was identified in the probable cause statement only as a 50-year-old with the initials D.L., The Argus Leader reported. But Dan Lederman, the former chair of the South Dakota Republican Party, confirmed to the paper that he was the one who was called on Jan. 22.

He had no further comment, but a special agent with the South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigation wrote in the statement that the call came from a website called PrankDial, which was able to make it appear as though it was coming from Noem's cellphone.

In the pre-recorded call, a mafia member angrily accuses the recipient of stealing boxes of vaccines, including lines like "You telling me you didn't tell Vito that you were gonna try to move the three boxes of that AstraZeneca outside this family?" The call ends "You've just been pranked by PrankDial.com."

Lederman told the investigator that Goss would "occasionally text him snide or rude remarks," and said the audio recording "caused him concern for his safety."

Noem announced one day after the call was made that she was urging the U.S. Attorney General and multiple congressional committees to investigate the leaking of her family's personal information, including her personal cellphone number.

The previous week, she demanded that the U.S. Department of Justice investigate why her family's social security numbers were leaked when Congress released its findings in the Jan. 6 investigation.

Officials with the U.S. Attorney General's office didn't immediately respond to messages from the Argus Leader or the AP about the new development.

Huskers set to play Oregon St. in basketball in South Dakota

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Nebraska will play Oregon State in a men's basketball game at the Sanford Pentagon on Nov. 18, the second time in five years the Cornhuskers have played in the venue.

Sanford Sports announced the matchup Thursday and said ticket information would be released later.

The Pentagon has hosted more than 80 Division I men's and women's basketball games since opening in 2013.

Nebraska defeated Oklahoma State 79-56 in front of a standing room-only crowd of 3,800 on Dec. 16, 2018. Oregon State will be making its first appearance at the building.

"We have a lot of alumni in the Sioux Falls area, so I expect there to be a lot of red and white in the crowd in November which will help make for a phenomenal atmosphere for a college basketball game," Nebraska coach Fred Hoiberg said.

Nebraska was 16-16 last season and returns four players who started at least 12 games. The Beavers were 11-21. Oregon State has won six of 10 all-time meetings with the Huskers.

"Sanford is an incredible partner and the Pentagon is an unbelievable facility bred for hoops," Oregon State coach Wayne Tinkle said. "Throw in the total support of the Sioux Falls community and this will prove to be a valuable experience for our program."

AP college basketball: <https://apnews.com/hub/college-basketball> and <https://apnews.com/hub/ap-top-25-college-basketball-poll> and https://twitter.com/AP_Top25

Iowa judge favors property owners in pipeline dispute

SPENCER, Iowa (AP) — Opponents of planned liquid carbon dioxide pipelines in the Midwest won a victory when an Iowa judge ruled that a state law that gives surveyors the right to enter private property is unconstitutional.

In his ruling Wednesday, District Judge John Sandy denied a pipeline company's request for an injunction that would allow survey crews access to Martin's Koenig's farmland near Sioux Rapids in northwest Iowa.

Sandy said a law giving crews that access violated the state constitution because it doesn't provide just compensation for damages to landowners in exchange for the loss of their right to deny entry to their land, according to the Sioux City Journal.

Pipeline company Navigator CO2 Ventures said it will appeal the ruling, arguing it deviated from decisions in similar cases in other states.

Attorney Brian Jorde, who is representing Koenig, welcomed the ruling, calling it "a good day for anyone who cares about property rights."

Jorde, of Omaha, Nebraska, also represents another property owner in western Iowa who has made a similar claim against Navigator. A ruling in that case is expected soon.

Navigator's planned pipeline would cut through five states — Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Nebraska and South Dakota — and carry carbon dioxide from ethanol and fertilizer processors to a site in Illinois. The gas would be converted to liquid form and sent under high pressure to a site where it would be pumped thousands of feet beneath the surface.

The pipeline is one of three proposed in Iowa, and similar projects are planned in other Midwest states. Interest in the pipelines has grown because of lucrative federal tax credits and the hopes that capturing the carbon dioxide produced when creating ethanol will make the fuel additive more marketable in states with more strict air quality standards.

Although the pipelines would capture carbon dioxide that otherwise would be released into the atmosphere, many environmental groups have opposed such projects. They question the safety of the pipelines and argue the nation should focus on renewable energy sources and break completely from fossil fuels.

Yeezy shoes still stuck in limbo after Adidas split with Ye

By DAVID McHUGH Associated Press

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — It's been nearly seven months since Adidas split with the rapper formerly known as Kanye West, and boxes of his popular Yeezy shoes are still piled up in warehouses.

The fate of 1.2 billion euros (\$1.3 billion) worth of unsold Yeezy stock is weighing on the German sports-wear company as it tries to engineer a turnaround from the loss of the lucrative sneaker line and the continued fallout over its former ties to Ye.

Adidas is "getting closer and closer to making a decision" on what do to with the sneakers and the "options are narrowing," new CEO Bjorn Gulden said in a conference call Friday after reporting 400 million euros (\$441 million) in lost sales at the start of the year.

But with "so many interested parties" involved in the discussions, no decision had yet been reached, he said.

Adidas is stuck with stacks of its flagship Yeezy brand shoes after ending its relationship with Ye in October over his antisemitic and other offensive comments on social media and in interviews.

Gulden, who became CEO in January after the Ye split, declined to say if destroying the shoes had been

ruled out but that the company was “trying to avoid that.”

He has previously said other options have drawbacks: selling the sneakers would mean paying royalties to Ye, restitching them to remove the brand identification would be dishonest, and giving them away to people in need could lead to resale because of their high market value.

Gulden would not say how many pairs of Yeezy shoes that Adidas is stuck holding “because then the consumer would know how many we have and that could have an impact on demand.”

Losing the Yeezy brand is “of course hurting us,” Gulden said in a statement. The breakup will reduce earnings by 500 million euros this year if Adidas decides not to sell the remaining Yeezy stock, the Herzogenaurach-based company said.

Net sales declined 1% in the first quarter, to 5.27 billion euros, and would have risen 9% with the Yeezy line, the company said. It reported a net loss of 24 million euros, a plunge from a profit of 310 million euros in the same period a year ago.

Operating profit, which excludes some items like taxes, was down to 60 million euros from 437 million euros a year earlier.

Gulden said the results for the Adidas were “a little better than we had expected” as the company seeks to restart growth and move beyond the breakup with Ye. He called 2023 “a year of transition” on the way to “a better ‘24 and a good ‘25.”

The company faces other problems tied to the rapper. Investors sued Adidas a week ago in the U.S., alleging the company knew about Ye’s offensive remarks and harmful behavior years before the split and failed to take precautionary measures to limit financial losses.

The lawsuit — representing people who bought Adidas securities between May 3, 2018, and February 21, 2023 — pointed to 2018 comments where Ye suggested slavery was a “choice” and reports of Ye making antisemitic statements in front of Adidas staff.

The company said last week that it rejected “these unfounded claims and will take all necessary measures to vigorously defend ourselves against them.”

Ending the Ye partnership also cost Adidas 600 million euros in lost sales in the last three months of 2022, helping drive the company to a net loss of 513 million euros.

An operating loss of 700 million euros is possible this year, Adidas said, mostly due to the 500 million-euro hit it would take if it doesn’t sell the existing Yeezy shoes.

How (and when) to watch King Charles’ coronation in the US

By The Associated Press undefined

King Charles III’s coronation Saturday will mix of a thousand-year tradition with the streaming age.

The pomp and ceremony will be unmissable for U.K. residents, but what about royal watchers across the Atlantic? There are plenty of options to watch the regalia-heavy event that serves as a formal confirmation of King Charles’ dual role as head of state and titular leader of the Church of England — for those willing to wake up early enough.

While it might seem odd that Americans might want to tune in, there have been large audiences for previous royal milestones, such as the wedding of Charles and Diana in 1981 and the weddings of their children, William and Harry.

The longevity of the king’s mother, Queen Elizabeth II, means that many people alive have never seen a coronation.

WHAT TIME DOES THE CORONATION START?

Well, first King Charles and his wife Camilla have to get to the ceremony. That begins with a procession to Westminster Abbey, which will get started at about 5 a.m. EDT, 2 a.m. for West Coasters.

The Associated Press will livestream the procession beginning at 5 a.m. Eastern and provide ongoing coverage throughout the day on www.apnews.com.

Broadcast networks ABC, CBS and NBC as well as cable channels CNN and Fox News all plan live coverage starting at 5 a.m. EDT. The outlets will also feature coverage on their digital platforms and streaming

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like Hulu+ Live TV.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW AHEAD OF TIME?

The day will be filled with pageantry — the handing over of a rod, sceptre and orb, all medieval symbols of power — and loads of other traditions. Despite that, Charles has slimmed down the event, shortening the procession route and the Westminster Abbey ceremony.

More than 100 heads of state will be in the audience, but President Joe Biden will keep with U.S. tradition and not attend. Instead, first lady Jill Biden will be there.

The celebration continues on Sunday with the Coronation Concert, but U.S. audiences won't be able to watch headliners Lionel Richie and Katy Perry. That will be shown on BBC's iPlayer, which isn't available outside the U.K.

For more coronation coverage, visit: <https://apnews.com/hub/king-charles-iii>

Russia's Wagner boss threatens Bakhmut pullout in Ukraine

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The owner of Russia's Wagner Group military contractor threatened Friday to pull his troops out of the protracted battle for the eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut next week, accusing Russia's military command of starving his forces of ammunition and causing them heavy losses.

Yevgeny Prigozhin, a notorious millionaire with longtime links to Russian President Vladimir Putin, claimed that Wagner had planned to capture Bakhmut by May 9. That day is a major Russian holiday marking the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II.

But, Prigozhin said, his force hasn't received enough artillery ammunition supplies from the Russian military since Monday. Known for his bluster, Prigozhin has previously made unverifiable claims and made threats he hasn't carried out.

Hours before releasing the statement, Prigozhin's spokespeople published a video of him angrily demanding ammunition from Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and General Staff Chief Valery Gerasimov.

In the video, Prigozhin stands in front of around 30 uniformed bodies lying on the ground. He says they are the bodies of Wagner fighters who died on Thursday alone.

Prigozhin speaks in a furious tone and uses numerous expletives in the video.

"These are someone's fathers and someone's sons," Prigozhin says, pointing at the bodies. "The scum that doesn't give us ammunition will eat their guts in hell."

He alleged that Russia's regular army was supposed to protect the flanks as Wagner troops pushed forward but is "barely holding on to them," deploying "tens and rarely hundreds" of troops.

Russia's Defense Ministry did not immediately comment on the claims, and it was not possible to independently verify them.

"Wagner ran out of resources to advance in early April, but we're advancing despite the fact that the enemy's resources outnumber ours fivefold," Prigozhin's statement said. "Because of the lack of ammunition, our losses are growing exponentially every day."

The Wagner Group has spearheaded the struggle for control of Bakhmut, which is the longest — and likely bloodiest — battle of the war. The more than eight months of fighting there is believed to have cost thousands of lives, though neither side is saying how many.

Prigozhin has toured Russian prisons to recruit fighters, promising inmates pardons if they survive a half-year tour of front-line duty with Wagner. Western countries and United Nations experts have accused Wagner mercenaries of committing numerous human rights abuses throughout Africa, including in the Central African Republic, Libya and Mali.

Bakhmut, located about 55 kilometers (34 miles) north of the Russian-held regional capital of Donetsk, has tactical military value for Moscow, though analysts say it won't be decisive in the war's outcome.

The city had a prewar population of 80,000 and was an important industrial center. It is now a devastated ghost town, but it has become an important symbol of Ukrainian resistance to Russia's invasion, with

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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy saying its capitulation could begin building international support for a deal that could require Ukraine to make unacceptable compromises.

Prigozhin's statement said that Wagner will be forced to pull out of Bakhmut on May 10 and have Russia's regular army take over, "because without ammunition, (Wagner fighters) are doomed to a senseless death."

He accused "jealous military bureaucrats" of denying him ammunition. Western officials and analysts believe Russia has run low on ammunition as the 14-month conflict became bogged down in a war of attrition over the winter, with both sides resorting to long-range bombardments.

It is not the first time Prigozhin has raged about ammunition shortages and blamed Russia's military, with which he has long been in conflict. He has already threatened to withdraw from Bakhmut once, in an interview with a Russian military blogger last week, if the situation with ammunition doesn't improve.

Asked by The Associated Press about Prigozhin's statement, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said he had seen references to it in the media but refused to comment further. The Russian military did not immediately comment on the statement either.

Also Friday, an oil refinery in Russia's southern Krasnodar region which borders the annexed Crimean Peninsula briefly caught fire after it was attacked by a drone, Russia's state news agency Tass reported, citing emergency officials. The fire was small and was quickly put out, the report said.

It was the second straight day that the Ilyinsky refinery had come under a drone attack. Drone attacks on oil facilities in Russian regions on the border with Ukraine have been reported almost daily over the past week.

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

King's coronation draws apathy, criticism in former colonies

By SYLVIA HUI, JOHN MYERS JR. and KRUTIKA PATHI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — When King Charles III is crowned on Saturday, soldiers carrying flags from the Bahamas, South Africa, Tuvalu and beyond will march alongside British troops in a spectacular military procession in honor of the monarch.

For some, the scene will affirm the ties that bind Britain and its former colonies. But for many others in the Commonwealth, a group of nations mostly made up of places once claimed by the British Empire, Charles' coronation is seen with apathy at best.

In those countries, the first crowning of a British monarch in 70 years is an occasion to reflect on oppression and colonialism's bloody past. The displays of pageantry in London will jar especially with growing calls in the Caribbean to sever all ties with the monarchy.

"Interest in British royalty has waned since more Jamaicans are waking to the reality that the survivors of colonialism and the holocaust of slavery are yet to receive reparatory justice," the Rev. Sean Major-Campbell, an Anglican priest in the Jamaican capital, Kingston, said.

The coronation is "only relevant in so far as it kicks us in the face with the reality that our head of state is simply so by virtue of biology," Major-Campbell added.

As British sovereign, Charles is also head of state of 14 other countries, though the role is largely ceremonial. These realms, which include Australia, Canada, Jamaica, Papua New Guinea and New Zealand, represent a minority of the Commonwealth nations: most of the 56 members are republics, even if some still sport the Union Jack on their flags.

Barbados was the most recent Commonwealth country to remove the British monarch as its head of state, replacing Charles' mother, Queen Elizabeth II, with an elected president in 2021. The decision spurred similar republican movements in neighboring Jamaica, the Bahamas and Belize.

Last year, when Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness welcomed Prince William and his wife, Kate, during a royal tour of the Caribbean, he announced that his country intends to become fully independent. It made for an awkward photo with the royal couple, who were also confronted with protests calling for Britain to pay slavery reparations.

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William, the heir to the throne, observed later in the same trip that the relationship between the monarchy and the Caribbean has evolved. The royal family will "support with pride and respect your decisions about your future," he told a reception in the Bahamas.

Rosalea Hamilton, an advocate for changing Jamaica's constitution to get rid of the royals, said she was organizing a coronation day forum to engage more Jamaicans in the process of political reform.

The timing of the event is meant to "signal to the head of state that the priority is to move away from his leadership, rather than focus on his coronation," Hamilton said.

Two days ahead of Charles' crowning, campaigners from 12 Commonwealth countries wrote to the monarch urging him to apologize for the legacies of British colonialism.

Among the signatories was Lidia Thorpe, an Australian senator, who said Thursday that Charles should "begin a process of repairing the damage of colonization, including returning the stolen wealth that has been taken from our people."

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, who will attend the coronation and join in an oath of allegiance to the king, favors ditching the monarchy, though he has ruled out holding a referendum during his current three-year term.

"I want to see an Australian as Australia's head of state," Albanese told the Australian Broadcasting Corp.

Buckingham Palace said last month that Charles supported research into the historical links between Britain's monarchy and the transatlantic slave trade. The king takes the issue "profoundly seriously," and academics will be given access to the royal collection and archives, the palace said.

In India, once the jewel of the British Empire, there's scant media attention and very little interest in the coronation. Some people living in the country's vast rural hinterlands may not have even heard of King Charles III.

"India has moved on," and most Indians "have no emotional ties with the royal family," Pavan K. Varma, a writer and former diplomat, said. Instead, the royals are seen more like amusing celebrities, he said.

And while the country still values its economic and cultural ties with the European country, Varma pointed out that India's economy has overtaken the U.K.'s.

"Britain has shrunk globally into a medium-sized power," he said. "This notion needs to be removed, that here is a former colony riveted to the television watching the coronation of Prince Charles. I don't think this is happening in India."

Since gaining independence in 1947, India has moved to shed the vestiges of British imperialism. The statue of King George V that used to stand near the India Gate monument in New Delhi was moved in the 1960s to Coronation Park. Once the scene of celebrations honoring Queen Victoria, King Edward VII and George V, the park is now a repository for representations of former monarchs and officials of the British Raj in India.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has led a renewed push to reclaim India's past and erase "symbols of slavery" from the country's time under the British crown. His government has scrubbed away colonial-era street names, some laws and even flag symbols.

"I don't think we should care much about (the royals)," Milind Akhade, a photographer in New Delhi, said. "They enslaved us for so many years."

In Nairobi, Kenya, motorcycle taxi driver Grahmat Luvisia was similarly dismissive of the idea of following the coronation on TV.

"I will not be interested in watching the news or whatever is happening over there because we have been mistreated back then by those colonizers," he said.

Herman Manyora, a political analyst and journalism professor at the University of Nairobi, said memories of Britain's harsh response to the Mau Mau rebellion in the 1950s are still raw.

Many Kenyans will not watch the coronation "because of the torture during colonialism, because of the oppression, because of detentions, because of killings, because of the alienation of our land," Manyora said.

Not everyone is as critical. In Uganda, political analyst Asuman Bisiika says British culture continues to have a strong influence on young people in the East African country, especially those who follow English soccer. There is also a lot of goodwill for Queen Elizabeth II, who died in September after 70 years on

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the throne.

"It's not about caring for the British monarchy," Bisiika said. "It's about relating."

In the South African city of Durban, expat British communities have planned a live screening of the coronation ceremony, complete with trumpeters to announce the moment the archbishop of Canterbury crowns Charles. On Sunday, there will be a special church service followed by a picnic or a "braai," a traditional South African barbecue.

"I think people want to be part of an important moment in history," said Illa Thompson, one of the organizers of the festivities.

Experts say that despite its flaws, historical baggage and fraying edges, the Commonwealth still holds appeal, especially for poorer nations. Gabon and Togo, which are former French colonies with no colonial links to Britain, became the association's newest members last year. Most observers believe countries like Jamaica that want an elected head of state are likely to retain their memberships.

"Countries, whether they benefit or not, feel like they need to have this closeness to Britain as an economic entity," said Kehinde Andrews, a professor of Black Studies at Birmingham City University. "As much as there will be still be some dissent — (Charles) is not as popular as his mother — it's all about the economics." _____

Myers Jr. reported from Kingston, Jamaica. Pathi reported from New Delhi. AP writers Gerald Imray in Cape Town, South Africa; Khaled Kazziha in Nairobi, Kenya; and Rodney Muhumuza in Kampala, Uganda, contributed to this report.

Violinist on Russian trains soothes weary commuters

MOSCOW (AP) — The commuter trains that take wearied workers out of Moscow every day can be difficult — a long and slow trip in close quarters with strangers, some of them drinking alcohol or sprawled sleeping across the seats.

But a few days a week, riders might get a lift when Oksana comes aboard to soothe them with her violin artistry. Classics, jazz, Russian folk music and children's songs all flow as she glides her bow across the strings.

It's not just her repertoire that raises the passengers' spirits, but her instruments themselves. She makes her own violins from kits and decorates them with intricate, colorful paintings of flowers and winding vines.

The 49-year-old Oksana, who did not want her surname reported out of safety concerns, once worked at a cultural center in the southern city of Rostov-on-Don but moved to Moscow after she lost that job. There was a house loan to pay off along with support for her two children, who live with their father.

At first she worked as a dishwasher. One day she fell into conversation with a street musician after giving him some money and he encouraged her to follow his example, saying it would likely pay more than her scullery job.

She took his advice, except that she chose the trains known as elektrichki as her venue rather than the street. They have been her stage for the past four years.

It's not lucrative. In a good month she can take in 80,000 rubles (\$750), but that's enough to pay for her room on the Moscow outskirts and to send some money to her kids.

She could make more, but standing for hours on the swaying trains while playing is hard on her legs and she plays only two or three times a week.

Sudan migrants in Israel worry over future, fighting at home

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Omer Easa is watching the violence roiling his native Sudan with deep trepidation. The further Sudan sinks into chaos and violence, he fears, the longer he is likely to remain an unrecognized asylum-seeker in Israel, where he has few protections.

Backers of migrants like Easa say their rights will likely come under greater threat if Israel's government, its most right-wing ever, moves ahead on a contentious plan to overhaul the judiciary.

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The plan, if it passes in its original form, could lead to legal measures that would embitter the everyday lives of the migrants and, critics say, make their stay in Israel intolerable.

"My heart is there. My head is there. It is just that my body is here," said Easa, 31, who said he fled the war-torn region of Darfur in 2012 over concerns for his life. "We live here often thanks to the graces of the Supreme Court."

Proponents of the legal overhaul say the migrants are a main reason the plan must move ahead.

African migrants, mainly from Sudan and Eritrea, began arriving in Israel in 2005 through its porous border with Egypt.

Israel initially turned a blind eye to their influx and many took up menial jobs in hotels and restaurants. But as their numbers swelled to a high of about 60,000, there was a backlash, with growing calls to expel the new arrivals. After years of attempts to push them out, they now number about 25,000, according to the Israeli Interior Ministry.

Easa is one of thousands of Sudanese migrants in Israel who live a precarious existence. Israel recognizes very few as asylum seekers, seeing them overwhelmingly as economic migrants and says it has no legal obligation to keep them. Talk of repatriating them emerged when Israel and Sudan signed a normalization agreement in 2020, but the turmoil there has slowed progress on the deal.

Violence in Sudan between forces loyal to two warring generals erupted last month, pushing the nation to the brink of collapse. The fighting, which began as Sudan was expected to start transitioning from last year's military coup to civilian rule, already has killed hundreds of people and left millions trapped in urban areas, sheltering from gunfire, explosions and looters.

With Sudan's cellphone network all but dead, Easa and others in Israel have struggle to reach their loved ones.

Israel's African migrants say they are asylum-seekers who fled for their lives and face danger if they return. Those from Sudan see the renewed conflict at home as another reminder of why they cannot go back and why their status should be settled, especially at a time of uncertainty over the future of Israel's judicial system.

Under international law, Israel cannot forcibly send migrants back to a country where their life or liberty may be at risk. Critics accuse the government instead of trying to coerce them into leaving.

Israel has used various tactics that have made their lives more difficult, from detaining them in remote desert prisons to holding part of their wages and making the money available to them only after they agree to leave the country. It has left thousands of asylum requests open and offered cash payments to those who agreed to move to a third country, somewhere in Africa.

Israel also has built a barrier along the border with Egypt to stop the influx and agreed with the United Nations to resettle thousands of migrants in Western countries while allowing thousands of others to remain in Israel. That deal, however, was quickly scrapped under pressure from anti-migrant activists and hard-line legislators.

The Supreme Court has also blocked some of those efforts, striking down some anti-migrant laws deemed unconstitutional, including those dealing with their detention and their salaries. Those rulings have made the migrant issue a rallying cry for supporters of the legal overhaul, who say the court has overstepped in its rulings.

In March, before he paused the overhaul under intense pressure, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu cited the migrant issue as an example in which "the court intervened unjustly."

The overhaul plan would weaken the Supreme Court and limit judicial oversight over government decisions. If it moves ahead in its proposed form, the government could re-legislate laws the court invalidated or enact new ones and override any future court decisions on them.

Migrants will face "a much greater risk" if the plan goes through, said Sigal Rozen, public policy director for the Hotline for Migrant Workers, a rights group.

A weakened Supreme Court would not be able to stand in the way of a proposed law planned by an ultranationalist coalition member who seeks to incarcerate migrants indefinitely, withhold part of their salary and restrict their movement within Israel, she said.

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The migrants' presence has long divided the country. Their supporters say Israel, a country founded upon the ashes of the Holocaust and built up by Jewish refugees, should welcome those seeking asylum.

Opponents claim the migrants have brought crime to the low-income southern Tel Aviv neighborhoods where they have settled. Some Israeli politicians have labeled them infiltrators, with one calling them "a cancer" threatening the country's Jewish character.

Proponents of the legal changes say the Supreme Court is oblivious to the problems posed by the migrants' presence.

"It's not the role of the court to decide our immigration policies," said Sheffi Paz, a prominent anti-migrant activist. "That's what we elect our lawmakers to do."

The fighting in Sudan hasn't softened her opposition, she said.

Since fleeing Sudan, Easa, the migrant, has had a tough existence in Israel. He was shot at by Egyptian forces as he tried to cross into Israel, was detained in an Israeli prison and now ekes out a living as a deliveryman.

All the while he has been hoping that Israel might one day recognize him as an asylum seeker with proper rights and an insurance policy against deportation.

"I hope they will ... let people live with dignity," he said, speaking in fluent Hebrew. "And we hope there will be peace."

Australia PM to give allegiance to king but wants president

By ROD MCGUIRK Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Friday he would declare his allegiance to King Charles III at the monarch's coronation despite believing that Australia should have its own head of state.

Albanese voted in a failed referendum in 1999 for an Australian citizen to replace the British monarch as the country's head of state. He said he accepted that a majority of Australians chose for the country to remain a constitutional monarchy instead of becoming a republic and would reflect that sentiment when he attended the king's coronation Saturday in London.

"I haven't changed my position on that and I've made that very clear. I want to see an Australian as Australia's head of state," Albanese told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

"That doesn't mean that you cannot have respect for the institution, which is the system of government that we have," he said. "And I believe, as the Australian prime minister, I have a particular responsibility to represent the nation in a way that respects the constitutional arrangements, which are there."

The Australian Republic Movement, which campaigns for Australia to become a republic, has urged Albanese to remain silent when the Archbishop of Canterbury invites "all who desire" among the congregation at Westminster Abbey to take the oath of allegiance to the king.

But Albanese said he would follow protocol by taking the oath, though his office did not respond when asked if Albanese intended to affirm or swear his allegiance to the king.

"I think as the Australian prime minister, people expect me to not come to the king's coronation in order to create a controversy," Albanese said.

Brought up as a Roman Catholic, Albanese opted against swearing an oath on a Bible a year ago when he was appointed prime minister by Governor-General David Hurley, who was then Australia's representative of Queen Elizabeth II.

He took an affirmation of office, a secular alternative to the oath that doesn't mention God or the monarch.

Albanese's eclectic Australian delegation to the coronation includes Hurley and all six state governors. The delegation will be led by Australian women's soccer star Sam Kerr, who currently plays for the London-based club Chelsea; post-punk pioneer musician Nick Cave; and comedian Adam Hills.

As a coronation gift, the Australian government will donate 10,000 Australian dollars (\$6,700) to a charity that conserves the Western ground parrot, an endangered Australian bird.

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Albanese has ruled out holding a referendum to replace the British monarch with an Australian president during his first three-year term in office. This year, he is prioritizing a referendum that would recognize Indigenous Australians in the constitution and create a representative body to advise the Parliament on Indigenous issues.

While Albanese has appointed a minister responsible for the republic, he has not provided a time frame for when Australians will get to vote on such a constitutional change.

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

Thompson scores 30, Warriors adjust to beat Lakers 127-100

By JANIE McCAULEY AP Sports Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — After yet another big basket, Klay Thompson scurried toward the fans sitting courtside opposite the Warriors bench and raised his arms in the air to ignite an entire arena behind him. It didn't take much the way his shots were falling.

He has been waiting his entire life to shine against his father's Los Angeles Lakers on the big stage.

Thompson scored 30 points with eight 3-pointers, Golden State limited Anthony Davis while allowing LeBron James 23 points, and the defending champion Warriors evened their Western Conference semifinal with the Lakers at one game apiece with a 127-100 win Thursday night.

"I was just trying to get the crowd going," Thompson said. "It's always fun when you shoot the ball well, it's even better when you couple that win a win."

Stephen Curry added 20 points and 12 assists as Splash Brother Thompson got hot to help Golden State make 21 more 3-pointers — giving the Warriors an NBA record for most in the first two games of a playoff series at 42. James' Cavaliers hit 40 against Atlanta in the 2016 second round.

"They made their adjustments. We knew they were going to do that, that's what a championship team does," James said. "They held serve on their home court tonight."

Coach Steve Kerr switched things up and inserted JaMychal Green into the starting lineup for Kevon Looney, who had a career-high 23 rebounds in Game 1 but has been dealing with an illness. Kerr aimed to give a different look with scoring options and more free-throw chances by going hard with a physical presence against Davis in the paint — where Golden State got thoroughly outplayed in a 117-112 loss in the opener.

Thompson's basket with 7:48 left in the third gave Golden State its biggest lead at 82-64 and the Warriors rolled from there.

"Klay got it going and our defense was kind of fueling our offense," Kerr said.

The Warriors had more fast-break points and points in the paint. JaMychal Green matched his playoff career high with 15 points, while Draymond Green contributed 11 points, 11 rebounds and nine assists after insisting he had to get more aggressive.

"I've been waiting on this moment, just wanted to show that I could help," JaMychal Green said. "They always tell me to stay ready, my time will come."

The best-of-seven series shifts to Los Angeles for Game 3 on Saturday. Back home in Southern California, Thompson said he would play in the memory of "my biggest inspiration" Kobe Bryant and daughter, Gigi.

"I have so much respect for just the opportunity ahead for me," Thompson said.

James shot 6 for 8 in the first with a pair of 3s for 14 points as the Lakers led 33-26. He retrieved a loose ball and let it fly for a pretty 3 with 7:47 before halftime but the Warriors were too much.

Davis followed up his brilliant Game 1 performance — 30 points, 23 rebounds, five assists and four blocked shots and 11-for-19 shooting — with 11 points while shooting 5 for 11, seven rebounds, four assists and three blocks.

"We played with more force," Draymond Green said.

Golden State outscored the Lakers 84-47 over the second and third quarters — recording two 40-point quarters in the same playoff game for the first time in franchise history.

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"It was hard for us to guard four shooters," Lakers forward Rui Hachimura said. "Defensively they were more aggressive I feel like. They had all the loose balls and the rebounds and everything."

Looney received huge roars as he came off the bench for his first action with 3:41 left in the first. He grabbed eight rebounds and scored six points playing just less than 12 minutes — and the Warriors still outboarded the Lakers 55-40 without its best rebounder.

"We're capable of playing a lot of different ways, I'm capable of playing a lot of different ways," Curry said.

Kerr was hardly worried ahead of Game 2, pointing to how Golden State lost Game 1 of the NBA Finals at home to Boston last year before winning it all.

The Warriors also rallied from a 2-0 deficit in their first-round series to beat Sacramento, the first defending champion to do so.

"You could tell, they came out just ready to try to secure a game," Lakers coach Darvin Ham said, "and again not go back to our place down 0-2."

KLAY'S DAY

Thompson shot 11 for 18 and 8 of 11 from deep. His 19 points in the first half were his most in a post-season contest since he scored 21 in Game 6 against the Rockets in 2019.

KEY SEQUENCE

The Warriors challenged an offensive foul call on Andrew Wiggins with James defending at the 2:50 mark of the second quarter. The call was overturned and a block assessed to James, and a Lakers assistant received a technical during the review process — and the Warriors converted all three free throws to lead 60-50 before Thompson's 3 the next time down.

TIP-INS

Lakers: James was -27 through three quarters. The only time he had a worse plus-minus through three in a playoff game was Game 1 of a second-round series against the Pistons in 2006. ... In a big change from Game 1, the Lakers didn't take their first free throws until 1:03 before halftime and their four attempts matched their second-fewest in a first half this season.

Warriors: Moses Moody added 10 points and seven rebounds off the bench and Gary Payton II seven points and five boards as Golden State controlled the glass all game. ... JaMychal Green earned his first playoff start since April 26, 2019, for the Clippers against the Warriors in Game 6 of the first round. "Two hours before game time Loon came down pretty ill," Kerr said. ... Golden State improved to 20-6 in Game 2s dating to the 2014-15 title run.

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

Cinco de Mayo celebrates Mexican culture, not independence

By ANITA SNOW Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — American bars and restaurants gear up every year for Cinco de Mayo, offering special deals on Mexican food and alcoholic drinks for the May 5 holiday that is barely celebrated south of the border.

In the United States, the date is largely seen as a celebration of Mexican American culture stretching back to the 1800s in California. Typical festivities include parades, street food, block parties, mariachi competitions and baile folklórico, or folkloric ballet, with whirling dancers wearing shiny ribbons and braids and bright, ruffled dresses.

For Americans with or without Mexican ancestry, the day has become an excuse to toss back tequila shots with salt and lime and gorge on tortilla chips smothered with melted orange cheddar that's unfamiliar to most people in Mexico.

That's brought some criticism of the holiday, especially as beer manufacturers and other marketers have capitalized on its festive nature and some revelers embrace offensive stereotypes, such as fake, droopy mustaches and gigantic straw sombreros.

THIS YEAR'S CELEBRATIONS

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With May 5 falling at the end of the work week this year, festivities are kicking off Friday evening with happy hours and pub crawls in cities including Hollywood, featuring \$4 beers and two-for-one margaritas, and a boozy party aboard a yacht on Chicago's Lake Michigan with música norteño, or northern Mexico music, and ballads called corridos.

Celebrations are planned throughout the weekend, especially in places with large Mexican American populations, such as Los Angeles, Houston, New York, San Antonio and Washington, D.C.

A Sunday festival in downtown Phoenix will feature performers including Los Lonely Boys, who describe their music as "Texican rock," as well as lucha libre, or wrestling matches with masked adversaries. A Cinco de Mayo parade will take place in Dallas on Saturday, while a Holy Guacamole Cinco de Mayo Run steps off that morning in Palisades Park in Santa Monica, California.

WHAT IT IS

Cinco de Mayo marks the anniversary of the 1862 victory by Mexican troops over invading French forces at the Battle of Puebla. The triumph over the better equipped and more numerous French troops was an enormous emotional boost for the Mexican soldiers led by Gen. Ignacio Zaragoza.

Historical reenactments and parades are held annually in the central Mexico city of Puebla to commemorate the inspirational victory over the Europeans, with participants dressed in historical French and Mexican army uniforms.

WHAT IT ISN'T

Cinco de Mayo is not Mexican Independence Day, Mexico's most important holiday.

Mexicans celebrate their country's independence from Spain on the anniversary of the call to arms against the European country issued Sept. 16, 1810, by the Rev. Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, a priest in Dolores, Mexico.

Mexico's president reenacts el Grito de Independencia, or the Cry of Independence, most years on Sept. 15 at about 11 p.m. from the balcony of the country's National Palace, ringing the bell Hidalgo rang.

The commemoration typically ends with three cries of "¡Viva México!" above a colorful swirl of tens of thousands of people crowded into the Zócalo, or main plaza, in central Mexico City.

Bucks fire Budenholzer as coach after early playoff exit

By STEVE MEGARGEE AP Sports Writer

MILWAUKEE (AP) — The Milwaukee Bucks have fired coach Mike Budenholzer just over a week after their stunning first-round playoff loss to the Miami Heat spoiled a season in which they owned the NBA's best record.

Budenholzer's ouster comes just two years after he directed the Bucks to their first NBA title in half a century. The move also comes three weeks after the NBA finalized Cleveland Browns owner Jimmy Haslam's purchase of a 25% stake in the team.

"The decision to make this change was very difficult," Bucks general manager Jon Horst said Thursday in a statement announcing the move. "Bud helped lead our team for five incredible seasons, to the Bucks' first title in 50 years, and into an era of sustained success. We are grateful for the culture of winning and leadership that Bud helped create in Milwaukee.

"This is an opportunity for us to refocus and re-energize our efforts as we continue building toward our next championship season."

The Bucks posted the most combined regular-season and playoff wins of any team during Budenholzer's tenure and had the league's best regular-season record in three of his five seasons on the job. He posted a 271-120 regular-season record and 39-26 playoff mark in Milwaukee.

With a roster featuring two-time MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo, Budenholzer's Bucks soared to heights the franchise hadn't reached since Kareem Abdul-Jabbar was wearing a Milwaukee uniform in the early 1970s.

But with the notable exception of that 2021 championship season, the Bucks couldn't match their regular-season success in the postseason.

The Bucks didn't reach the NBA Finals during any of the three seasons in which they had the league's

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No. 1 playoff seed. They had a 2-0 lead over Toronto in the 2019 Eastern Conference finals before losing four straight. They lost 4-1 in the second round to the Miami Heat in the 2020 East semifinals at the Walt Disney World playoff bubble.

This year's playoff exit was particularly devastating.

The Bucks suffered fourth-quarter collapses in each of their last two games and lost 4-1 to the eighth-seeded Heat. They were just the sixth No. 1 seed to lose to a No. 8 seed in the opening round, and the only No. 1 seed that failed to win more than one playoff game.

"There's a ton of disappointment when your season ends, no matter how it happens," Budenholzer said afterward. "It's a hard feeling. It's a disappointing feeling."

Milwaukee owned a 12-point lead at Miami in Game 4 before getting outscored 30-13 over the last six minutes of a 119-114 loss in which the Heat's Jimmy Butler scored 56 points. They were up 16 at home to start the fourth quarter of Game 5, but lost 128-126 in overtime after Butler made a tying basket with half a second left in regulation.

Budenholzer, 53, acknowledged the Bucks should have called a timeout after Butler's tying basket, giving them a chance to make a buzzer beater that could have prevented overtime. The Bucks also declined to call a timeout when they got the ball back while trailing by two points in the closing seconds of overtime, and they weren't able to attempt a shot before the game ended.

Antetokounmpo said after the game the Bucks didn't make enough adjustments in how they defended Butler, who averaged 37.6 points in the series.

Antetokounmpo, who was playing with a bruised lower back, said he would have liked more opportunities to guard Butler.

The removal of Budenholzer comes as the Bucks enter a critical offseason. Brook Lopez, a finalist for the NBA defensive player of the year award this season, is a free agent. Three-time All-Star Khris Middleton could become a free agent as well if he doesn't pick up his \$40.4 million player option for 2023-24.

Budenholzer's exit means that three of the last four NBA champions have since fired their coaches.

Nick Nurse led Toronto to the 2019 title but was ousted last month after the Raptors' season ended with a loss to the Chicago Bulls in a play-in game. Frank Vogel coached the Los Angeles Lakers to the 2020 championship and was fired after missing the playoffs last season. The exception is Steve Kerr, coach of the defending champion Golden State Warriors.

"On the one hand, we all know what we're getting into when we get into this business," Kerr said Thursday when he was asked about Budenholzer's firing. "So my first response is not necessarily shock, it's more disappointment because Bud is a fantastic coach... just won a championship and has been wildly successful in his coaching career. But this is the business we're in."

Budenholzer's teams had some bad luck with injuries during the postseason.

Middleton sprained his left medial collateral ligament in Game 2 of an opening-round series with the Chicago Bulls last year and missed the rest of the playoffs as the Bucks ended up losing their second-round matchup with the Boston Celtics in seven games.

Antetokounmpo sprained his ankle in Game 4 against Miami in 2020 and missed the rest of that series, though the Bucks already trailed 3-0 when he got hurt. Antetokounmpo exited Game 1 of this year's Heat series with the back issue that caused him to miss Games 2 and 3. The Bucks won the 2021 title even though a hyperextended knee prevented Antetokounmpo from playing the final two games of the Eastern Conference finals with the Atlanta Hawks.

Budenholzer came to Milwaukee after going 213-197 in five seasons with Atlanta. He was an assistant coach with the San Antonio Spurs from 1996-2013 and was on Gregg Popovich's staff for four championship seasons (1999, 2003, 2005, 2007).

AP Sports Writer Janie McCauley contributed to this report.

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Australia PM: US effort to extradite Assange not worth it

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese expressed frustration at the United States' continuing efforts to extradite WikiLeaks founder and Australian citizen Julian Assange, saying: "There is nothing to be served by his ongoing incarceration."

Albanese's comments Friday in an Australian Broadcasting Corp. interview appeared to escalate diplomatic pressure on the United States to drop the charges against the 51-year-old Assange, who has spent four years in Britain's Belmarsh Prison fighting extradition to the United States.

Before that, Assange had taken asylum for seven years in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London.

Albanese said Assange's case had to be examined in terms of whether the time Assange had "effectively served" was in excess of what would be "reasonable" if the allegations against him were proved.

"I just say that enough is enough. There is nothing to be served by his ongoing incarceration," Albanese said.

"I know it's frustrating, I share the frustration. I can't do more than make very clear what my position is and the U.S. administration is certainly very aware of what the Australian government's position is," Albanese added.

Assange has battled in British courts for years to avoid being sent to the U.S., where he faces 17 charges of espionage and one charge of computer misuse that stem from WikiLeaks' publication of a huge trove of classified documents in 2010.

American prosecutors allege he helped U.S. Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning steal classified diplomatic cables and military files that WikiLeaks later published, putting lives at risk.

To his supporters, Assange is a secrecy-busting journalist who exposed U.S. military wrongdoing in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Albanese said there was a "disconnect" between the U.S. treatment of Assange and Manning. Then-U.S. President Barack Obama commuted Manning's 35-year sentence to seven years, which allowed her release in 2017.

Albanese has said he has advocated for Assange in meetings with Biden administration officials. On Friday, he declined to say whether he would raise Assange with Biden when Albanese hosts the U.S. leader along with leaders of India and Japan in Sydney on May 24.

"The way that diplomacy works ... is probably not to forecast the discussions that you will have, or have had with leaders of other nations," Albanese said. "I'll engage diplomatically in order to achieve an outcome."

Albanese said he did not want to get into an argument about whether Assange's alleged actions were right or wrong.

Albanese noted a British district court decision, since overturned, that rejected the extradition request on the grounds that Assange was likely to kill himself if held under harsh U.S. prison conditions.

"I am concerned about Mr. Assange's mental health," Albanese said.

Dog Show 101: What's what at the Westminster Kennel Club

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — To the casual viewer, competing at the Westminster Kennel Club dog show might look pretty simple: Get a dog. Groom it. Pose it. Lead it around a ring.

But there's a lot more than that to getting to and exhibiting in the United States' most prestigious canine event, now in its 147th year.

So here are the ins and outs of the show, which starts Saturday at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York.

HOW MANY DOGS COMPETE?

Twenty-five hundred dogs from 210 different breeds and varieties signed up to vie for the best in show trophy that gets awarded Tuesday night. (Varieties are subsets of breeds. Think smooth, longhaired and wirehaired dachshunds.)

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Hailing from 49 states and 13 countries, contestants range from tiny Chihuahuas to giant Great Danes. They include familiar breeds like Labrador retrievers, rarities such as the sloughi, and a newcomer, the bracco Italiano. Agility and obedience contests Saturday involve a few hundred more dogs, including some mixed-breed ones.

HOW DO DOGS GET INTO THE SHOW?

All the dogs are champions, meaning they've racked up a certain amount of prior wins and points. Certain top dogs in the sport's complicated rankings are invited, but other pooches also can enter.

The process of becoming a potential best in show begins when breeders suss out which puppies in a litter have the physical attributes and disposition to shine in what's known as "conformation" competition.

Some pups eventually get to Westminster with owners who learned the ropes after unexpectedly getting a show-quality dog. Other canine contestants crisscross the country by road or even air, hitting shows every weekend with big-name professional handlers and a strategy that can entail gathering intel about rivals' schedules, pondering judges' past picks and even running ads to celebrate the animal's accomplishments and boost its profile. They don't call it "campaigning a dog" for nothing!

WHAT'S A DOG SHOW DOING AT A TENNIS FACILITY?

It's a new venue for Westminster, which was held for decades all or partly at Madison Square Garden. The pandemic prompted a move to outdoor digs at an estate in suburban Tarrytown, New York, for the past two years. Organizers were keen to return to New York City this year. Amid construction plans at a pier building that used to house the show's early rounds, organizers linked up with the U.S. Open tennis tournament's base in Flushing Meadows. "An iconic dog show event in an iconic venue," Westminster President Donald Sturz enthuses.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

"Conformation" dogs first face off against others of their breed – sometimes dozens of others, sometimes few or even none. Each breed's winner moves on to a semifinal round of judging against others in its "group," such as hounds, herding dogs or terriers. In the final round, the seven group winners compete for best in show.

WHAT DO JUDGES LOOK FOR?

They're tasked with determining which dog best matches the ideal, or "standard," for its breed.

The standard is derived from the breed's original function and may speak to anything from teeth to tail to temperament. For example, a hound developed to hunt in rough terrain might be required to have thick paw pads. A herding dog might need proportions that allow for quick, tight turns.

Judges do hands-on examinations and watch the dogs in motion, taking in each dog's assets and imperfections. Especially in the finals, distinctions can be very subtle. Show folk often say that victory can go to "the dog on the day" — or as the rest of us might say, the one that just brings it.

WHAT BREEDS HAVE WON THE MOST?

In records going back to 1907, Wire fox terriers have scampered away with the top prize 15 times, most recently in 2019. Scottish terriers, English springer spaniels, standard poodles and Pekingeses all have five or more wins.

Many breeds have yet to triumph, including such popular ones as the Labrador retriever. But winless breeds should never say never: A bloodhound took best in show for the first time just last year.

Westminster's agility and obedience competitions were added only within the last decade. So far, almost all the agility championships have gone to border collies, and nearly all the obedience titles to Labs. One Lab, named Heart, won five times in a row.

HAS A MIXED-BREED DOG EVER WON?

While Westminster has said there a few mixed-breed entrants in early shows, the best in show prize wasn't awarded until 1907 and has gone only to purebreds. The pedigreed set also has won all the agility and obedience trials to date, but there's a special prize every year for the top mix (or "all American dog," in show parlance).

The focus on purebreds irks groups such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, which regularly

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protests Westminster as a reprehensible canine beauty pageant. The kennel club says it celebrates all dogs while highlighting "preservation breeding" of those with skills and traits that have been honed over generations.

WHAT DO WINNERS GET?

Bragging rights and trophies. There are no cash prizes, though the agility and obedience winners each get to direct a \$5,000 Westminster donation to a training club or to the American Kennel Club Humane Fund.

SO WHAT'S THE POINT?

Showcasing dogs, particularly breeds that many people don't see regularly, participants say. Many also value the friendships that develop at shows that bring dog lovers together across miles and backgrounds.

"We can all talk about dogs," says dog expert David Frei, who hosted the Westminster telecast for over two decades. "That's the beauty of the sport, and the beauty of dogs."

Officials: Man killed 3, then self in rural Georgia town

By JEFF AMY and RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

A man recorded by a security camera fatally shooting his manager Thursday at a fast food restaurant in rural south Georgia is also suspected of killing his mother and grandmother at their nearby homes before taking his own life, authorities said.

Security video from a McDonald's in Moultrie showed 26-year-old Kentavious White shoot the store manager after getting her to come to the door Thursday morning, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation said. The footage then showed White step inside the restaurant and shoot himself.

Police found the manager, identified as 41-year-old Amia Smith, and White both dead when they arrived, the GBI said in a news release Thursday evening. They also found two women related to White had been shot at neighboring homes less than 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) away. Both women died — one after being taken to a hospital, the GBI said.

All three of the slain women appeared to have been shot multiple times, Colquitt County Coroner C. Verlyn Brock told The Associated Press.

"I can't for the life of me figure out what provoked him in that way," Brock said in a phone interview.

Brock said the slain women were the gunman's 50-year-old mother and 74-year-old grandmother, who lived next door to each other. Their names were not immediately released. Brock said his office was working to contact next of kin.

Moultrie police called in the GBI take the lead in investigating the case, which often happens with major crimes in Georgia. The state law enforcement agency said its investigation is ongoing.

Jerry Goodwin lived next door to the gunman and his mother and two doors down from the grandmother. He told The Associated Press on Thursday that his wife heard shots fired before 1 a.m. Thursday, while he was asleep. Goodwin said the young man who lives next door had come outside and fired a gun one day earlier in the week while shouting something, and that Moultrie police had responded.

However, it appears police did not respond immediately on Thursday. Goodwin said police and an ambulance arrived just before 6 a.m., with the ambulance immediately taking one person away. He said the coroner later retrieved two more bodies.

Goodwin said he didn't know his neighbors well, although the man had come to his house after moving in several years ago to seek advice on installing a fence.

"I had never seen him hurt anybody or try to hurt anybody before this," Goodwin said.

Moultrie Police Chief Sean Ladson did not immediately return email messages seeking comment. A person answering the phone at police headquarters said Ladson was referring all calls to the GBI.

Moultrie resident Tanner Strickland said he knew two of the slain women.

"Both them were two of the most amazing people I've had the pleasure of being around," Strickland told WALB-TV. "They both light up any room that they walk into. Both of them really have hearts of gold."

Sabrina Holweger, who works at an optometrist's office next to the McDonald's, told the AP she and a coworker arrived at work before 8 a.m. to find a woman's body gunned down and lying in a doorway of

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the restaurant, with police swarming around.

"It was really just scary not knowing if they had shot themselves," Holweger said.

She said police blocked off a main street that runs in front of the McDonald's in the city of 15,000.

Holweger said the woman who died at the restaurant was the early morning manager, and that the shooter had been an employee there. Holweger said it appeared that the man killed the woman when she unlocked the door to let him in for an early-morning shift.

George Suarez, owner and operator of the McDonald's in Moultrie, said the restaurant will remain closed until further notice.

"We are devastated by the loss of our beloved restaurant manager, and our hearts go out to all the victims of this senseless act of violence," Suarez said in a statement provided by McDonald's corporate office in Chicago.

The killings in Moultrie, in rural Colquitt County about 60 miles (95 kilometers) northeast of Tallahassee, Florida, came a day after a gunman in Atlanta killed one person and wounded four others at a medical office.

Chas Cannon, Colquitt County's government administrator, said he was driving his daughter to school on Thursday morning when he passed the McDonald's blocked off by police tape and patrol cars.

"A killing is pretty rare in our neck of the woods," Cannon said. "It's surprising. But this day and time, our jail's at capacity, our local prison's at capacity. There's a lot of folks breaking the law, unfortunately."

Press group: China biggest global jailer of journalists

WASHINGTON (AP) — China was the biggest global jailer of journalists last year with more than 100 behind bars, according to a press freedom group, as President Xi Jinping's government tightened control over society.

Xi's government also was one of the biggest exporters of propaganda content, according to Reporters without Borders. China ranked second to last on the group's annual index of press freedom, behind only neighbor North Korea.

The ruling Communist Party has tightened already strict controls on media in China, where all newspapers and broadcasters are state-owned. Websites and social media are required to enforce censorship that bans material that might spread opposition to one-party rule.

Xi, China's most powerful figure in decades, called during a 2016 meeting with journalists who had been awarded official prizes for them to adhere to "the correct orientation of public opinion."

Xi is pursuing a "crusade against journalism," Reporters Without Borders said in a report Wednesday. It called China's decline in press freedom "disastrous."

Beijing operates what is regarded as the world's most extensive system of internet controls. Its filters try to block the Chinese public from seeing websites abroad operated by news outlets, governments and human rights and other activist groups.

Chinese journalists have been prosecuted on charges of spying, leaking national secrets and picking quarrels, a vague accusation used to jail dissidents. Others are subjected to surveillance, intimidation and harassment.

Journalist Dong Yuyu, who worked at a ruling party-affiliated newspaper and is a former Harvard University fellow, faces espionage charges after being detained for more than one year, his family said last week.

In 2022, Chinese-born Australian journalist Cheng Lei was tried in China on national security charges but has yet to learn the verdict, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong said in March.

Cheng worked for CGTN, the English-language state TV channel aimed at foreign audiences. She was detained in August 2019 and accused of sharing state secrets.

In Hong Kong, the Communist Party forced a prominent newspaper, Apple Daily, to shut down as part of a crackdown on pro-democracy sentiment.

Apple Daily's founder, Jimmy Lai, was convicted of fraud last year that his supporters said were politically motivated. Six other former executives of the newspaper pleaded guilty.

Pride organizers keep eye on drag laws ahead of festivals

By SUSAN HAIGH and PAT EATON-ROBB Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — Tennessee organizers booked more than 50 drag entertainers for next month's Midsouth Pride festival in Memphis now that the state's new law placing strict limits on cabaret shows is temporarily on hold.

But they are being cautious, making adjustments to performances should the limits of the first-in-the-nation law essentially banning drag from public property or in the presence of minors kick in before June celebrations.

"As soon as this stuff started making its way, I immediately started coming out with plans to be able to counteract that," said longtime festival organizer Vanessa Rodley. "Because, at the end of the day, we can't put on an event that then segregates a huge portion of our community, right? We just can't do that. So you have to find ways around it."

The show must go on.

Organizers of Pride festivals and parades in mostly conservative states where there's been a broader push targeting LGBTQ+ rights have been under increasing pressure to censor their events. They're taking steps like editing acts and canceling drag shows in order to still hold their annual celebrations of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer identity in today's contentious climate.

In some cases, they are trying to navigate broad legislative language that can equate drag performances and story hours with "adult-oriented performances that are harmful to minors," as in the Tennessee law. In other places, Pride organizers have had to fight for local permits that were pro forma in past years, facing off with critics at local city council meetings who oppose drag.

Most Pride organizations are busy "doing their homework" and investigating how legislation popping up around the country may impact their events, said Ron deHarte, co-president for the U.S. Association of Prides. And in more progressive states like California, this year's Pride events will be an opportunity to make a larger statement and raise awareness about the LGBTQ+ community, he said.

"Our members attract more than 20 million people in the United States to their events every year," deHarte said. "So when you talk about the collective impact that Pride organizers can have, not only in their community but across the country, it is powerful."

Bills to limit or ban drag were filed in more than a dozen states. The only other state set to enact a law is Florida, where Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis is expected to sign a bill.

Kayla Bates, a founder of ELGbtq+, an organizer of the community Pride festival and parade in Elgin, Illinois, said she expects a large turnout for the inaugural event given the legislation targeting transgender rights and drag shows elsewhere.

"I think people want to really make it known that they back us and that we should feel safe and protected in our community," she said.

Often held in June, Pride events began as a way to commemorate the uprising by New York's LGBTQ+ communities in 1969, known as the Stonewall rebellion, and as a way to celebrate the LGBTQ+ rights movement.

In New York City, a Pride rally planned for June 17 and a parade on June 25 will have a national theme: "Strength in Solidarity." Sue Doster, co-chairperson of NYC Pride, said they're putting a spotlight on the transgender community and drag queens, targets of the recent legislation in conservative states.

"They're attacking these people because they're less likely to stand up and fight back, which is why it's important that we all come together in solidarity and speak up when we see these injustices," she said.

Backlash against transgender individuals, drag performances and Pride events is not new. Last year, 31 members of a white supremacist group were arrested near an Idaho Pride event after they were found packed into the back of a U-Haul truck with riot gear.

This year, the Pride Alliance of the Treasure Coast in Port St. Lucie, Florida has reacted to possible legislation, canceling a planned gay pride parade and restricting other events to people 21 years and older.

The Pride festival in Hutchinson, Kansas, has also adjusted its program and secured a new venue after

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losing its original one when a local business owner posted a video on social media decrying the event, which included a drag queen story hour, as depraved.

"Our event is completely family friendly," said Hutchinson Salt City Pride chair Julia Johnson.

Meanwhile, organizers in the Nashville, Tennessee, suburb of Franklin, opted not to include drag performances in their Pride celebrations so they can work with local officials to get other events permitted.

In Naples, Florida, Pride organizers agreed they wouldn't allow drag performers to be tipped on stage, and later announced that the drag show portion of its festival will be held at an indoor venue because of safety concerns.

In Memphis, drag entertainers plan to not change costumes mid-performance or accept tips from the audience if the limits are reinstated.

Even in progressive-leaning Massachusetts, there's been debate about whether a drag show could be part of a Pride celebration in the small town of North Brookfield, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) west of Boston. The three-member select board had rescinded a previous vote and determined a drag show violated restrictions on "adult entertainment." Last week, the town's lawyer said the event could take place on the town common as planned after the ACLU got involved.

Support for the community is also making a difference. In Iowa, the Cedar Falls Mayor Rob Green, this week reversed his controversial decision not to sign a proclamation declaring June as Pride Month. He wrote on Facebook that he signed the proclamation out of concern for the safety and health of LGBTQIA+ residents after hearing stories and receiving letters from constituents.

"I learn a lot from these kind of letters and very much appreciate the opportunity to re-examine my assumptions and thought processes," he wrote.

Biden sends wife Jill to King Charles' coronation Saturday

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Jill Biden has celebrated the athleticism of wounded service members with Prince Harry, discussed the value of early childhood education with Princess Kate and sipped tea poured by Queen Elizabeth II.

Now the first lady is back in London for another royal engagement. President Joe Biden has dispatched his wife to represent the United States at Saturday's coronation of King Charles III, the late queen's eldest son. No American president has ever attended a British coronation.

"Headed to the U.K. for the Coronation of King Charles III – the first in 70 years!," Jill Biden tweeted before her flight Thursday to London. "It's an honor to represent the United States for this historic moment and celebrate the special relationship between our countries."

Jill Biden was just 2 years old when Elizabeth was crowned in June 1953. She held the throne for seven decades until her death last September at age 96.

While in London, Jill Biden will engage in some soft diplomacy before the big event. She is traveling with Finnegan Biden, one of her granddaughters.

The first lady will spend part of Friday at No. 10 Downing St., the prime minister's official residence, to meet for the first time with Akshata Murty, the wife of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. Afterward, the women will meet with veterans and their families participating in a health and wellness program.

They will later visit a school that is hosting an event about the coronation. The first lady will also stop by the U.S. Embassy to greet staff and their families before ending her day at a reception King Charles III is hosting at Buckingham Palace.

On Saturday, Jill Biden will represent the United States at the coronation at Westminster Abbey, seated among several hundred heads of state, royals from other nations and other guests who were invited to watch Charles and his wife, Camilla, be crowned king and queen. Afterward, she will attend a reception hosted by U.S. Ambassador Jane Hartley.

Jill Biden will also mingle at a Sunday luncheon hosted by Sunak and Murty at their Downing Street residence before her flight back to Washington.

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President Biden has received some criticism for skipping the coronation, but the White House has cited precedent for his decision. Dwight Eisenhower, who was president in 1953, did not attend Elizabeth's coronation.

The president and Charles have interacted at global climate events since Biden took office, and during the queen's funeral last year. They also spoke in April when Biden called to say he was sending the first lady to the coronation, and the president expressed interest in meeting with the king in the United Kingdom at a future date, the White House said at the time.

First ladies often stand in for presidents when they can't be present.

"I love seeing the first lady as our representative and I would have been thrilled for any first lady to attend," said Lindsay Reynolds, who was first lady Melania Trump's White House chief of staff. "I don't think it is a slight in any way for the president to not be attending."

Most modern-era first ladies, including Jill Biden, have engaged with members of the British royal family because the late queen had met every American president since Eisenhower, except for Lyndon Johnson.

Biden was the 13th and final U.S. leader to meet the queen. They saw each other when he visited England in 2021 with his wife to participate in a Group of Seven world leader summit. At the time, the queen also invited the Bidens to have tea with her at Windsor Castle.

Jill Biden told The Associated Press in a telephone interview after the queen's death that sitting in her living room was like being with one's grandmother.

"And she said, 'Let me pour the tea,' and we said, 'No, no, let us help,' and she said 'Oh, no, no, no, I'll get this. You sit down,'" the first lady said. "And it was just a very special moment with a very special woman."

During that trip, she and Prince William's wife, Kate, met for the first time at a preschool in southwest England where they participated in a roundtable discussion on the role of early childhood education in life outcomes. They also learned about caring for bunny rabbits.

The first lady also has met William's brother, Prince Harry, several times through their work and support of military veterans. She has joined Harry for the Invictus Games, an athletic competition he founded for wounded or sick military veterans.

Hard to read? Oregon GOP boycott comes down to reading level

By ED KOMENDA Associated Press

Republicans blocking votes on bills about abortion, gun control and gender-affirming healthcare in Oregon this week have based their boycott on an obscure, 44-year-old state law that requires bill summaries to be written at the reading level of an 8th- or 9th-grader.

GOP leadership says their walkout — now entering day three — is about "every bill" but that two bills that would expand protections for abortions and transgender health care and place more limitations on gun ownership "specifically don't qualify" under the 1979 law.

Democrats say Republicans didn't take issue with the writing style of bipartisan bills they backed earlier in the session until hot button issues were on the table. The fate of the contested bills is now unclear; under a new voter-approved law, Oregon legislators who have 10 unexcused absences are banned from re-election.

"This is about abortion, guns and transgender rights," said Senate Majority Leader Kate Lieber. "The timing of this is such that they're walking out on important legislation that Oregonians sent us here to do."

The 1979 law in question specifically requires bill summaries to have an eighth- or ninth-grade reading level — measured by a score of at least 60 on something called the Flesch readability test. It's unclear if it was ever followed or consulted for past bill summaries, but it was dusted off recently by a Republican Senate employee who dug it out the Capitol archives.

"It's important that we follow the law because, if we're passing laws today, are we just expecting in, you know, 20, 30, 40 years that people are just going to ignore the laws that we have on the books that we all passed? I don't think we would appreciate that," said Senate Republican leader Sen. Tim Knopp.

"And so I'm pretty sure that the legislators that did that back then also wanted the law followed"

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The namesake of the Flesch test was Rudolf Flesch, a Vienna-born psychologist and readability expert specializing in the art of plain talk.

Designed in the 1940s to measure how easy it is to read and understand a text, the Flesch readability test factors word and sentence length to determine the grade level of a text. Scores range from 1 to 100, with 100 being the easiest to read and 1 being the most difficult. A score between 60 and 70 indicates an eighth- or ninth-grade reading level.

Flesch's readability formula eventually inspired lawmakers across the country in the 1970s to use the test to make insurance policies easy-to-read for everyday consumers. In 1975, scientist J. Peter Kincaid refined the formula into the Flesch-Kincaid Readability test to help U.S. Navy personnel improve technical documents.

By 1979 in Oregon, lawmakers had figured out a way to use the Flesch test to shape legislation with plain language, too. Senate Bill 543 passed with overwhelming bipartisan support at the time.

Gary Wilhelms, the Oregon house minority leader in 1979, was one of 31 bipartisan votes to pass the readability bill. On Monday, the 85-year-old Republican addressed the resurfacing of the law decades after its passage in a statement released by the GOP senators.

"Transparency prevailed then as it should today," Wilhelms said. "The law is the law, and I'm glad the Senate Republican Caucus is attempting to enforce this statute today."

In an interview with The Associated Press, Wilhelms said his memory of the political moment in 1979 that shaped the readability law is fuzzy. He described it as "minor legislation."

Justin Brecht is the senior policy analyst for the Senate Republican caucus who knocked the dust off the law four decades later. But even with that legislation, it would take more digging and a legal opinion to understand how it fit into the GOP playbook.

"Well, at first it was, 'Well, what's this statute that it says these measure summaries have to comply with?'" Brecht said. "Most don't even know what the Flesch readability standard is."

Republican lawmakers have until May 12 before those with 10 unexcused absences will be banned from re-election under the new law passed by 70% of Oregon voters last year.

Associated Press Writers Andrew Selsky and Claire Rush in Salem, Oregon, contributed to this report.

The Associated Press receives support from several private foundations to enhance its explanatory coverage of elections and democracy. See more about AP's democracy initiative [here](#). The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Anti-Muslim Twitter feed in Spain: 'A recipe for disaster'

By DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The person who operates the Twitter account claims to be an Islamic fundamentalist living in Spain, empathizing with violent extremists and longing for the days, more than six centuries ago, when Muslims ruled the country.

The views are as fake as the account, part of a loose and informal effort by far-right nationalists in Spain to use social media to stir up anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant fervor and to undermine faith in Spain's multicultural democracy. In some cases, they exploit Twitter's loose rules to spread hateful messages and threats of violence, while in others they pose as Muslims as a way to disparage actual followers of Islam.

By harnessing the power of social media to communicate, coordinate and evangelize, those behind the so-called Reconquista movement are relying on the same playbook used by far-right extremists in the U.S., Brazil and other countries who have used social media to expand their power and recruit new followers.

Reconquista also borrows the same rhetoric used by far-right groups in the U.S., and even some of the same online memes, including Pepe the Frog, a crudely drawn amphibian who has become a mascot for white supremacist and antigovernment groups in the U.S. In one Reconquista meme, Pepe is shown wearing the garb of a 16th century Spanish conquistador.

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As in the U.S. and other countries, the Spanish nationalists have seized on debates over trans rights, spreading misleading claims about the exploitation of children and supposed conspiracies to eradicate the idea of gender. They've also criticized COVID-19 vaccines, feminism, efforts to address climate change and support for Ukraine following Russia's invasion.

The remarkable overlap of tactics and interests isn't a coincidence, but reflects how far-right groups in many countries are learning from one another, copying each other's successes, said Joel Finkelstein, co-founder of the Princeton, N.J.-based Network Contagion Research Institute, a group that studies online extremism that released a report on Reconquista this week. The findings were first reported by The Associated Press.

"This is a recipe for disaster," Finkelstein told the AP. "All over the world we're seeing different manifestations of the same kind of problem. The flags are all different, but it's remarkable how similar the memes are."

One concern, Finkelstein said, is that the rhetoric could lead to offline violence.

Reconquista takes its name from the successful effort by Christian leaders to reconquer vast parts of the Iberian peninsula from its Islamic rulers and expel Muslims during the Middle Ages. It's a term embraced by some on the far-right, who see their opposition to Islam and immigrants as a divinely ordained sequel of sorts to that bloody, centuries long conflict.

Anti-Muslim rhetoric from accounts linked to Reconquista soared after a Moroccan man attacked two Catholic churches in the southern city of Algeciras in January, killing a church officer and injuring a priest. The man, an unauthorized immigrant, is now jailed in the psychiatric ward of a Spanish prison awaiting the results of a judicial probe; authorities believe he acted alone.

Many of the violent threats against Muslims that spread on Twitter following the attack violated the platform's rules, and in some cases the platform did act to remove the content or suspend the author. But often those behind the content simply created a new account days after they were suspended.

The far-right party Vox helped popularize Reconquista online, using the term repeatedly in Tweets ahead of the 2019 election. Vox, whose members express strongly anti-immigrant views, now holds 52 seats, or the third largest number, in Spain's 350-member lower legislative chamber. The party's Twitter account was briefly suspended in 2020 for accusing its critics of promoting pedophilia, and again in 2021 for inciting hatred against Muslims.

The party's leader, Santiago Abascal, has made several references to the Reconquista, as he did last year in a Tweet. "Today is the anniversary of the reconquest of Granada, an indelible memory of the day the recovery of the entire national territory was completed after eight centuries of Islamic invasion," he wrote.

Supporters of La Reconquista often display Spanish flags in their profiles and some openly praise Francisco Franco, the fascist dictator whose rule ended more than 40 years ago. They often refer to Muslims as Moors, an outdated historical term for Muslims from North Africa. One uses a photo of ex-U.S. President Donald Trump as their profile picture.

"If loving Spain is very facha, well, I am very facha," reads the Twitter bio of one supporter of La Reconquista, using a Spanish term for fascism.

"Reconquista style, but we won't only remove the moors but also those who opened their doors to them," wrote another.

Spain has responded to the effort to rehabilitate Franco's legacy by passing a law last year that made it a crime to glorify the dictator. In 2019 Franco's body was exhumed from a tomb at a grandiose memorial complex built by the fascists. He was reburied in a nearby cemetery.

Far-right groups in several countries have sought to reshape public understanding of events like the holocaust, slavery and, more recently, the Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol. By ignoring the details of the historic Reconquista or Franco's dictatorship, La Reconquista seeks to legitimize its own anti-immigrant views as traditional Spanish values, according to Marc Esteve Del Valle, a professor at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands who has studied Reconquista's use of the internet.

In that sense, the internet isn't just a place where Reconquista supporters find each other and share information, but a method of shaping public opinion and politics.

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"The social networks are tools to organize, to mobilize. It's where the movement lives," Esteve Del Valle said.

Twitter has drastically reduced its staff focused on ferreting out misinformation, hate speech and extremist content since it was bought by Elon Musk. The company did not respond to messages seeking comment about La Reconquista.

In recent years a number of informally organized far-right groups have used social media in similar ways.

In Italy, an anti-vaccine group known as V_V (after the movie "V for Vendetta") has used Telegram to threaten nurses, doctors and others involved in efforts to save lives during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Germany, a similar group known as Querdenken used Facebook to encourage violence against vaccine supporters until it was kicked off the site. In Brazil, supporters of former President Jair Bolsonaro plotted on social media ahead of January's violent attack in Brasilia.

And in the U.S., social media played a critical role in spurring the deadly Jan. 6, 2021 riot at the U.S. Capitol, and is now being used by supporters of Trump in an effort to whitewash the events of that day.

Trump himself has helped build bridges between some of the groups, as when he praised the Spanish Vox Party during a video message played at a rally last year.

"We have to make sure that we protect our borders and do lots of very good conservative things," Trump told the crowd. "Spain is a great country and we want to keep it a great country. So congratulations to Vox for so many great messages you get out to the people of Spain and the people of the world."

Listen both ways: Blind walkers winning safer road crossings

By JEFF McMURRAY Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — After a retinal disease left him legally blind, architect John Gleichman was struck by a taxicab while walking home near Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo — at the same intersection where a 4-year-old girl was killed by a hit-and-run driver years earlier.

Although Maya Hirsch's death in 2006 ignited a citywide crusade for pedestrian safety improvements, almost all the electronic upgrades since then have been for people who can see. Nearly 3,000 Chicago intersections are now equipped with visual crossing signals, yet fewer than three dozen include audible cues.

In a landmark victory for blind residents challenging the accessibility of a major city's signalized crosswalks, a federal judge in March ruled in a class-action lawsuit that such disparity in the nation's third-largest city violates the Americans with Disabilities Act.

"Every time I go out to go downtown for a meeting, I have to think I could get hit today and not make it home," said Gleichman, 65, who has been struck four times by vehicles while navigating the city with his white cane since being diagnosed as legally blind in 2005. He considers himself fortunate to have escaped serious injury each time.

A future hearing could decide how many audible crossing signals Chicago must install, but a similar case in New York City suggests it could be substantial. A federal judge there appointed an independent monitor and in December 2021 gave officials a decade to gradually make at least 10,000 of its approximately 13,000 signalized intersections accessible to blind pedestrians. It's already well ahead of schedule.

"It's been huge progress. It's a game-changer to the blind and visually impaired community," said Terence Page, president of the Greater New York Council of the Blind. "As new cities begin to build infrastructure, we want accessibility to not be an afterthought but work in parallel with the upgrades."

Accessible pedestrian signals, known as APS, have been around for decades, though the technology has evolved.

Many of Chicago's few APS-equipped intersections — including on a busy street outside The Chicago Lighthouse, which provides services to blind and low-vision residents — still rely on beeps or cuckoo chirps to announce when it's safe to cross. Newer models actually speak the words "walk" or "don't walk," and feature tactical buttons to clarify directions so blind pedestrians don't stray into traffic. Many also convey the time remaining before the light turns red.

Sandy Murillo, a lifelong Chicago-area resident who was born with glaucoma and lost her sight at age 2,

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said she didn't even know about APS until she heard a strange voice say "walk" during a childhood family trip to southern California.

"That kind of made it dawn on me," said Murillo, who produces a radio show for The Chicago Lighthouse and writes a blog on issues facing the blind community. "I thought, 'Oh, so that's what it is. They're there for people like me.'"

Chicago's Department of Transportation declined to comment on the judge's ruling, citing the ongoing litigation. But spokesperson Erica Schroeder told The Associated Press in an email that APS devices are installed at 35 intersections and "under construction, in design, or in procurement" at more than 150 others.

The department estimates a \$50,000 to \$200,000 price tag per intersection to install APS, although grant money is available through the 2021 federal infrastructure law to help cities defray some costs.

Advocates for Chicago's blind residents say they pushed the city for years to add APS with little success before taking legal action.

Kathy Austin, a community engagement specialist at Second Sense — a downtown organization serving blind residents — recalls a meeting in 2017 or 2018 in which she and others in the blind community presented a list of the most dangerous intersections, only to be told by city officials that APS was too difficult to install in many of those places.

"There was a laundry list of excuses," Austin said.

Blind residents know from their mobility training to wait to hear the sounds of parallel traffic before crossing a street. That's often difficult in noisy downtowns like Chicago's with its overhead "El" train stations and other ambient noises. Then, when the pandemic hit and downtown traffic steeply declined, they encountered the opposite problem — not enough vehicles or even people around to help decipher when to walk or stop.

"Sometimes I would stand at an intersection for like half a minute and no car would come by," Gleichman said. "So you either ask somebody walking by, 'Do I have the light?' or you just go out in the road and hope you don't get hit."

London-based Waymap, which created a smartphone navigation app for blind pedestrians that Washington, D.C.'s subway system uses as an accessibility tool, found in a study that blind people average just 2.5 regular routes — such as from home to the office or grocery store and back — if they use a cane or 3.5 if they use a guide dog. Celso Zucollo, Waymap's chief operating officer, said the study found that people who lack independent mobility were far more likely to experience depression.

Maureen Reid, a job-placement counselor at The Chicago Lighthouse, said she feels more comfortable than many of her blind friends moving about the city because of her familiarity with its sidewalks and the help of her guide dog, Gaston. But she acknowledges there's room for numerous safety improvements — including more tactile strips at pedestrian crosswalks and transit stations. Her previous dog slipped off a platform edge at an "El" station and dangled from his harness over the commuter train track as Reid yelled for help. The dog was unharmed.

San Francisco voluntarily entered a settlement with blind residents nearly two decades ago to add APS, and numerous other U.S. cities as well as the state of Maryland require it, said Torie Atkinson, senior staff attorney with Disability Rights Advocates, which represents plaintiffs in both the New York and Chicago cases.

Matt Baker, vice president of sales and marketing at Greenville, Texas-based Polara, a leading manufacturer of APS products, said the Chicago market has been one of the toughest to crack — with just a few intersections equipped with Polara devices. Baker said that could change due to the court ruling and expectations that the federal board reviewing public right-of-way issues will eventually require APS at most new or rebuilt signalized intersections nationwide.

Either way, Chicago will almost certainly be compelled to include the technology in future construction. Atkinson said the Chicago verdict expanded on the New York ruling in several key areas, reinforcing the need for Chicago to equip all its signalized intersections with APS.

"I would genuinely hope these lawsuits are a wake-up call," Atkinson said.

Trump is accused in court of rape. Will it matter in 2024?

By SARA BURNETT Associated Press

E. Jean Carroll testified in sometimes searing detail about the day she says Donald Trump raped her in a department store dressing room two decades before he became president, allegations the Republican has repeatedly and vehemently denied.

Taking the witness stand in support of Carroll this week, two friends told jurors that they spoke with the former magazine columnist shortly after the alleged 1996 attack, and that they believe she is telling the truth. Other women testified about separate encounters; one said Trump grabbed and groped her while they were on a flight in the late 1970s, the other told jurors he forcibly kissed her at his Florida home in 2005.

The accounts, shared during the civil trial on Carroll's claims of battery and defamation against Trump, mark the first time that any of the numerous allegations of sexual misconduct against the former president have been heard in a court trial. Given a chance to rebut Carroll's accusations on the witness stand, Trump declined to make an appearance, instead traveling overseas. He told reporters in Ireland that he may still testify in person, though his attorney said in court that he will not and that they will not present other witnesses.

For most politicians, the allegations laid out in a New York courtroom would be enough to torpedo any future aspirations. But Trump isn't the average politician, a fact that became clear when he won the 2016 presidential contest a month after the release of an "Access Hollywood" tape in which he boasted about sexually assaulting women and said that as a star, "you can do anything."

Now, as Trump campaigns for a 2024 presidential bid, the Carroll case provides another test of Trump's ability to survive scandals that would sink others. Some political observers say the public already has hardened opinions of the former president — love him or hate him — and that claims about him abusing women aren't new.

"At this point, the American people have a pretty good sense of Donald Trump's character, so it is unlikely that the Carroll trial will change many voters' minds," said Christina Wolbrecht, a political science professor at the University of Notre Dame who studies politics and gender.

She said a more relevant question is whether a verdict against Trump in this trial, or convictions in other cases, will scare away potential donors or advisers.

In addition to the Carroll case, Trump was recently charged in New York with 34 felony counts of falsifying business records in a hush-money scheme to cover up allegations of extramarital affairs during the 2016 campaign. He is also under criminal investigation over his attempts to overturn his 2020 election loss and his retention of classified documents after leaving office.

Democratic pollster Celinda Lake, who has worked with President Joe Biden, said that during recent focus groups she's been conducting with Democratic and independent likely voters on Trump and his legal troubles, women kept volunteering that the case they were most troubled by is "the rape case." That has left Lake thinking the trial testimony could be more damaging than she initially assumed.

"I was flabbergasted, because I thought this was baked in" to how voters feel about Trump, Lake said. "They knew he didn't respect women and that he was a real playboy, but rape is different."

Steven Cheung, a spokesperson for Trump's campaign, did not respond to a message seeking comment for this story.

Trump's other legal issues have so far brought limited political fallout, but that could change, according to a poll last month by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

It found only 4 in 10 U.S. adults believe Trump acted illegally in the New York hush-money case. About half of voters believe he broke the law in Georgia, where he is under investigation for interfering in the 2020 election vote count, the poll found.

It also showed about half feel similarly about Trump's role in his supporters' storming of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, and his handling of classified documents found at Mar-a-Lago. The poll did not ask about the Carroll case.

Carroll filed a defamation suit against Trump while he was still president, over denials and insults he

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made about her. She filed the rape claim in November, under a New York state law that temporarily allows sexual assault victims to sue over alleged attacks that happened even decades ago. Because it is a civil and not criminal case, Trump faces no prison time; Carroll is seeking unspecified monetary damages.

Jurors did see parts of a recorded deposition in which Trump answered questions under oath last fall. He called Carroll a "nut job" and "mentally sick," adding, "She said that I did something to her that never took place." The jury also was shown the "Access Hollywood" tape.

Trump, his attorneys and his supporters have dismissed Carroll's allegations as politically motivated attacks and an attempt to sell more copies of her memoir. Trump has said he wasn't at the department store with Carroll and had no clue who she was when she first aired the story publicly. On his social media network last week, Trump called the case "a made up SCAM."

At trial, Trump's attorney also questioned why Carroll didn't report the alleged assault to police at the time; Carroll, 79, said many people her age were conditioned to keep quiet about such attacks. Carroll, a registered Democrat, also testified that she voted for Trump's Democratic opponents in 2016 and 2020 but said that has nothing to do with her lawsuit.

Rachel O'Leary Carmona, executive director of Women's March, said she is hopeful that Carroll's case will mobilize voters. After Trump's election, millions of people turned out to protest him at women's marches across the country, and the events have been credited with sparking increased political involvement by women, including seeing a record number of women elected to the U.S. House in the 2018 midterms.

"I hope that we can take this moment as another proof point of the absolutely dire, critically dire need to build women's political power in this country," she said.

The Associated Press typically does not name people who say they have been sexually assaulted unless they come forward publicly, as Carroll has done.

Associated Press writer Michelle Price in New York contributed to this report.

Police video shows Idaho killings suspect in traffic stop

PULLMAN, Wash. (AP) — Newly released body camera video shows the man accused of fatally stabbing four University of Idaho students being pulled over for allegedly running a red light about a month before the killings.

The video shows Washington State University campus police stopping Bryan Kohberger on Oct. 14, 2022, in Pullman, the Idaho Statesman reported Thursday.

During the nearly 10-minute video, WSU Police Officer Isobel Luengas parks her vehicle behind Kohberger's 2015 Hyundai Elantra in a parking lot. Luengas approaches Kohberger as he sits in the car and she says he drove through a red light. She asks for Kohberger's license, vehicle registration and proof of insurance.

Kohberger tells the officer he was stuck in the middle of the intersection.

"I was behind you the whole time," she said. "You're not supposed to enter the intersection at all for that reason because if the light turns red, then you're stuck in the intersection."

Kohberger, then a WSU graduate student living in Pullman, says he is unfamiliar with how to drive through crosswalks because he's from rural Pennsylvania and asks for further explanation.

"It never even occurred to me that was actually something wrong," Kohberger said. "I'm just curious about the law. I don't mean to disagree with anything."

Luengas notes in the video that Kohberger's registration was current, with an expiration of Nov. 22, 2022. The officer eventually lets him go with a warning.

Kohberger, 28, is charged with four counts of first-degree murder and burglary in connection with the stabbing deaths in Moscow, Idaho.

The bodies of Madison Mogen, Kaylee Goncalves, Xana Kernodle and Ethan Chapin were found on Nov. 13, 2022, at a rental home across the street from the University of Idaho campus.

The slayings shocked the Idaho community and neighboring Pullman, Washington, where Kohberger

was a graduate student studying criminology at Washington State University. Kohberger remains in custody with a court hearing set for late June.

Proud Boys' Tarrío guilty of Jan. 6 seditious conspiracy

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN, LINDSAY WHITEHURST and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press WASHINGTON (AP) — Former Proud Boys leader Enrique Tarrío and three other members of the far-right extremist group were convicted Thursday of a plot to attack the U.S. Capitol in a desperate bid to keep Donald Trump in power after the Republican lost the 2020 presidential election.

A jury in Washington, D.C., found Tarrío and three lieutenants guilty of seditious conspiracy after hearing from dozens of witnesses over more than three months in one of the most serious cases brought in the stunning attack that unfolded on Jan. 6, 2021, as the world watched on live TV.

Jurors cleared a fifth defendant — Dominic Pezzola — of the sedition charge, though he was convicted of other serious felonies. The judge excused the jury without delivering a verdict on some counts — including another conspiracy charge for Pezzola — after jurors failed to reach a unanimous decision.

It's a significant milestone for the Justice Department, which has now secured seditious conspiracy convictions against the leaders of two major extremist groups prosecutors say were intent on keeping Democratic President Joe Biden out of the White House at all costs. The charge carries a prison sentence of up to 20 years.

"The Justice Department will never stop working to defend the democracy to which all Americans are entitled," Attorney General Merrick Garland told reporters after the verdict.

Tarrío, behind bars since his March 2022 arrest, didn't appear to show any emotion as the verdict was read. He hugged one of his lawyers and shook the hand of the other before leaving the courtroom. A few of the people sitting among the defendants' relatives wiped away tears as the verdict was read.

The verdict comes after a trial that took more than twice as long as originally expected, slowed by bickering, mistrial motions and revelations of government informants in the group. Securing the conviction of Tarrío, a high-profile leader who wasn't at the riot itself, could embolden the Justice Department as a special counsel investigates Trump, including key aspects of the Jan. 6 insurrection.

Special Counsel Jack Smith in recent weeks has sought the testimony of many people close to Trump. They include former Vice President Mike Pence, who testified before a grand jury last week, likely giving prosecutors a key first-person account about certain conversations and events in the weeks preceding the riot.

Tarrío was a top target of what has become the largest Justice Department investigation in American history. He led the neo-fascist group — known for street fights with left-wing activists — when Trump infamously told the Proud Boys to "stand back and stand by" during his first debate with Biden.

Tarrío wasn't in Washington on Jan. 6, because he had been arrested two days earlier in a separate case and ordered out of the capital city. But prosecutors said he organized and directed the attack by Proud Boys who stormed the Capitol that day.

In addition to Tarrío, a Miami resident, three other Proud Boys were convicted of seditious conspiracy: Ethan Nordean, Joseph Biggs and Zachary Rehl.

Tarrío, Nordean, Biggs and Rehl were also convicted of obstructing Congress' certification of Biden's electoral victory and obstructing law enforcement as well as two other conspiracy charges. The four were cleared of an assault charge stemming from Pezzola, who stole an officer's riot shield.

Rehl's attorney, Carmen Hernandez, said her client "continues to maintain his innocence." Lawyers for Biggs and Pezzola declined to comment. An attorney for Tarrío declined to comment.

Prosecutors told jurors the group viewed itself as "Trump's army" and was prepared for "all-out war" to stop Biden from becoming president.

The Proud Boys were "lined up behind Donald Trump and willing to commit violence on his behalf," prosecutor Conor Mulroe said in his closing argument.

The backbone of the government's case was hundreds of messages exchanged by Proud Boys in the

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days leading up to Jan. 6 that show the far-right extremist group peddling Trump's false claims of a stolen election and trading fears over what would happen when Biden took office.

As Proud Boys swarmed the Capitol, Tarrío cheered them on from afar, writing on social media: "Do what must be done." In a Proud Boys encrypted group chat later that day someone asked what they should do next. Tarrío responded: "Do it again."

"Make no mistake," Tarrío wrote in another message. "We did this."

Defense lawyers denied there was any plot to attack the Capitol or stop Congress' certification of Biden's win. A lawyer for Tarrío sought to push the blame onto Trump, arguing the former president incited the pro-Trump mob's attack when he urged the crowd near the White House to "fight like hell."

"It was Donald Trump's words. It was his motivation. It was his anger that caused what occurred on January 6th in your beautiful and amazing city," attorney Nayib Hassan said in his final appeal to jurors. "It was not Enrique Tarrío. They want to use Enrique Tarrío as a scapegoat for Donald J. Trump and those in power."

The Justice Department hadn't tried a seditious conspiracy case in a decade before a jury convicted another extremist group leader, Oath Keepers founder Stewart Rhodes, of the Civil War-era charge last year.

Over the course of two Oath Keepers trials, Rhodes and five other members were convicted of seditious conspiracy for what prosecutors said was a separate plot to forcibly halt the transfer of presidential power from Trump to Biden. Three defendants were acquitted of the sedition charge, but convicted of obstructing Congress' certification of Biden's electoral victory.

The Justice Department has yet to disclose how much prison time it will seek when the Oath Keepers are sentenced later this month.

This story has been corrected to reflect that the Oath Keepers sentencing is scheduled for later this month, not next month.

Oil boom transforms Guyana, prompting a scramble for spoils

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

ANN'S GROVE, Guyana (AP) — Villagers in this tiny coastal community lined up on the soggy grass, leaned into the microphone and shared their grievances as someone in the crowd yelled, "Speak the truth!"

And so they did. One by one, speakers listed what they wanted: a library, streetlights, school buses, homes, a grocery store, reliable electricity, wider roads and better bridges.

"Please help us," said Evadne Pellew-Fomundam — a 70-year-old who lives in Ann's Grove, one of Guyana's poorest communities — to the country's prime minister and other officials who organized the meeting to hear people's concerns and boost their party's image ahead of municipal elections.

The list of needs is long in this South American country of 791,000 people that is poised to become the world's fourth-largest offshore oil producer, placing it ahead of Qatar, the United States, Mexico and Norway. The oil boom will generate billions of dollars for this largely impoverished nation. It's also certain to spark bitter fights over how the wealth should be spent in a place where politics is sharply divided along ethnic lines: 29% of the population is of African descent and 40% of East Indian descent, from indentured servants brought to Guyana after slavery was abolished.

Change is already visible in this country, which has a rich Caribbean culture and was once known as the "Venice of the West Indies." Guyana is crisscrossed by canals and dotted with villages called "Now or Never" and "Free and Easy" that now co-exist with gated communities with names like "Windsor Estates." In the capital, Georgetown, buildings made of glass, steel and concrete rise above colonial-era wooden structures, with shuttered sash windows, that are slowly decaying. Farmers are planting broccoli and other new crops, restaurants offer better cuts of meat, and the government has hired a European company to produce local sausages as foreign workers transform Guyana's consumption profile.

With \$1.6 billion in oil revenue so far, the government has launched infrastructure projects including the construction of 12 hospitals, seven hotels, scores of schools, two main highways, its first deep-water port

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and a \$1.9 billion gas-to-energy project that Vice President Bharrat Jagdeo told The Associated Press will double Guyana's energy output and slash high power bills by half.

And while the projects have created jobs, it's rare for Guyanese to work directly in the oil industry. The work to dig deep into the ocean floor is highly technical, and the country doesn't offer such training.

Experts worry that Guyana lacks the expertise and legal and regulatory framework to handle the influx of wealth. They say it could weaken democratic institutions and lead the country on a path like that of neighboring Venezuela, a petrostate that plunged into political and economic chaos.

"Guyana's political instability raises concerns that the country is unprepared for its newfound wealth without a plan to manage the new revenue and equitably disburse the financial benefits," according to a USAID report that acknowledged the country's deep ethnic rivalries.

A consortium led by ExxonMobil discovered the first major oil deposits in May 2015 more than 100 miles (190 kilometers) off Guyana, one of the poorest countries in South America despite its large reserves of gold, diamond and bauxite. More than 40% of the population lived on less than \$5.50 a day when production began in December 2019, with some 380,000 barrels a day expected to soar to 1.2 million by 2027.

A single oil block of more than a dozen off Guyana's coast is valued at \$41 billion. Combined with additional oil deposits found nearby, that will generate an estimated \$10 billion annually for the government, according to USAID. That figure is expected to jump to \$157 billion by 2040, said Rystad Energy, a Norwegian-based independent energy consultancy.

Guyana, which has one of the world's highest emigration rates with more than 55% of the population living abroad, now claims one of the world's largest shares of oil per capita. It's expected to have one of the world's fastest-growing economies, too, according to a World Bank report.

The transformation has lured back Guyanese such as Andrew Rampersaud, a 50-year-old goldsmith who left Trinidad last July with his wife and four daughters, encouraged by changes he saw in his country.

He makes some 20 pairs of earrings and four necklaces a day, mostly with Guyanese gold, but where he's really noticed a difference is in real estate. Rampersaud owns seven rental units, and before the oil discovery, he'd get a query every month or so.

Now, three to four people call daily. And, unlike before, they always pay on time in a country where a two-bedroom apartment now costs \$900, triple the price in 2010, according to Guyana's Real Estate Association.

But many Guyanese, including those living in Ann's Grove, wonder whether their community will ever see some of that wealth. Here, bleating goats amble down the village's main road, wide enough for a single car or the occasional horse-drawn cart. Dogs dart through wooden homes with zinc roofs, and the sole marketplace where vendors once sold fruits and vegetables is now a makeshift brothel.

"I expected a better life since the drilling began," said Felasha Duncan, a 36-year-old mother of three who spoke as she got bright pink extensions braided into her hair at an open-air salon.

Down the road, 31-year-old Ron Collins was busy making cinderblocks and said he didn't bother attending the recent Saturday morning meeting with officials.

"It makes no sense," he said, leaning on his shovel.

He doesn't believe his village will benefit from the ongoing projects that have employed people such as Shaquiel Pereira, who's helping build one of the new highways and earning double what he did three months ago as an electrician. The 25-year-old bought land in western Guyana last month and is now saving to build his first home and buy a new car.

"I feel hopeful," he said as he scanned the new highway from his car, pausing before the hourlong drive home.

His boss, engineer Arif Hafeez, said that while people aren't seeing oil money directly in their pockets by way of public wage increases, construction projects are generating jobs and new roads will boost the economy.

"They say it's going to look like Dubai, but I don't know about that," he said with a laugh.

At a job fair at the University of Guyana, excitement and curiosity were in the air as students met with

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oil companies, support and services firms, and agricultural groups.

Greeting students was Sherry Thompson, 43, a former hospital switchboard operator and manager of a local inn who joined a company that provides services such as transportation for vice presidents of major oil companies.

"I felt like my life was going nowhere, and I wanted a future for myself," Thompson said.

Jobs like hers have become plentiful, but it's rare to find Guyanese working directly in the oil industry.

Richie Bachan, 47, is among the exceptions. As a former construction worker, he had the foundation, with some additional training, to begin working as a roustabout, assembling and repairing equipment in the offshore oil industry two years ago. His salary tripled, and his family benefits: "We eat better. We dress better. We can keep up with our bills."

But beyond the slate of infrastructure projects and jobs they're creating, experts warn the huge windfall could overwhelm Guyana.

"The country isn't preparing and wasn't prepared for the sudden discovery of oil," said Lucas Perelló, a political science professor at New York's Skidmore College.

Three years after the 2015 oil discovery, a political crisis erupted in Guyana, which is dominated by two main parties: the Indo-Guyanese People's Progressive Party and the Afro-Guyanese People's National Congress, which formed a coalition with other parties.

That coalition was dissolved after a no-confidence motion approved by a single vote in 2018 gave way to snap general elections in 2020. Those saw the Indo-Guyanese People's Progressive Party win by one seat in a race that's still being contested in court.

"That's why the 2020 elections were so important. Everyone knew what was at stake," Perelló said.

The USAID report accused the previous administration of a lack of transparency in negotiations and oil deals with investors, adding that the "tremendous influx of money opens many avenues for corruption."

When The Associated Press asked Prime Minister Mark Phillips about concerns over corruption, his press officers tried to end the interview before he interjected, saying his party had a zero-tolerance policy: "Wherever corruption exists, we are committed to rooting it out."

Guyana signed the deal in 2016 with the ExxonMobil consortium, which includes Hess Corporation and China's CNOOC, but did not make the contract public until 2017 despite demands to release it immediately.

The contract dictates that Guyana would receive 50% of the profits, compared with other deals in which Brazil obtained 61% and the U.S. 40%, according to Rystad Energy. But many have criticized that Guyana would only earn 2% royalties, something Jagdeo said the current government would seek to increase to 10% for future deals.

"The contract is front-loaded, one-sided and riddled with tax, decommissioning and other loopholes that favor the oil companies," according to a report from the Ohio-based Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis.

Aubrey Norton, leader of the opposition People's National Congress that was part of the coalition that signed the deal, told AP that it made mistakes: "I have no doubt about that. And therefore, moving forward, we should rectify those mistakes."

Activists also have raised concerns that the oil boom will contribute to climate change, given that one barrel of fuel oil produces on average about 940 pounds (about 425 kilograms) of carbon dioxide, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

AP reached out to ExxonMobil for comment about how it handled the deal in Guyana and environmental concerns. Through company spokeswoman Meghan Macdonald, ExxonMobil's top official in Guyana agreed to an interview. But Macdonald repeatedly canceled, and the company offered no other comment to AP.

Norton said he was concerned about the current government's focus on building infrastructure instead of developing people, adding that he worries the oil wealth will intensify ethnic divisions in Guyana and create other problems: "It will result in the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer."

Jagdeo, the vice president who once served as president, told AP that his party has created a special fund for oil revenues with safeguards to prevent corruption, including appointment of an independent

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monitor and a board of directors to oversee the fund along with the finance minister.

Parliamentary approval also is needed to decide how the funds would be used, he said, adding that oil revenues currently represent only a third of Guyana's budget and that increases in salaries might happen later: "At this point in time, we are not awash with money."

"We have seen the mistakes made by other countries," he said. "We have to be cautious."

Despite the oil boom, poverty is deepening for some as the cost of living soars, with goods such as sugar, oranges, cooking oil, peppers and plantains more than doubling in price while salaries have flatlined.

Many are still scraping by, like Samuel Arthur, who makes \$100 a month selling large, heavy-duty plastic bags in Georgetown and other areas, hauling some 40 pounds of weight every day.

"All we live on is promises," he said of the oil boom. "I have to do this because I don't have any other way to survive."

It's the kind of need familiar to many in Ann's Grove.

When the meeting between residents and officials ended, the prime minister pledged that most requests would be fulfilled.

"Looking forward to your promise," resident Clyde Wickham said. Officials nodded and vowed to return with more details on how they'll help Ann's Grove.

Hopeful residents clapped. Like Wickham, many say they'll work to hold the government to its word.

Former California college student arrested in 3 stabbings

DAVIS, Calif. (AP) — A 21-year-old who was a student at the University of California, Davis, until last week was arrested on accusations of fatally stabbing two people and wounding another in attacks that terrified the quiet college community, police said Thursday.

Carlos Dominguez was taken into custody Wednesday after 15 people called in reports of a person who matched the description of the suspect near a city park where he is accused of stabbing the second victim to death, said Davis Police Chief Darren Pytel.

Pytel did not disclose a motive for the stabbings, which took place over a span of days starting with the discovery of the first body April 27, and said it was unclear if Dominguez knew the victims. Those killed were a 50-year-old homeless man well loved in the community and a 20-year-old UC Davis student. A homeless woman attacked in her tent Monday night is recovering.

"He was out wandering a neighborhood where the second homicide had occurred. He had a large knife in a backpack, wearing the same clothes from the third stabbing," Pytel told a news conference, explaining the circumstances of Dominguez's arrest. "That's highly unusual and unique."

The multiple stabbings over the course of less than a week shattered the town's sense of safety. Some businesses closed early and college students said they were too frightened even to attend daytime classes on campus.

"A murderer is off the streets, and our families will sleep easier tonight," Davis Mayor Will Arnold said at the news conference.

It wasn't immediately clear if Dominguez had an attorney who could speak on his behalf.

UC Davis officials said in a statement that Dominguez was a third-year student majoring in biological sciences until April 25, "when he was separated for academic reasons."

He enrolled at UC Davis in fall 2020 and previously attended Laney College, a community college in Oakland, California.

Davis is a small city about 70 miles (112 kilometers) northeast of San Francisco and 15 miles (24 kilometers) west of Sacramento. There are roughly 67,000 residents in the city in addition to more than 13,000 students who live on the UC Davis campus.

The first death was reported Thursday when officers found David Henry Breaux in downtown's Central Park, hunched over a bench where he often sat or slept. The second victim, Karim Abou Najm, was found Saturday night at Sycamore Park with multiple stab wounds.

The stabbings all occurred within a mile of campus. On Thursday, police were searching a residence

near campus, where Dominguez lived with housemates.

Pytel said police started receiving calls Wednesday afternoon about a person who matched the description of the suspect. Officers discovered a "large fixed blade knife" in his backpack and took him in for more questioning with his consent.

Dominguez was booked into Yolo County Jail early Thursday on a weapons violation related to the knife but was not arrested on two counts of homicide and one count of attempted homicide until shortly before Thursday's news conference.

Pytel said they were zeroing in on the suspect based on other evidence, "but the tips certainly expedited finding him and an arrest, there's no doubt about that."

This story has been updated to correct that the suspect was taken into custody Wednesday.

8 fatally shot in Serbia town a day after 9 killed at school

By JOVANA GEC and DUSAN STOJANOVIC Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) — A shooter killed at least eight people and wounded 13 in a drive-by attack near a town close to Belgrade late Thursday, the second such mass killing in Serbia in two days, state television reported.

The attacker shot randomly at people near the town of Mladenovac, some 50 kilometers (30 miles) south of the capital, the RTS report said early Friday. Police were looking for a 21-year-old suspect who fled after the attack, the report said.

The shooting came a day after a 13-year-old boy used his father's guns in a rampage at a school in Belgrade that killed eight of his fellow students and a school guard.

The bloodshed sent shockwaves through a Balkan nation unused to mass murders.

Though Serbia is awash with weapons left over from the wars of the 1990s, mass shootings are extremely rare. Wednesday's school shooting was the first in the country's modern history. The last mass shooting before this week was in 2013, when a war veteran killed 13 people in a central Serbian village.

Serbian Interior Minister Bratislav Gasic called Thursday's shooting "a terrorist act," state media reported.

Special police and helicopter units have been sent to the region as well as ambulances, it added.

No other details were immediately available, and police had not issued any statements.

Earlier Thursday, Serbian students, many wearing black and carrying flowers, filled streets around the school in central Belgrade as they paid silent homage to peers killed a day earlier. Thousands lined up to lay flowers, light candles and leave toys to commemorate the nine people who were killed on Wednesday morning.

The tragedy also sparked a debate about the general state of the nation following decades of crises and conflicts whose aftermath have created a state of permanent insecurity and instability, along with deep political divisions.

Authorities on Thursday moved to boost gun control, as police urged citizens to lock up their guns and keep them away from children.

Police have said that the teen used his father's guns to carry out the attack. He had planned it for a month, drawing sketches of classrooms and making lists of the children he planned to kill, police said on Wednesday.

The boy, who had visited shooting ranges with his father and apparently had the code to his father's safe, took two guns from the safe where they were stored together with bullets, police said on Wednesday.

The shooting on Wednesday morning in Vladislav Ribnikar primary school also left seven people hospitalized — six children and a teacher. One girl who was shot in the head remains in a life-threatening condition, and a boy is in serious condition with spinal injuries, doctors said on Thursday morning.

To help people deal with the tragedy, authorities announced they were setting up a helpline. Hundreds answered a call to donate blood for the wounded victims. A three-day mourning period will begin Friday morning.

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Serbian teachers' unions announced protests and strikes to warn about a crisis in the school system and demand changes. Authorities shrugged off responsibility, with some officials blaming Western influence.

The shooter, whom the police identified as Kosta Kecmanovic, has not given any motive for his actions. Upon entering his school, Kecmanovic first killed the guard and three students in the hallway. He then went to the history classroom where he shot a teacher before turning his gun on the students.

Kecmanovic then unloaded the gun in the school yard and called the police himself, although they had already received an alert from a school official. When he called, Kecmanovic told duty officers he was a "psychopath who needs to calm down," police said.

The children killed Wednesday were seven girls and one boy. One of the girls was a French citizen, France's foreign ministry said.

Authorities have said that Kecmanovic is too young to be charged and tried. He has been placed in a mental institution, while his father has been detained on suspicion of endangering public security because his son got hold of the guns.

"I think we are all guilty. I think each one of us has some responsibility, that we allowed some things we should not allow," said Zoran Sefik, a Belgrade resident, during Wednesday evening's vigil near the school.

Jovan Lazovic, another Belgrade resident, said he was not surprised: "It was a matter of days when something like this could happen, having in mind what is happening in the world and here," he said.

Gun culture is widespread in Serbia and elsewhere in the Balkans: The region has among the highest numbers of guns per capita in Europe. Guns are often fired into the air at celebrations and the cult of the warrior is part of national identities.

Experts have repeatedly warned of the danger posed by the number of weapons in a highly divided country like Serbia, where convicted war criminals are glorified and violence against minority groups often goes unpunished. They also note that decades of instability stemming from the conflicts of the 1990s, as well as ongoing economic hardship, could trigger such outbursts.

"We have had too much violence for too long," psychologist Zarko Trebjesanin told N1 television. "Children copy models. We need to eliminate negative models ... and create a different system of values."

NC lawmakers pass 12-week abortion ban; governor vows veto

By GARY D. ROBERTSON and HANNAH SCHOENBAUM Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — North Carolina lawmakers on Thursday approved and sent to the governor a ban on nearly all abortions after 12 weeks of pregnancy, down from the current 20 weeks, in response to last year's overturning of Roe v. Wade at the U.S. Supreme Court.

The ban is one of the least onerous of a slew of bills Republican-led assemblies have pushed through in recent months since the high court stripped away constitutional protections for abortion. Other states have banned the procedure almost completely or throughout pregnancy.

Nonetheless, the 29-20 party-line vote by the Senate was met with loud cries of "Abortion rights now!" from about 100 observers who had crowded into the gallery to watch the debate. Police quickly cleared the area, but protesters could still be heard shouting "Shame!" from outside the closed doors. The House passed the measure Wednesday night on a similar party-line vote.

While perhaps less stringent, North Carolina's bill has far-reaching consequences. Before its passage, many women from nearby states with more restrictive laws had traveled to the state for abortions in later stages of pregnancy.

Abortion-rights supporter Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper has pledged to veto the bill, calling it "an egregious, unacceptable attack on the women of our state. While GOP seat margins and assurances from chamber leaders indicate a veto will likely be overridden, Republicans appear for now to have little wiggle room with votes for the bill to become law.

Democrats unsuccessfully attempted several parliamentary maneuvers to get the measure sent back to committee during an hourslong debate. Senate Minority Leader Dan Blue of Wake County said it was unprecedented that all 20 members of the chamber's Democratic caucus spoke on the floor about the bill.

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He called the abortion vote "one of the most consequential things we have done in this chamber."

State law currently bans nearly all abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy. Starting July 1, the restriction would be tightened to 12 weeks. It also would place limits on new exceptions, capping abortions at 20 weeks in cases of rape or incest and 24 weeks for "life-limiting" fetal anomalies, including certain physical or genetic disorders that can be diagnosed prenatally. An existing exception for when the life of the pregnant woman is in danger would remain.

The 46-page bill, which was revealed just this week after months of private negotiations by Republican legislators, also includes more medical and paperwork requirements for patients and physicians and licensing requirements for abortion clinics.

GOP lawmakers also are promoting at least \$160 million for such services as maternal health, adoption care, contraceptive services and paid leave for teachers and state employees after the birth of a child.

Sen. Joyce Krawiec, a Forsyth County Republican who helped negotiate the measure, said during Thursday's debate that "many of us who have worked for decades to save unborn babies for the sanctity of human life, we saw it as an opportunity to put forth a very pro-life, pro-woman legislation."

"This is a pro-life plan, not an abortion ban," she added.

Cooper and other critics say the measure remains an attack on reproductive freedoms and denies women the ability to make their own health care choices.

"This bill is an extreme and oppressive step backwards for our society and one that will deny women the right to make decisions about their own health care and future," Democratic Sen. Sydney Batch of Wake County said during the debate.

Batch and others also pointed to provisions of the bill that would make it harder to get abortions within the new legal time frame. They cite, for example, the requirement for women to make an in-person visit to a medical professional at least 72 hours beforehand. Under current law, the three-day waiting period can be initiated over the phone. The bill would also require a doctor to schedule a follow-up visit for women who have a medically induced abortion, increasing the hardship for some who work and those who travel to North Carolina from out of state.

Republicans have been more aggressive in advancing measures that Cooper has opposed or previously vetoed following GOP seat gains in the November elections. The party gained veto-proof majorities in both chambers last month, when then-Democratic Rep. Tricia Cotham switched to the Republican Party. Cotham, who had spoken out previously for abortion rights but expressed a willingness to consider additional restrictions, voted for the bill Wednesday.

In a video released late Thursday, Cooper identified Cotham and three other Republican legislators that he said had expressed temperate views on abortion and said viewers should urge them to uphold his upcoming veto. One of the four was absent for Wednesday's House vote.

The measure contains other restrictions that Cooper had successfully vetoed in previous years. One would bar women from getting abortions on the basis of the baby's race or a prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome. Another would require doctors and nurses to protect and care for children born alive during a failed abortion later in pregnancy.

Still, North Carolina Republicans stung by some 2022 electoral defeats in suburban legislative and congressional districts where abortion was an issue ultimately declined to push more stringent prohibitions as other states have done.

Meanwhile, at least 19 Democratic-dominated states have taken steps — through laws, constitutional amendments or executive orders — to protect access to abortion.

Last year, Cooper signed an executive order shielding out-of-state abortion patients from extradition and prohibiting state agencies under his control from assisting other states' prosecutions of those who travel for the procedure.

Most of the states where the status quo on abortion hasn't changed are those where the political leadership is divided between the two parties.

Schoenbaum 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.

Churchill Downs suspends trainer Joseph after 2 horse deaths

By BETH HARRIS AP Racing Writer

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Churchill Downs suspended trainer Saffie Joseph Jr. indefinitely and Lord Miles, who is trained by Joseph, was scratched from the Kentucky Derby on Thursday, days after the sudden death of two of his horses at the track.

The suspension prohibits Joseph, or any trainer directly or indirectly employed by him, from entering horses in races or applying for stalls at all Churchill Downs Inc.-owned tracks.

The decision comes after the deaths of Parents Pride on Saturday and Chasing Artie on Tuesday. Both collapsed on the track and died after races.

"Given the unexplained sudden deaths, we have reasonable concerns about the condition of his horses, and decided to suspend him indefinitely until details are analyzed and understood," Bill Mudd, CDI president and chief operating officer, said in a statement. "The safety of our equine and human athletes and integrity of our sport is our highest priority. We feel these measures are our duty and responsibility."

Investigators have yet to find any cause in the deaths of Joseph's two horses in a 72-hour span, along with two others over the past week, which has cast a pall over Churchill Downs in the final preparations for the Kentucky Derby on Saturday.

"This is the worst part of the game," said Mike Repole, co-owner of early Derby favorite Forte. "It's very sad."

Joseph said earlier Thursday he was questioned by investigators from the Kentucky Horse Racing Commission and Churchill Downs.

"They found no wrongdoing on our part," he said.

Joseph received permission from the KHRC to scratch five horses from races on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, according to the Daily Racing Form. He already had scratched one on Wednesday. He told reporters earlier in the day that he scratched any horse that had been in contact with the two that died out of an abundance of caution.

Despite the deaths, Joseph had planned to run Lord Miles in the Derby. The colt arrived from Florida; the two dead horses had been at Keeneland in Lexington.

Joseph, a 36-year-old third-generation trainer, said earlier Thursday that investigators examined his barn, checked the horses' veterinary records and took blood samples from each of his horses, which showed nothing abnormal. The feed, hay, straw and supplements used by the horses were checked, too.

The deaths are the first for Joseph, who came to Florida in 2011 after training in his native Barbados.

"It crushes you. It knocks your confidence, it makes you doubt everything," he said.

At the same time, he added, "There's two ways: You can run away from it and pretend it didn't happen or you could face it and find out what we can do."

Meanwhile, two horses dumped their exercise riders during on-track training Thursday, including Derby entrant Verifying. Neither rider was injured.

Besides Joseph's horses, Derby long shot Wild On Ice and 3-year-old filly Take Charge Briana broke down with musculoskeletal injuries during training or racing at Churchill Downs. Both were euthanized.

Joseph said the first necropsy done on his horse didn't reveal a cause of death.

"We're living on unknown terms right now, so that's the uneasy part," he said.

Spectators at morning training were startled when Verifying, one of trainer Brad Cox's four Derby runners, got loose on the track, triggering a warning siren. The colt was caught by an outrider and turned over to Cox, who led him back to the barn. The exercise rider dislocated his right shoulder.

"He was galloping by and looked great. Next thing I know the rider was on the ground," Cox said. "We got lucky, we dodged a bullet."

Cox said he had "no concern" about any issues with the track as a result of the horse deaths.

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Not long after, And Tell Me Nolies reared and dumped her rider before tearing off the track at full speed and rampaging through the stable area in search of her barn. Trainer Peter Miller said the filly appeared to be fine and is scheduled to start in the Kentucky Oaks on Friday.

"Luckily, she didn't go down or anything, so she's OK," he said.

Repole believes it would help if the sport did more to reassure the public how seriously it takes safety.

"People will understand injuries," he said. "People won't understand injuries with death."

The industry was rocked in 2019, when more than 40 horses died at Santa Anita in California. As a result, a raft of safety reforms were enacted that have spread around the country.

"The horses get great care and we do our best to prevent these kind of things, but they still happen," Joseph said. "A lot of times in those sudden deaths you never get answers."

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

US to control land sales to foreigners near 8 military bases

By MARGARET STAFFORD, TARA COPP and FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Foreign citizens and companies would need U.S. government approval to buy property within 100 miles (160 kilometers) of eight military bases, under a proposed rule change that follows a Chinese firm's attempt to build a plant near an Air Force base in North Dakota.

The Treasury Department's Office of Investment Security is set to propose the rule on Friday. It would give expanded powers to the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, which screens business deals between U.S. firms and foreign investors and can block sales or force the parties to change the terms of an agreement to protect national security.

Controversy arose over plans by the Fufeng Group to build a \$700 million wet corn milling plant about 12 miles (19 kilometers) from the Grand Forks Air Force Base, which houses both air and space operations.

As opposition to the project grew, North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum and U.S. Sens. John Hoeven and Kevin Cramer, all Republicans, raised questions about the security risks and asked the federal government last July for an expedited review.

CFIUS told Fufeng in September that it was reviewing the proposal and eventually concluded that it did not have jurisdiction to stop the investment.

The plans were eventually dropped after the Air Force said the plant would pose a significant threat to national security.

The new rule would affect Grand Forks and seven other bases, including three that are tied to the B-21 Raider, the nation's future stealth bomber. The Pentagon has taken great pains to protect its new, most-advanced bomber from spying by China. The bomber will carry nuclear weapons and be able to fly manned and unmanned missions.

Six bombers are in various stages of production at Air Force Plant 42, located in Palmdale, California, while the two other bases will serve as future homes for the 100-aircraft stealth bomber fleet: Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota and Dyess Air Force Base in Texas.

The national security concerns regarding the other bases were not immediately clear. Also on the list were Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio and Laughlin Air Force Base in Del Rio, Texas, which are both training bases. The others selected for greater protection are the Iowa National Guard Joint Force Headquarters in Des Moines and Luke Air Force Base, located in Glendale, Arizona.

The Air Force was not immediately available for comment on why the eight bases were selected.

CFIUS, a committee whose members come from the State, Justice, Energy and Commerce departments among others, already had the power to block property sales within 100 miles of other military bases under a 2018 law.

Hoeven said the CFIUS process for reviewing proposed projects needed to be updated.

"Accordingly, China's investments in the U.S. need to be carefully scrutinized, particularly for facilities like the Grand Forks Air Force Base, which is a key national security asset that serves as the lead for all

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Air Force Global Hawk intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations and has a growing role in U.S. space operations," he said.

In February, Andrew Hunter, an assistant secretary of the Air Force, said in a letter to North Dakota officials that the military considered the project a security risk but did not elaborate on the kinds of risks Fufeng's project would pose.

The letter prompted Grand Forks officials, who had initially welcomed the milling plant as an economic boon for the region, to withdraw support by denying building permits and refusing to connect the 370-acre (150-hectare) site to public infrastructure.

Fufeng makes products for animal nutrition, the food and beverage industry, pharmaceuticals, health and wellness, oil and gas, and others industries. It's a leading producer of xanthan gum. It denied that the plant would be used for espionage.

Lawmakers have also called for a review of foreign investments in agricultural lands. Earlier this year, Sens. Jon Tester, D-Mont., and Mike Rounds, R-S.D., introduced legislation aimed at preventing China, Russia, Iran and North Korea from acquiring U.S. farmland.

"Countries like China who want to undermine America's status as the world's leading economic superpower have no business owning property on our own soil – especially near our military bases," Tester said in a statement Thursday.

Stafford reported from Liberty, Missouri.

Some call NYC subway choking criminal, others hold judgment

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ and BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The choking death of a man at the hands of another New York subway rider was setting off powerful reactions Thursday, with some calling it a criminal, racist act even as authorities reserved judgment on the killing.

New York has become one of the nation's safest large cities, but the emotional responses recalled the metropolis of decades ago, when residents felt besieged by crime and fatal vigilantism made national headlines.

Manhattan prosecutors promised a "rigorous" investigation into whether to bring charges in the death of Jordan Neely, a Black man who was tackled by fellow passengers and put in the chokehold by a white Marine veteran.

The medical examiner's office ruled Wednesday night that Neely, 30, died in a homicide caused by compression of the neck, but it said any determination about criminal culpability would be left to the legal system.

Regardless, many New Yorkers saw the choking as the latest in a long history of attacks on Black city residents.

"We're like animals in white people's backyards. They want to get rid of us," said Diango Cici, a 53-year-old Manhattan resident.

Neely, who in the past had earned money imitating Michael Jackson, died Monday after the early-afternoon confrontation aboard a train beneath Manhattan. Neely, who had been homeless at times, according to people who knew him, was shouting at fellow passengers when another rider wrapped his arm around his neck and pinned him on the floor. Two other passengers also helped restrain Neely.

Marine recruits are routinely taught about executing and defending against chokeholds, which can render someone unconscious in as few as eight seconds, according to a military manual revised in 2020.

The lethal risks of chokeholds led New York City to ban police from using them. An officer was fired for using a chokehold on Eric Garner, a Black New Yorker whose dying words "I can't breathe" became a chant in protests against racial injustice.

A U.S. Department of Justice website called chokeholds "inherently dangerous" and said that they have "too often led to tragedy."

No one has been arrested, but the Manhattan district attorney's office said late Wednesday it would

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review autopsy reports, as well as “assess all available video and photo footage, identify and interview as many witnesses as possible, and obtain additional medical records.”

Police questioned the 24-year-old whom the video showed holding Neely in a headlock for at least 3 minutes — perhaps longer — but released him without charges. His name was not released by police, but his relationship with the Marines was disclosed by a law enforcement official who wasn’t authorized to make the information public and spoke on condition of anonymity because the investigation was not yet complete.

It was not clear why passengers moved to restrain Neely. One witness, a freelance journalist who was on the train and recorded Neely becoming unconscious as he was restrained, said that while Neely was acting aggressively and threw his jacket, he hadn’t attacked anyone.

Police asked other witnesses to come forward and sought additional photos and videos that might help investigators understand what transpired during the fatal confrontation or what triggered it.

In the absence of video showing what happened before the chokehold, many were reserving judgment.

Among them was Mayor Eric Adams, who said Thursday that there were “many layers” to the incident. He rejected criticism that he has not expressed enough outrage over Neely’s death, unlike other officials who have called for a quick arrest.

“All the other electeds, they have a role to play and I have a role to play. The police is doing their investigation and the district attorney is doing his investigation, and I respect the process,” Adams said.

Governor Kathy Hochul called the video-recorded encounter “wrong” and “horrific to view,” adding that Neely’s “family deserves justice.” But the governor said she was watching how the matter unfolds.

“No one has the right to take the life of another person. And in this circumstance, I have said all along and have stood firm in our commitment to helping people with mental health challenges,” Hochul told reporters after a meeting with union workers in Manhattan.

She said sometimes people are loud and emotional in public, but it was “very clear” that Neely was not going to harm others and the video showed a “very extreme response.”

Dozens of people gathered Thursday night in Brooklyn’s Barclay Center for a second day of demonstrations. On Wednesday a few dozen protesters gathered at the station where Neely died to call for an arrest.

Kyle Ishmael, a 38-year-old Harlem resident, said the video left him “disgusted.”

“I couldn’t believe this was happening on my subway in my city that I grew up in,” he said.

Street performers who knew Neely described him as a kind and gifted impressionist who sank into a depression as a result of his mother’s 2007 death. According to news accounts at the time, Christie Neely was strangled. Neely, who was 14 when she died, testified against his mother’s boyfriend at the murder trial.

Tari Tudesco, a backup dancer in the Michael Jackson tribute act “Michael’s Mirror,” said many in the community had grown worried about Neely’s absence in recent years, and had begun searching for him, unsuccessfully.

“We were in shock to find now that he was living homeless,” she said. “We feel terrible.”

Associated Press researcher Rhonda Shafner in New York and reporters Lolita Baldor in Washington and Maysoon Kahn in Albany, New York, contributed.

Prince William pours a pint, meets public before coronation

By SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Prince William has poured a pint of ale and taken a ride on the subway with his wife Kate as part of a royal ramble in central London before King Charles III’s coronation.

With just two days to go until Saturday’s coronation ceremony at Westminster Abbey, William and Kate took time to chat with royal fans, tourists and Londoners on Thursday in the U.K. capital’s bustling Soho entertainment district.

The pair took their first trip on the Elizabeth line, named after Queen Elizabeth II and the latest line on London’s busy train network. They then stopped at the historic Dog and Duck pub, where William went

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behind the bar and poured a pint of Kingmaker, a pale ale brewed to celebrate the coronation.

William joked that he would have to watch how much he drank and “get back into work mode.”

Hundreds of royal fans — some hailing from China, Canada and the United States — lined the streets of Soho, hoping for a glimpse of the couple, a handshake or a brief chat.

Kate told well-wishers that her eldest child, Prince George, was “excited” about the coronation. The 9-year-old royal, who is second in line to the throne after his father, is expected to carry Charles’ robes as one of the king’s four pages of honor on Saturday.

George and his younger siblings Princess Charlotte and Prince Louis attended a rehearsal for the ceremony alongside other members of the royal family on Wednesday.

Thursday’s royal visit came as London prepared for the United Kingdom’s first coronation since Elizabeth II was crowned 70 years ago.

Union Jack bunting and crown decorations have appeared across the capital, while Big Ben was lit up in red as part of late-night dress rehearsals around midnight on Wednesday.

Some 100 heads of state, representatives from 200 countries and hundreds of thousands of visitors are expected to descend on London for the historic event. Many die-hard royal fans are already camped out near Buckingham Palace to secure the best viewing spot.

“We’ve always been a massive fan of the royal family. I was also over for the (queen’s) jubilee, so all the big moments that we can, we come over,” said Luisa Rawes, from Portugal. “It is a massive occasion.”

Thousands of police are being deployed across London for one of the most complex security operations in U.K. history, bracing for any disruptions and anti-monarchy protests.

On Tuesday night, officers arrested a man who threw shotgun cartridges into the grounds of Buckingham Palace, and blew up a suspicious bag belonging to the man. Police said the man was searched and a lock knife was found.

Authorities said Thursday that the 59-year-old suspect, who hasn’t been named, was detained under mental health laws and taken to a hospital. No one was injured, and Charles and Camilla, the queen consort, weren’t at the palace at the time.

Follow AP’s coverage of King Charles III and the coronation at <https://apnews.com/hub/king-charles-iii>

Jury finds Ed Sheeran didn’t copy Marvin Gaye classic

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — British singer Ed Sheeran didn’t steal key components of Marvin Gaye’s classic 1970s tune “Let’s Get It On” to create his hit song “Thinking Out Loud,” a jury said with a trial verdict Thursday, prompting Sheeran to joke later that he won’t have to follow through on his threat to quit music.

The emotions of an epic copyright fight that stretched across most of the last decade spilled out as soon as the seven-person jury revealed its verdict after over two hours of deliberations.

Sheeran, 32, briefly dropped his face into his hands in relief before standing to hug his attorney, Ilene Farkas. As jurors left the courtroom in front of him, Sheeran smiled, nodded his head at several of them, and mouthed the words: “Thank you.” Later, he posed for a hallway photograph with a juror who lingered behind.

He also approached plaintiff Kathryn Townsend Griffin, the daughter of Ed Townsend, who co-created the 1973 soul classic with Gaye and had testified. They spoke about 10 minutes, hugging and smiling and, at one point, clasping their hands together.

Sheeran later addressed reporters outside the courthouse, revisiting his claim made during the trial that he would consider quitting songwriting if he lost the case.

“I am obviously very happy with the outcome of this case, and it looks like I’m not going to have to retire from my day job, after all. But at the same time, I am unbelievably frustrated that baseless claims like this are allowed to go to court at all,” the singer said, reading from a prepared statement.

He also said he missed his grandmother’s funeral in Ireland because of the trial, and that he “will never

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get that time back.”

Inside the courthouse after the verdict, Griffin said she was relieved.

“I’m just glad it’s over,” she said of the trial. “We can be friends.”

She said she was pleased Sheeran approached her.

“It showed me who he was,” Griffin said.

She said her copyright lawsuit wasn’t personal but she wanted to follow through on a promise to her father to protect his intellectual property.

A juror, Sophia Neis, told reporters afterward that there was not immediate consensus when deliberations began.

“Everyone had opinions going in. Both sides had advocates, said Neis, 23. “There was a lot of back and forth.”

The verdict capped a two-week trial that featured a courtroom performance by Sheeran as the singer insisted, sometimes angrily, that the trial was a threat to all musicians who create their own music.

Sheeran sat with his legal team throughout the trial, defending himself against the lawsuit by Townsend’s heirs, who had said “Thinking Out Loud” had so many similarities to “Let’s Get It On” that it violated the song’s copyright protection.

It was not the first court victory for a singer whose musical style draws from classic soul, pop and R&B, making him a target for copyright lawsuits. A year ago, Sheeran won a U.K. copyright battle over his 2017 hit “Shape of You” and then decried what he labeled a “culture” of baseless lawsuits that force settlements from artists eager to avoid a trial’s expense.

Outside court, Sheeran said he doesn’t want to be taken advantage of.

“I am just a guy with a guitar who loves writing music for people to enjoy,” he said. “I am not and will never allow myself to be a piggy bank for anyone to shake.”

At the trial’s start, attorney Ben Crump told jurors on behalf of the Townsend heirs that Sheeran himself sometimes performed the two songs together. The jury saw video of a concert in Switzerland in which Sheeran can be heard segueing on stage between “Let’s Get It On” and “Thinking Out Loud.” Crump said it was “smoking gun” proof Sheeran stole from the famous tune.

In her closing argument on Wednesday, Farkas said Crump’s “smoking gun was shooting blanks.”

She said the only common elements between the two songs were “basic to the tool kit of all songwriters” and “the scaffolding on which all songwriting is built.”

“They did not copy it. Not consciously. Not unconsciously. Not at all,” Farkas said.

When Sheeran testified over two days for the defense, he repeatedly picked up a guitar resting behind him on the witness stand to demonstrate how he seamlessly creates “mashups” of two or three songs during concerts to “spice it up a bit” for his sizeable crowds.

The English pop star’s cheerful attitude on display under questioning from his attorney all but vanished under cross examination.

“When you write songs, somebody comes after you,” Sheeran testified, saying the case was being closely watched by others in the industry.

He insisted that he and the song’s co-writer — Amy Wadge — stole nothing from “Let’s Get it On.”

Townsend’s heirs said in their lawsuit that “Thinking Out Loud” had “striking similarities” and “overt common elements” that made it obvious that it had copied “Let’s Get It On,” a song that has been featured in numerous films and commercials and scored hundreds of millions of streams spins and radio plays in the past half century.

Sheeran’s song, which came out in 2014, was a hit, winning a Grammy for song of the year.

Sheeran’s label, Atlantic Records, and Sony/ATV Music Publishing were also named as defendants in the “Thinking Out Loud” lawsuit, but the focus of the trial was Sheeran.

Wadge, who was not a defendant, testified on his behalf and hugged Sheeran after the verdict.

Gaye was killed in 1984 at age 44, shot by his father as he tried to intervene in a fight between his parents. He had been a Motown superstar since the 1960s, although his songs released in the 1970s made him a generational musical giant.

Townsend, who also wrote the 1958 R&B doo-wop hit "For Your Love," was a singer, songwriter and lawyer who died in 2003. Griffin, his daughter, testified during the trial that she thought Sheeran was "a great artist with a great future."

Associated Press Writer Andrew Dalton in Los Angeles contributed to this report. Find more AP stories about Ed Sheeran: <https://apnews.com/hub/ed-sheeran>

Napoli wins 1st title since Maradona played for the club

By ANDREW DAMPF AP Sports Writer

ROME (AP) — Below a giant mural of Diego Maradona, Napoli fans celebrated the Italian league soccer title as if they were at the game — singing, jumping and lighting flares.

On the other side of Naples, at the stadium now named for Maradona, tributes to the club's most emblematic player were everywhere: his image on banners, flags and scarves, his No. 10 on the back of shirts.

As Napoli coach Luciano Spalletti put it after the Partenopei sealed their first league title since Maradona led the club to the 1987 and 1990 championships, the late Argentina standout's legacy made a difference.

"These fans have seen big coaches come and go. They saw Diego Armando Maradona play and perhaps his (impact) is also felt in this success," Spalletti said.

Unlike the Maradona years, however, this Napoli title wasn't about a single player but rather a well-run unit that often overwhelmed opponents with standouts in every department: league scoring leader Victor Osimhen at center forward, league assist leader Khvicha Kvaratskhelia at left wing, passing expert Stanislav Lobotka in central midfield and physical presence Kim Min-jae at center back — not to mention their veteran coach.

Napoli clinched the trophy with a 1-1 draw at Udinese on Thursday.

Osimhen equalized for Napoli early in the second half by redirecting in a rebound after Sandi Lovric had put Udinese ahead early on.

"I'm happy for all Napoli fans worldwide," Osimhen said. "No one deserves the scudetto more than Neapolitans — more than us.

"I don't care who scored, I just wanted to get the scudetto."

Napoli moved an insurmountable 16 points ahead of second-place Lazio with five rounds still to play.

Besides the 11,000 Napoli fans inside and 5,000 more outside the stadium in Udine in northern Italy, a capacity crowd of more than 50,000 watched the match on jumbo screens at the Stadio Diego Armando Maradona in Naples.

"Napoli, this is for you," Spalletti said. "There are people here who will be able to get through difficult moments in their lives because they remember this moment. These people deserve all the joy."

In Udine, celebrating fans invaded the field at the final whistle, while in Naples there were fireworks and delirium.

"You always told me, 'We want to win,' and now we've won. We've won all together," Napoli president Aurelio De Laurentiis told the crowd at the Naples stadium before he embraced Naples Mayor Gaetano Manfredi.

De Laurentiis took over the club in 2004 when Napoli was declared bankrupt, restarting in the third division.

"This is the coronation of a dream that's been going on for 33 years," De Laurentiis added. "It's been a long process."

It's the first time a club south of Italy's traditional soccer capitals of Milan and Turin has won the league since Roma claimed the title in 2001.

Napoli matched the record of clinching with five rounds to spare, shared with Torino (in 1947-48), Fiorentina (1955-56), Inter Milan (2006-07) and Juventus (2018-19).

In the 52nd minute, Osimhen slotted in a rebound off a shot from Kvaratskhelia following a corner kick.

During his goal celebration, Osimhen broke his face mask and the Nigeria forward had to play without it for a few minutes while it was repaired by Napoli staff members on the sideline.

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It was Osimhen's 22nd goal in the league this season and the 46th of his Serie A career, matching former AC Milan standout and current Liberia President George Weah as the top African scorers in Italy.

Afterward, Osimhen — who has acknowledged that he would like to play in the Premier League one day — would not commit to remaining with Napoli.

"I want to enjoy this moment for the rest of my life. Then after the season my other dreams can come," Osimhen said. "But for now it's not a time to talk about my other dreams. I wanted to win this. ... For me this is just a moment."

Napoli had a brief lapse during the first half during which Lovric found space within the area for a quick control and angled shot inside the far post in the 13th.

Napoli has dominated all season and didn't lose in the league until getting beat by Inter in January. A 5-1 victory over Juventus nine days later left no doubt that this was the Partenopei's year.

Napoli, though, wasn't even considered a title contender before the season because of the departures of former captain Lorenzo Insigne, club record scorer Dries Mertens and defensive stalwart Kalidou Koulibaly.

But Osimhen has developed into the most dangerous striker in the league, and dribbling wizard Kvaratskhelia has done far more than just replace Insigne on the left wing as one of the biggest revelations in Europe this season.

The title also gives Spalletti the one honor he has coveted most after previously managing Roma and Inter and winning two Russian league championships with Zenit St. Petersburg.

Spalletti's innovative style first showed promise at Udinese nearly two decades ago when he led the provincial club to a fourth-place finish and a spot in the Champions League. Udinese coach Andrea Sottil played under Spalletti at Udinese.

"The fans deserve it," Napoli captain Giovanni Di Lorenzo said, his hair colored in Napoli blue from the locker room celebration. "It felt like we were playing in Naples today."

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Kids and social media: Here are tips for concerned parents

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

When it comes to social media, families are seeking help.

With ever-changing algorithms pushing content at children, parents are seeing their kids' mental health suffer, even as platforms like TikTok and Instagram provide connections with friends. Some are questioning whether kids should be on social media at all, and if so, starting at what age.

Lawmakers have taken notice. A bipartisan group of senators recently introduced legislation aiming to prohibit all children under the age of 13 from using social media. It would also require permission from a guardian for users under 18 to create an account. It is one of several proposals in Congress seeking to make the internet safer for children and teens.

Meanwhile, on Wednesday the Federal Trade Commission said Facebook misled parents and failed to protect the privacy of children using its Messenger Kids app, including misrepresenting the access it provided to app developers to private user data. Now, the FTC is proposing sweeping changes to a privacy order it has with Facebook's parent company Meta that would include prohibiting it from making money from data it collects on children.

But making laws and regulating companies takes time. What are parents — and teens — supposed to do in the meantime? Here are some tips on staying safe, communicating and setting limits on social media — for kids as well as their parents.

IS 17 THE NEW 13?

There's already, technically, a rule that prohibits kids under 13 from using platforms that advertise to them without parental consent: The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act that went into effect in 2000

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— before today's teenagers were even born.

The goal was to protect kids' online privacy by requiring websites and online services to disclose clear privacy policies and get parents' consent before gathering personal information on their kids, among other things. To comply, social media companies have generally banned kids under 13 from signing up for their services, although it's been widely documented that kids sign up anyway, either with or without their parents' permission.

But times have changed, and online privacy is no longer the only concern when it comes to kids being online. There's bullying, harassment, the risk of developing eating disorders, suicidal thoughts or worse.

For years, there has been a push among parents, educators and tech experts to wait to give children phones — and access to social media — until they are older, such as the "Wait Until 8th" pledge that has parents sign a pledge not to give their kids a smartphone until the 8th grade, or about age 13 or 14. But neither social media companies nor the government have done anything concrete to increase the age limit.

IF THE LAW WON'T BAN KIDS, SHOULD PARENTS?

"There is not necessarily a magical age," said Christine Elgersma, a social media expert at the nonprofit Common Sense Media. But, she added, "13 is probably not the best age for kids to get on social media."

The laws currently being proposed include blanket bans on the under-13 set when it comes to social media. The problem? There's no easy way to verify a person's age when they sign up for apps and online services. And the apps popular with teens today were created for adults first. Companies have added some safeguards over the years, Elgersma noted, but these are piecemeal changes, not fundamental rethinks of the services.

"Developers need to start building apps with kids in mind," she said.

Some tech executives, celebrities such as Jennifer Garner and parents from all walks of life have resorted to banning their kids from social media altogether. While the decision is a personal one that depends on each child and parent, some experts say this could lead to isolating kids, who could be left out of activities and discussions with friends that take place on social media or chat services.

Another hurdle — kids who have never been on social media may find themselves ill-equipped to navigate the platforms when they are suddenly allowed free rein the day they turn 18.

TALK, TALK, TALK

Start early, earlier than you think. Elgersma suggests that parents go through their own social media feeds with their children before they are old enough to be online and have open discussions on what they see. How would your child handle a situation where a friend of a friend asks them to send a photo? Or if they see an article that makes them so angry they just want to share it right away?

For older kids, approach them with curiosity and interest.

"If teens are giving you the grunts or the single word answers, sometimes asking about what their friends are doing or just not asking direct questions like, 'What are you doing on Instagram?' but rather, 'Hey, I heard this influencer is really popular,'" she suggested. "And even if your kid rolled their eyes it could be a window."

Don't say things like "Turn that thing off!" when your kid has been scrolling for a long time, says Jean Rogers, the director of the nonprofit Fairplay's Screen Time Action Network.

"That's not respectful," Rogers said. "It doesn't respect that they have a whole life and a whole world in that device."

Instead, Rogers suggests asking them questions about what they do on their phone, and see what your child is willing to share.

Kids are also likely to respond to parents and educators "pulling back the curtains" on social media and the sometimes insidious tools companies use to keep people online and engaged, Elgersma said. Watch a documentary like "The Social Dilemma" that explores algorithms, dark patterns and dopamine feedback cycles of social media. Or read up with them how Facebook and TikTok make money.

"Kids love to be in the know about these things, and it will give them a sense of power," she said.

SETTING LIMITS

Rogers says most parents have success with taking their kids' phones overnight to limit their scrolling.

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Occasionally kids might try to sneak the phone back, but it's a strategy that tends to work because kids need a break from the screen.

"They need to an excuse with their peers to not be on their phone at night," Rogers said. "They can blame their parents."

Parents may need their own limits on phone use. Rogers said it's helpful to explain what you are doing when you do have a phone in hand around your child so they understand you are not aimlessly scrolling through sites like Instagram. Tell your child that you're checking work email, looking up a recipe for dinner or paying a bill so they understand you're not on there just for fun. Then tell them when you plan to put the phone down.

YOU CAN'T DO IT ALONE

Parents should also realize that it's not a fair fight. Social media apps like Instagram are designed to be addictive, says Roxana Marachi, a professor of education at San Jose State University who studies data harms. Without new laws that regulate how tech companies use our data and algorithms to push users toward harmful content, there is only so much parents can do, Marachi said.

"The companies are not interested in children's well-being, they're interested in eyes on the screen and maximizing the number of clicks," Marachi said.

US seeks help to find out who shot 4 bald eagles in Arkansas

PYATT, Ark. (AP) — Federal and state wildlife authorities are asking for the public's help in catching whoever might be responsible for the deaths of four bald eagles in Arkansas' Marion County earlier this year.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service last month put up a \$5,000 reward for tips that lead to the arrest and conviction of those who killed the federally protected birds discovered Feb. 13 near Pyatt, the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette reported.

A joint investigation by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined that the birds were shot between mid-January and mid-February. In addition to the eagles, authorities found red-tailed hawks, a domestic dog and white-tailed deer in the vicinity that had also been shot and killed.

"There's, I think, evidence that somebody probably shot (the birds) from the road, but I don't even know that they're 100% certain of that," said Rob Finley, the Arkansas Game and Fish commissioner for the area where the eagles were killed. "I know that they did set up a little bit of an operation to see if ... the people ever came back, but never did."

Finley said that is when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service took the lead on the investigation.

Bald eagles are federally protected and if killed, violators could face up to a \$250,000 fine and up to two years in federal prison if convicted. While protected, bald eagles are no longer considered endangered. They were removed from the endangered list in 2007.

"The bald eagles do migrate in and out of the state quite a bit now," Arkansas Game and Fish Commission spokesperson Randy Zellers said. "We do have nesting bald eagles in the state. But we (also) see an influx of bald eagles every winter, primarily with the waterfowl migration. When the waterfowl come south, a lot of eagles will follow them down (to prey on)."

Anyone with information about the bald eagles killed in Marion County should contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at (501) 513-4470 or the Arkansas Game & Fish Commission at (833) 356-0824.

Porn industry group sues over Utah age verification law

By SAM METZ Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — An adult entertainment industry group filed a lawsuit on Wednesday challenging a new Utah law that requires porn websites to implement age verification mechanisms to block minors from accessing sexually explicit materials.

The law, which took effect Wednesday, made Utah the second state to require adult websites to verify the age of those who want to view their pages — either through an independent contractor or digital

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ID. Lawmakers likened the requirement to those for alcohol or online gambling and argued that stronger protections were needed to shield kids from pornography, which is ubiquitous online.

The Free Speech Coalition — along with an erotica author and companies that manage adult websites and are party to the suit — argues that Utah's new law unfairly discriminates against certain kinds of speech, violates the First Amendment rights of porn providers and intrudes on the privacy of individuals who want to view sexually explicit materials. The plaintiffs have asked a federal judge to bar enforcement of the law until their legal challenge is resolved.

They contend that the age verification law "imposes a content-based restriction on protected speech that requires narrow tailoring to serve a compelling state interest."

It is currently illegal to show children pornography under federal law, however that law is rarely enforced.

Utah's new law is the conservative state's latest effort to crack down on access to pornography and dovetails with lawmakers' other efforts to restrict how children use the internet, including social media sites. It comes less than a year after Louisiana enacted a similar law and as additional states consider such policies as filters or age verification for adult websites.

The Utah law builds off years of anti-porn efforts by the Republican-controlled Legislature, where a majority of lawmakers are members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It comes seven years after Utah became the first state to declare pornography a public health crisis and two years after lawmakers passed a measure paving the way to require internet-capable devices be equipped with porn filters for children. Provisions of the law delay it from taking effect unless at least five other states pass similar measures.

The age verification law is facing strong pushback, including from one of the biggest porn sites, Pornhub, which disabled access to its site in Utah earlier this week.

The Free Speech Coalition has filed similar challenges before. In 2002, its case against a federal child pornography statute made landed before the U.S. Supreme Court, which struck down provisions for overly interfering with free speech.

New York, California probing workplace discrimination at NFL

By KAREN MATTHEWS and ADAM BEAM Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Prosecutors in New York and California launched an investigation of the NFL's workplace culture on Thursday, issuing subpoenas to executives of one of the world's richest sports league in search of documents related to an array of accusations that include racial discrimination and sexual harassment.

New York Attorney General Letitia James and California Attorney General Rob Bonta, both Democrats, say they are not targeting any of the league's 32 teams that take up so much of the country's cultural space. Instead, their probe is focused on the league itself, specifically its corporate offices in New York and California.

The investigation is in response to what Bonta called a "robust public record" that points to a "disturbing and concerning set of allegations about gender and racial discrimination in the NFL." That includes lawsuits filed by former employees, congressional hearings last year into the workplace practices of the Washington Commanders and a 2022 New York Times article detailing allegations of gender discrimination by more than 30 former female NFL employees.

"No one is above the law," Bonta said in an interview with the Associated Press. "We're gonna get to the bottom of what's happening and if there is discrimination occurring, we're gonna make sure we address it and that the NFL is held accountable."

The league said it would cooperate with the investigation but called the allegations "entirely inconsistent with the NFL's values and practices."

"The NFL offices are places where employees of all genders, races and backgrounds thrive. We do not tolerate discrimination in any form," league officials said in a statement.

The NFL has faced investigations before, including an inquiry by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration into former players' claims that teams were mishandling prescription drugs. But the investigation announced Thursday appears to be the first of its kind for various workplace violations in the league's

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corporate office.

The NFL is not a monolith, consisting of 32 teams with 32 different owners who are “primarily responsible for steering their own ship,” said Nellie Drew, director of the Center for the Advancement of Sport at the University of Buffalo School of Law. But an investigation of the league itself, depending on the results, could tarnish the entire brand — something that could impact sponsorships.

“It’s probably not what they want people talking about the week before the schedule drops,” Drew said, referring to the NFL’s plans to unveil the 2023 schedule next week, an event that often generates buzz about high-profile matchups and for the 2023 season and prompts speculation about the chances of success for each team.

Complaints of race and sex discrimination have dogged the NFL and individual teams. The Washington Commanders, owner Dan Snyder, the NFL and Goodell were sued by the attorney general for the District of Columbia in November for colluding to deceive fans by lying about an inquiry into “sexual misconduct and a persistently hostile work environment” within the team.

Fired Miami Dolphins coach Brian Flores filed a federal lawsuit against the NFL and three teams last year over alleged racist hiring practices for coaches and general managers, saying the league remains “rife with racism.”

And a lawsuit filed earlier this year in Los Angeles Superior Court by Jennifer Love, a former director for NFL Enterprises, attributed her 2022 layoff to retaliation for her complaints of “pervasive sexism” and a “boys’ club” mentality.

The NFL has said Flores’ claims are without merit. NFL spokesperson Alex Riethmiller said the league had no comment on Love’s lawsuit.

Beyond the lawsuits, James and Bonta cited a 2022 New York Times story where more than 30 former female NFL employees described a sexist culture at the league. The women said the culture persisted despite promises of reform that Commissioner Roger Goodell made after the 2014 release of a video that showed Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice punching his fiancée.

One former NFL executive, Theresa Locklear, who held the position of director of business intelligence and optimization, told the Times that after the Rice video became public, managers were told to speak to their staffs about the video and the league’s response to it.

Locklear said that when she met with her team, a male employee, Aaron Jones, argued that Rice’s fiancée was partly at fault because she had egged Rice on, and other men on the call seemed to agree.

Jones told the Times that he had never spoken to Locklear about Rice and would never have argued that a woman was to blame for her assault.

Beam reported from Sacramento, California. Associated Press writers Rob Maaddi and Stephen Whyno contributed.

Napoli fans wildly celebrate Italian soccer league title

NAPLES, Italy (AP) — Napoli fans are celebrating wildly in the streets of the southern city following the team’s first Serie A title in more than three decades.

Diego Maradona led the team to the 1987 and 1990 titles, and Napoli sealed its third championship with a 1-1 draw at Udinese on Thursday.

The Stadio Diego Armando Maradona in Naples was open for fans to watch the game against Udinese on giant screens and a capacity crowd of more than 50,000 showed up, setting off fireworks at the final whistle.

Also, Napoli fans following the team at the Dacia Arena at Udine, in northern Italy, stormed the field after the game.

There was also a big crowd of fans at a Maradona mural in the downtown Quartieri Spagnoli neighborhood in Naples.

League scoring leader Victor Osimhen equalized for Napoli early in the second half by redirecting in a

rebound after Sandi Lovric had put Udinese ahead early on.

Napoli moved an insurmountable 16 points ahead of second-place Lazio with five matches still to play. No team south of Milan or Turin had won the Italian league since Roma claimed the title in 2001.

More AP soccer: <https://apnews.com/hub/Soccer> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Indiana governor signs bills targeting LGBTQ students

By ARLEIGH RODGERS Associated Press/Report for America

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Indiana's governor on Thursday signed a bill that will require schools to notify a parent if a student requests a name or pronoun change at school, one of the final bills approved in a legislative session that had targeted LGBTQ+ people in the state, especially students.

Critics worry the law could out transgender children to their families and erode trust between students and teachers while supporters have contested the legislation keeps parents empowered and informed about their children when at school.

Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb's approval of the legislation comes in a year when GOP-led legislatures around the country are seeking to curb LGBTQ+ rights, specifically targeting trans people's participation in sports, workplaces and schools, as well as their access to health care.

Recently, Florida Republicans on Wednesday also approved a bill that would prevent students and teachers from being required to use pronouns that don't correspond to someone's sex, a bill Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis is expected to sign into law. Meanwhile, at least 16 states, including Indiana, have banned or restricted access to gender-affirming care such as hormones, puberty blockers, and surgeries.

Indiana's name and pronouns law, which goes into effect July 1, will require school officials to provide written notification to a child's parent or guardian within five business days of the child asking to be called a different "pronoun, title, or word," according to the bill. It also prohibits, from prekindergarten through third grade, instruction on "human sexuality," something that is not defined in the bill.

"I believe in parental rights," Holcomb said in a statement Thursday. "I also just believe its commonsense that sex education should not be taught in prekindergarten through third grade."

GOP bill author Rep. Michelle Davis said the law will "ensure Hoosier parents are in the driver's seat when it comes to introducing sensitive topics to their kids."

"I continue to hear from constituents who are concerned about what their kids are being taught in the classroom, and that they're being left out of important discussions with their children," she said in a statement. "This new law will also increase transparency by requiring that parents be notified if their child is struggling with their gender identity at school."

Holcomb also signed into law on Thursday a bill that could make it easier to ban books from public school libraries, staff at which would be required by July 1 to publicly post a list of books they offer and provide a complaints process for community members.

Schools and librarians could also no longer argue, as a legal defense, that the texts in their libraries have "educational" value. The law would still allow them to argue the text has literary, artistic, political or scientific value.

Those who supported the legislation expressed concern that sexually inappropriate or "pornographic" materials are available to children in school libraries. Critics, however, said the legislation could open the door to banning books or criminal prosecutions of librarians simply because some people don't like the topics of the texts, particularly those with LGBTQ+ themes.

Holcomb said he was "happy that these decisions will continue to take place at the local level."

The American Civil Liberties Union of Indiana said, however, laws like these only serve to "control what youth can and cannot read, what they can and cannot learn, and — most troublingly — who they can and cannot be."

"Trans youth thrive when they are affirmed in their gender identity, which includes being called by a name and pronouns that reflect who they are," said Katie Blair, ACLU of Indiana advocacy and public policy director.

Arleigh Rodgers 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 her on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/arleighrodgers>.

The banking crisis isn't over. But how bad will it get?

By KEN SWEET and MICHELLE CHAPMAN AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Uncertainty continues to pummel the banking industry, despite assurances from financial regulators and bankers such as Jamie Dimon this week that the worst of the recent crisis is over and the health of the banking system remains strong.

Bank shares have sold off on Wall Street this week following the government seizure and subsequent sale of First Republic Bank to JPMorgan. It was the second-largest bank failure in U.S. history and the third failure of a midsize lender in two months.

While many thought the sale of First Republic “would stop the ‘who’s next?’ conversations, investors are clearly continuing to focus on remaining players that are deemed the weakest” analysts at UBS wrote in a note to clients.

The bigger worry is that the bank failures might lead to doubts about relatively healthy banks, creating a financial contagion that could impact the wider economy. Averting that scenario was the reason the U.S. put tighter restrictions on major banks following the financial crisis 15 years ago.

It is difficult to ignore the sense of unease in banking right now, though there’s no need for concern if your money is in a bank insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. and you have less than \$250,000 there, which covers most accounts.

Bankers and regulators have tried to reassure investors that the worst of the crisis is past, to little avail. JPMorgan’s Dimon said Monday that he believed “this part” of the banking crisis was over. Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell vouched for the health of the financial system on Wednesday.

A renewed sell-off Thursday focused on PacWest Bancorp and Western Alliance Bancorp, two smaller regional banks whose shares have been under pressure since Silicon Valley Bank failed in mid-March and set off the current crisis. PacWest fell 51% after acknowledging it was considering putting itself up for sale.

PacWest was targeted because of a high concentration of large, uninsured deposits from venture capital and tech clients, the same type of customers who triggered bank runs at Silicon Valley and First Republic. The UBS analysts estimate that about 23% of PacWest’s deposits come from the venture capital and tech space.

But even Midwest regionals such as Comerica and KeyCorp are down more than 20% this week. That could reflect growing concerns about large amounts of real estate loans, particularly in the office property market, which continues to suffer the effects of the pandemic.

PacWest, based in Los Angeles, and Western Alliance, in Phoenix, each issued a statement overnight saying they weren’t experiencing any out-of-the-ordinary deposit withdrawals following the sale of First Republic. Both saw significant withdrawals following the failure of Silicon Valley Bank, but the banks say deposits have increased since March 31.

Western Alliance issued a separate statement Thursday morning denying a story in The Financial Times that said the bank is considering a sale. Its shares fell 38%.

Investors may fear that PacWest’s fate could mirror that of First Republic, which spent weeks looking for a buyer before failing. First Republic also catered to a wealthy clientele, many who rapidly pulled deposits when Silicon Valley failed. The rapid rise in interest rates over the past year had also reduced the value of large loans the bank issued when rates were much lower.

“The underlying issue, particularly at these banks, is their asset and deposit mix isn’t sustainable. Deposits keep running out the door or banks are having to pay hefty prices for them,” said Chris Caulfield, a banking industry consultant with West Monroe who has worked with many of the regional banks in trouble.

In another sign of potential trouble, a major deal in the banking sector was called off Thursday. TD Bank

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Group and First Horizon Corp. said they called off a planned merger, citing regulatory hurdles. Toronto-Dominion Bank had said in February that it was buying regional bank First Horizon in a \$13.4 billion all-cash deal.

The Federal Reserve's fight against inflation has played a key role in the banking turmoil. The Fed on Wednesday raised its key interest rate by a quarter-point to the highest level in 16 years as part of that campaign, its tenth consecutive rate hike.

The higher rates have prompted depositors to move money into higher-paying certificates of deposit and money market funds. They also played a role in the slowdown in the tech industry, which had major implications for West Coast banks such as Silicon Valley.

Chair Jerome Powell said the Fed would monitor several factors, including the turmoil in the banking sector, in deciding its next move on rates.

The Fed chair stressed his belief that the collapse of three large banks in the past six weeks will likely cause other banks to tighten lending, and that would help the Fed in its inflation fight. The Fed's rapid rate hikes over the past year have started to slow the economy, and a number of economists expect a recession late in 2023 or in early 2024.

Powell also said he agreed with the conclusions of a Fed report issued last week that said lapses in supervision contributed to the demise of Silicon Valley Bank, and recommended stricter regulation of the banking industry.

JPMorgan anticipates bank stocks will continue to be pressured due to regulatory and economic uncertainty, among other factors.

"Regulatory concerns primarily would translate into how much banks need to add to capital, liquidity, and debt, all of which would strengthen them longer term but hurt (earning per share)," analysts said in a note.

Ex-Democrat Florida gov nominee not guilty of lying to FBI

By ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE undefined

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — Former Florida Democratic candidate for governor Andrew Gillum, who came within a whisker of defeating Republican Ron DeSantis in 2018, was acquitted Thursday of lying to the FBI in a corruption case that also involved illegal use of campaign contributions.

But the federal jury hung on charges that Gillum funneled tens of thousands of dollars in campaign money to personal accounts. Prosecutors said they will retry him on those counts. They had claimed Gillum was struggling financially after quitting his \$120,000-a-year job with the People for the American Way group to run for governor.

Gillum was acquitted of lying to undercover FBI agents posing as developers who paid for a 2016 trip he took with his brother to New York, including hotel rooms, meals, a boat tour and a ticket to the hit Broadway show "Hamilton."

Outside the courthouse, Gillum thanked his family, wife, legal team and pastor for their support, but took a dig at prosecutors.

"They have quite literally tried to take everything from us. And the beauty is in our system the powers that be don't always get to decide. Everyday people like you and me sometimes get our swing at the ball," he said.

Asked about what comes next, Gillum said "sleep" as he walked away from a gaggle of news reporters.

Gillum had faced a potentially lengthy prison sentence if convicted, although, under federal sentencing guidelines, he would have likely gotten far less than the maximum.

The jury came back hung for public relations executive and Gillum adviser, co-defendant Sharon Lettman-Hicks, in the case. Prosecutors said they will also retry her.

Gillum, 43, a former Tallahassee mayor, sought to become the first Black governor in Florida history when he took on DeSantis in 2018. Gillum lost by less than 34,000 votes to DeSantis, triggering an automatic recount.

Justice Clarence Thomas let GOP donor pay child's tuition

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Republican megadonor paid two years of private school tuition for a child raised by Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, who did not disclose the payments, a lawyer who has represented Thomas and his wife acknowledged Thursday.

The revelation of tuition payments made by Dallas billionaire Harlan Crow is the latest example of Crow's generosity to Thomas and his family that has raised questions about Thomas' ethics and disclosure requirements more generally. The payments, along with the earlier examples of Crow's financial ties to Thomas, were first reported by the nonprofit investigative journalism site ProPublica.

ProPublica reported Thursday that Crow paid tuition for Thomas' great-nephew Mark Martin. Thomas and his wife, Virginia, raised Martin from the age of 6.

Over the past month, ProPublica has reported in other stories about luxury vacations paid for by Crow that the conservative justice took as well as Crow's purchase of property from the Thomas family, neither of which were disclosed. Democrats have used the revelations to call for stronger ethics rules for the Supreme Court, and the Democrat-controlled Senate held a hearing on ethics issues this week. Republicans have defended Thomas.

According to the ProPublica story, Crow paid tuition for Martin at a military boarding school in Virginia, Randolph-Macon Academy, as well as Hidden Lake Academy in Georgia.

ProPublica said Thomas did not respond to questions. Crow's office responded in a statement to questions but did not address a question about how much he paid in total for Martin's tuition. He did say that Thomas had not requested the support for either school, ProPublica reported.

A Supreme Court spokeswoman did not immediately respond to an email from The Associated Press about whether Thomas would have any response to the story. On Twitter, however, lawyer Mark Paoletta defended Thomas in an extended statement. Paoletta, a longtime friend of Thomas, called the story "another attempt to manufacture a scandal about Justice Thomas."

Paoletta said in his statement that Crow had recommended that Thomas consider Randolph-Macon Academy, which Crow had attended, and had offered to pay for Martin's first year there in 2006, a payment that went directly to the school. When the school recommended Martin spend a year at Hidden Lake Academy, Crow offered again to pay for that year, a payment that also went directly to the school, Paoletta said.

In response to the story, lawmakers in Congress were again divided by party.

Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., who once clerked for Chief Justice John Roberts, said it was "just the latest installment of the left's multi-decade campaign to target Justice Thomas."

Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., said in a statement that with "every new revelation in this case, it becomes clearer that Harlan Crow has been subsidizing an extravagant lifestyle" that Thomas could not otherwise afford.

"This is a foul breach of ethics standards, which are already far too low when it comes to the Supreme Court," Wyden said.

Democratic Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, urged Roberts to take note.

"I hope that Chief Justice Roberts reads this story this morning and understands something has to be done," Durbin said. "The reputation of the Supreme Court is at stake here, the credibility of the court when it comes to its future decisions is at stake."

Associated Press video journalist Rick Gentilo contributed to this report.

Carrie Fisher gets her Walk of Fame star, on May the Fourth

By The Associated Press undefined

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Carrie Fisher received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on Thursday, a May the Fourth tribute to a beloved "Star Wars" actor that had a touch of stardust.

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The late star's daughter, Billie Lourd, wearing her mother's portrait printed on her metallic dress, accepted the star on behalf of Fisher. She threw glitter, her mother's favorite, on the newly unveiled star.

"My mom used to say you weren't actually famous until you became a Pez dispenser. Well, people eat candy out of her neck every day. I say you aren't actually famous until you get a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame," she said. "My mom is a double-whammy — a Pez dispenser and has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame now. Mama, you've made it."

Mark Hamill, who played Fisher's space brother, Luke Skywalker, was also on hand, and recalled meeting the young actor when she was just 19.

"She played such a crucial role in my personal and professional life and both would have been far emptier without her. Was she a handful? Was she high-maintenance? No doubt! But everything would have been drabber and less interesting if she hadn't been the friend that she was," Hamill said.

Several in the crowd were dressed as characters from the space franchise and C-3P0 and R2-D2 were present for the unveiling. "Never forget the droids!" Lourd said on a wet day that gave way to sun.

Fisher — who died in 2016 — joins "Star Wars" co-stars Harrison Ford and Hamill on the Hollywood tourist attraction that recognizes luminaries from film, television, music and other entertainment industries. The trio's stars are all located on the 6,800 block of Hollywood Boulevard, near where the original film debuted in 1977.

Fisher played Leia Organa, who over six films morphed from a princess to a general leading the forces of good in its fight against oppressive regimes aiming to control a galaxy far, far away.

"No one will ever be as hot or as cool as Princess Leia," said Lourd. "Leia is more than just a character. She's a feeling. She is strength. She is grace. She is wit. She is femininity at its finest. She knows what she wants and gets it. She doesn't need anyone to rescue her because she rescues herself and even rescues the rescuers. And no one could have played her like my mother."

Fans had long campaigned for her to receive a Walk of Fame star. The honor comes on May the Fourth, essentially an official holiday for Star Wars fans that's a play on a line that Fisher said often in the films, "May the Force be with you."

Devotees worldwide celebrate with a variety of tributes, while retailers hold special sales on Star Wars merchandise.

Fisher was given the 2,754th star on the Walk of Fame. Ford received his star in 2003 and Hamill was similarly honored in 2018.

Walk of Fame stars are given to performers who are nominated and a \$75,000 fee is now required to create the star and maintain it.

This story corrects the day of the week to Thursday.

Fox opposes fellow journalists trying to uncover documents

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Fox News is opposing a renewed effort by three news organizations to unseal documents related to its recently settled defamation lawsuit, saying it would do nothing but "gratify private spite or promote public scandal."

The Associated Press, The New York Times and National Public Radio asked a Delaware judge earlier this week to reveal mostly private text messages and conversations between Fox employees shortly after the 2020 presidential election. The information was uncovered during the Dominion Voting Systems lawsuit.

Fox lawyer Katharine L. Mowery, in a letter sent to Delaware Superior Court Judge Eric Davis and accepted by the court Thursday, said much of the material its competitors sought wasn't relevant to the issues of the lawsuit.

Some material from the vast trove of evidence that Dominion gathered has already been released and proved newsworthy, showing that Fox hosts and executives didn't believe the false allegations about Dominion's voting equipment but still continued to air them. Some messages revealed former Fox host

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Tucker Carlson's scorn for former President Donald Trump, including one text where he declared, "I hate him passionately."

"They have not been shy about sharing the communications with the most potential to grab headlines," Mowery wrote of the media challenging the sealed documents.

One of the reasons Fox agreed to settle the case was to "buy peace and bring an end to the media spectacle," she wrote.

David McCraw, senior vice president and deputy general counsel at The New York Times, said the newspaper was disappointed by Fox's continued opposition.

"Fox's lawyers argue that unsealing the court documents will harm journalism and undermine the First Amendment, when in fact the best interests of the public and journalism are served by judicial transparency, not secrecy," McCraw said.

While it's standard for journalists to want as much information as possible to be made public, it's also not surprising Fox would want to keep it under wraps, said Lucy Dalglish, dean of the Philip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland.

"I'd be shocked if Fox said, 'sure, let me give it to you, have fun,'" Dalglish said.

Fox may be concerned that some of the hidden information might be fodder for other legal action, she said, and wouldn't want to release it unless under a court order. Fox has said much of the material was redacted because it contained proprietary information about the company.

The material's continued relevance was evident this week, when an article in the Times quoted a racist text message from Carlson saying that a group of Trump supporters beating a protester was "not how white men fight." The newspaper suggested that the message may have played a role in Fox's decision last week to fire Carlson.

His text was among the cache of Dominion documents that had been sealed from the public. The Times said that the contents of the text were disclosed in interviews with several people close to the defamation lawsuit. Fox's lawyer cited the story in her letter to Davis.

Mowery pointed out that Dominion's lawsuit had reached a conclusion, but lawyers for the news organization said that doesn't make their request for unsealing the information moot.

It's not clear when Davis might rule. He has already cited the settlement as the reason for ending an investigation he had ordered into Fox not being forthcoming in producing certain evidence in the case.

Fox agreed last month to pay \$787 million to end the case. Dominion had accused the network of repeatedly airing bogus claims that its voting equipment rigged the 2020 election against Trump, despite knowing those claims were false.

COVID dropped to 4th leading cause of death in US last year

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. deaths fell last year, and COVID-19 dropped to the nation's No. 4 cause, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Thursday.

COVID-19 deaths trailed those caused by heart disease, cancer and injuries such as drug overdoses, motor vehicle fatalities and shootings. In 2020 and 2021, only heart disease and cancer were ahead of the coronavirus.

U.S. deaths usually rise year-to-year, in part because the nation's population has been growing. The pandemic accelerated that trend, making 2021 the deadliest in U.S. history, with more than 3.4 million deaths. But 2022 saw the first drop in deaths since 2009.

The 2022 tally was about 3.3 million — a 5% decline from 2021 but still much higher than in the years before the pandemic. The CDC cautioned that last year's numbers are preliminary and may change a little after further analysis.

Coronavirus-associated death rates fell for nearly all Americans. The virus was deemed the underlying cause of about 187,000 U.S. deaths last year, accounting for about 6% of deaths. The highest COVID-19 death rates were in the South and in an adjacent region that stretches west to Texas, Oklahoma and New

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Mexico, the CDC said.

The death rates for heart disease and cancer increased during the pandemic, the CDC said. The cancer death rate had been falling for 20 years before COVID-19 hit.

The CDC report indicated a slight decline in the number of injury deaths last year, falling to about 218,000 from about 219,500 the year before. That would be a surprise, given recent trends in rising drug overdose and gun deaths.

CDC officials noted that number could rise. Death certificate data for injury deaths tends to take longer because many involve police investigations.

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Science and Educational Media Group. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Barrera hopes 'Carmen' film shows human side at the border

By LESLIE AMBRIZ Associated Press

Before taking on a new role, Melissa Barrera asks herself, "What is the message that I'm trying to send out into the world with this?"

The Mexican actor and singer is intentional with the projects she selects, including her latest movie, "Carmen," the feature directorial debut of "Black Swan" choreographer Benjamin Millepied.

It's a musical love story loosely inspired by the 1875 George Bizet opera. The modern-day retelling, now showing in theaters, is set both in the desert along the U.S.-Mexican border and in gritty Los Angeles.

Barrera — best known to U.S. audiences, perhaps, for the "Scream" series and the film adaptation of "In the Heights" — stars here as Carmen, a young Mexican woman. She crosses paths near the border one night with Aidan (portrayed by Oscar nominee Paul Mescal), a Marine with PTSD who is working as a volunteer border patrol guard. A series of dangerous events forces them to go on the run together.

Barrera says that building chemistry with Mescal was easy, since they spent hours in dance rehearsals together.

"When you're dancing with someone, you get to know their body and you get to know how they move, and you make a fool of yourselves together, and you laugh and you fail and you fall," she said. "And it's a very complete way of getting to know another human being very quickly."

Millepied takes audiences on a visually poetic journey as the two make their way to Los Angeles. Carmen reunites there with her late mother's best friend, Masilda — portrayed by Rossy De Palma — and finds comfort in dance and her growing love for Aidan.

The film's score is composed by Nicholas Britnell, with Julieta Venegas, Taura Stinton and Tracy "The Doc" Curry.

When Barrera first heard of the project, she did not know what the story was about. "I just saw Benjamin Millepied is making his feature debut, and it's going to be an adaptation of 'Carmen.' That's all I got," said the actor.

It was not until months later, when she received the script, that she realized it was a story featuring an immigrant woman fleeing the cartel. That's a theme that Barrera had been trying to avoid since she began her crossover acting career in the United States. When she first moved here, she said, she would only get calls to be part of immigrant storylines or cartel-related roles.

"And we (Latinos) are always the victims, and we're always painted in an 'aye pobrecito' (oh, you poor little thing) light," said the actor.

While she knows that immigrant stories are real and important, Barrera prefers to "fight for other spaces where they don't see us, and try and get us in there."

As she kept reading the script, however, her initial hesitation began to disappear.

"I was like, OK, this is different. This is kind of beautiful and romantic and poetic, and it's going to be told through movement and dance sequences," she said.

Millepied's "Carmen" is a surrealist fever dream with avant-garde symbolism woven throughout. Each

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song and each dance sequence features Barrera, Mescal or De Palma.

When asking herself "What is the message?" in this case, Barrera said, it's "the plight of this woman who is like many women that are at the border right now, who is running from danger and trying to find a better life and find freedom and safety and love, which is what all human beings want."

She hopes the movie will humanize the individuals at the border who are waiting for asylum, create conversation and "get through to another type of audience."

Barrera said she worked closely with Millepied, who was born and grew up in France, to approach the story with sensitivity.

"It was a very collaborative experience, and I always felt like my opinion mattered and my voice mattered. And it was the first time that I ever felt like that on a project," she said.

Barrera's career began in Mexico on popular telenovelas, and she appeared in Netflix's "Club De Cuervos." In the U.S., she quickly landed a television crossover role in Starz's "Vida," as Lyn. She went on to star as Vanessa in Jon M. Chu and Lin Manuel Miranda's film "In the Heights," among other projects.

When taking the role of Sam in "Scream," Barrera said, the message she wanted to send is "we (Latinos) belong in franchises... We can be the lead of a franchise."

"I like to just keep working and keep knocking on those doors and keep auditioning for things that aren't meant for me but change people's minds, and be like, 'Oh, actually, it can be someone like you,'" she said.

Barrera will soon be starring in an untitled monster thriller directed by "Scream VI" directors Tyler Gillett and Matt Bettinelli-Olpin. Audiences can also watch her on Netflix's "Keep Breathing."

The Last of Us, Wii Sports entering Video Game Hall of Fame

ROCHESTER, N.Y. (AP) — The first commercial video game and the first one marketed to girls are headed to the World Video Game Hall of Fame, alongside a post-apocalyptic nail-biter and a system that made gamers out of grandparents.

Computer Space, Barbie Fashion Designer, The Last of Us and Wii Sports were announced Thursday as the Hall of Fame's class of 2023.

The Hall of Fame honors arcade, console, computer, handheld and mobile games that have influenced popular culture or the video game industry. This year's additions bring to 40 the number of games to be enshrined since its opening at The Strong museum in 2015.

The winners were voted in by a panel of experts from a field of finalists that also included Age of Empires, Angry Birds, Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare, FIFA International Soccer, Goldeneye 007, NBA 2K, Quake and Wizardry.

Nutting Associates' coin-operated Computer Space appeared in 1971 as the first commercial video game and was recognized for proving that video games could reach paying audiences outside of the labs where they were being developed. It didn't garner the kind of commercial success that would bring video games to the masses, according to the hall, but it did lay the foundation for the gaming industry: The developers went on to establish the gaming giant Atari Inc.

"There was no video game industry in 1970. The games that we'd now call video games were still mostly locked away on computers in university and research labs, inaccessible to the public," Jeremy Saucier, assistant vice president for interpretation and electronic games at The Strong, said in a news release.

Barbie Fashion Designer was the first video game to target girls, letting them design and print clothes for their Barbie dolls. It quickly took off, selling more than 500,000 copies in two months after its 1996 release by Digital Domain/Mattel Media. The game not only expanded the audience for video games but also began a discussion about gender and stereotypes in gaming that continues today, according to the Hall of Fame.

"Barbie Fashion Designer became a jumping-off point for the girls' games movement and shook up the software and gaming scene," collections manager Kristy Hisert said. "It also sparked important questions and debate. What does it mean to be a game for girls? Should there even be games 'for girls'? What are the implications of these games? What are the consequences of gendering games?"

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The Last of Us, with its memorable characters and storytelling, quickly stood out in the field of post-apocalyptic zombie games when it was released by Naughty Dog and Sony Interactive Entertainment. More than 200 publications named it the game of the year when it entered the scene in 2013. Ten years later, millions of viewers now tune in for the HBO series it inspired.

"The 2023 HBO adaptation has expanded the game's reach and popularity. Created with Naughty Dog's involvement, the show has garnered support from both critics and fans as one of the best video game adaptations ever made," video game curator Lindsey Kurano said.

Wii Sports, which launched with the Nintendo Wii home video game system in 2006, was honored for putting motion-based technology into living rooms across the world, where anyone from young children to older adults could grab the controller and join in virtual bowling, tennis matches and rounds of golf. Community centers for older adults embraced the games for their health and social benefits.

"With more than 82 million copies sold, Wii Sports is one of the best-selling video games of all time, but its true influence comes from the fact that it made gamers out of millions of people around the world who'd never thought about playing one before," said Aryol Prater, research specialist for Black play and culture at The Strong.

Anyone can nominate a game for consideration by the World Video Game Hall of Fame. The hall is set to move to an expanded space in The Strong in Rochester come June 30.

AP Was There: Covering the previous coronation in Britain

By ALLEN G. BREED AP National Writer

It might just be the coolest caption in newspaper history: "AP Wirephoto via jet bomber from London"

On Saturday, The Associated Press will deploy a small army of writers, photographers, radio correspondents and video journalists to cover the coronation of Britain's King Charles III.

But for his mother's crowning 70 years ago, the world's oldest news cooperative enlisted the help of an air force as well.

CONNECTING THE WORLD

Founded in 1846 by competing New York City newspapers looking to share the costs of covering the Mexican War, the AP used boats, barges, trains, sleighs, ponies and pigeons to get stories to its "members." AP was an early adopter of Samuel Morse's and Alfred Vail's telegraph — thus the term "wire service." With the telegraph, communications technology severed itself permanently from transportation methods.

"Innovation is in our bloodstream — and always has been," says Valerie Komor, director of AP's corporate archives.

Another big leap came in 1935, when — after 10 years of development in collaboration with AT&T — the AP launched its Wirephoto service, using a 10,000-mile network of telephone lines to distribute pictures to newspapers simultaneously with the news report. The photos were transmitted using a light bulb called an "exciter lamp."

The print was wrapped around a cylinder that rotated as the lamp shone its beam across the image, scanning about 1 inch of copy per minute. So, an 8 x 10 black-and-white photo took eight minutes to transmit — that is, if there was no interference on the line.

That technology had changed little by 1953, as the world prepared for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. But the AP had a few tricks up its sleeve.

Today, stories, photos and videos are beamed around the planet via a network of satellites. But this was more than four years before the Soviet Union successfully put Sputnik into orbit.

To get its photos out of London, AP was relying on the "radiophoto," which used the airwaves to transmit images. But there was another hurdle.

Normal commercial radiophoto circuits of the day ran at a rate of 60 revolutions per minute; AP's wirephoto network operated at 100 rpm. So, for the coronation, AP leased a special circuit operating at the higher rate.

Pre-coronation tests were conducted in London. "Results were reasonably good," the AP noted. But, it

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warned its members, atmospheric storms forecast between London and New York that week "may make radiophoto transmission difficult — perhaps impossible during certain periods." The problem: Radio waves carrying a photo signal across the Atlantic didn't simply follow the Earth's curvature.

"To reach New York successfully they must be reflected from layers of electrified air particles 100 to 200 miles above the Earth," the wire service wrote. "It is the reflection from this 'mirror' which makes possible long distance transmission of pictures by radio."

During atmospheric storms, the AP said, that mirror might become clouded, "like the mirror in your bathroom after your hot shower."

FLIGHT PLANS

So, as a precaution, AP arranged to have the original photos transported across the Atlantic aboard English Electric Canberra jet planes — the Royal Air Force's new high-altitude bombers — that were already tasked to carry television films.

"These planes will leave London at intervals during the day," the wire service told its members, "with the first jet due in Montreal around 3:30 pm, EST. Original prints will be sent directly onto AP's wirephoto network from a location at St. Hubert's airport in Montreal."

The dual plan worked, and AP prevailed over the "opposition," a committee of the Associated Press Managing Editors group crowed in a postmortem of the photo coverage. The dedicated circuit was used "in contrast to circuits the opposition were using (and cursing), and it was a key factor in AP's success."

"Over this 6,000-mile route from London, AP started moving a picture of Elizabeth wearing her crown only 18 minutes after it was put on her head," the report noted. "By the same method the New York Daily News received the picture of Elizabeth's leaving the palace, and printed it only an hour and 43 minutes after the event. The News called it "an all-time record for picture-handling."

In a battle to be first on American airwaves with footage, CBS and NBC each hired "souped-up" P-51 Mustang fighter planes to ferry film from Canada to Boston, the AP reported. In a scheme dubbed "Operation Astro," NBC even hired a Canberra being delivered to the Venezuelan air force to carry its film, though alleged fuel pump problems forced it to turn around, according to a 1988 retrospective by former network president Reuven Frank.

"The TV networks spared no expense to deliver coronation films to U.S. viewers," the APME panel wrote. "But thanks to the absence of any TV transatlantic link, U.S. afternoon papers had the picture beat."

WHAT WAS WRITTEN

Despite all the hubbub about photos, AP was still primarily a word operation in 1953. And a team of writers cranked out stories that magically appeared on banks of newsroom teletype machines that clacked away at a stately 60 words per minute — in all caps.

Hal Boyle wrote about then 4-year-old "PRINCE CHARLIE, BRITAIN'S FAIR-HAIRED BOY," and how the future monarch "STOLE THE PRE-CORONATION SPOTLIGHT FROM HIS REGAL MOTHER BY PLAYING A GAME OF PEEK-A-BOO WITH VAST THROGS OUTSIDE BUCKINGHAM PALACE."

"YOUNG CHARLIE, WEARING A SUIT OF PALE BLUE, STEPPED TO A SECOND FLOOR WINDOW, AND DREW BACK A LACE CURTAIN," Boyle wrote. "SMILING BROADLY, HE WAVED HAPPILY DOWN AT THE CHURNING THROG, WHICH SET UP A CRY, 'THERE HE IS!'"

Boyle, who won a Pulitzer in 1944 for his war dispatches, reported that hundreds of mothers held their children high to see the bonnie prince, "WHO IS ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR FIGURES IN THE ROYAL FAMILY BECAUSE, LIKE ANY NORMAL BOY, HE GETS IN HIS FAIR SHARE OF TROUBLE."

Over his long years as sovereign-in-waiting, Charles earned a reputation as somewhat stiff and distant. But 70 years ago, Boyle wrote, the young prince's antics "HAD GIVEN A HUMAN TOUCH TO THE SHOW AND TAKEN SOME OF THE TENSION AWAY FROM THE LONG WATCH ..."

Relman "Pat" Morin, already the recipient of the 1951 Pulitzer Prize in International Reporting, would add a second Pulitzer five years later for his coverage of the integration battle in Little Rock, Arkansas. He wrote the AP's "second night lead."

"IN THE MOMENT OF HER CORONATION, ELIZABETH WAS THE VERY VISION OF A QUEEN, BEAUTI-

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FUL, REGAL, AND OUTWARDLY SERENE," he wrote.

Morin said it was a ceremony "OLD TO ENGLAND BUT NEW TO TELEVISION."

"THE BROADCAST BROUGHT OFFICIALLY TO A CLOSE A DAY OF DESTINY THAT HAD KEPT THE QUEEN IN THE PUBLIC EYE 11 HOURS," he wrote. "IT WAS THE MOST-SEEN CORONATION IN HISTORY."

That is, perhaps, until Saturday.

'Not my king': UK republicans want coronation to be the last

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — On his way to be crowned this week, King Charles III will travel by gilded coach through streets swathed in red, white and blue Union flags — and past a warning from history.

At Trafalgar Square stands a large bronze statue of King Charles I, the 17th-century monarch deposed by Parliament and executed in 1649. On Saturday, more than 1,500 protesters, dressed in yellow for maximum visibility, plan to gather beside it to chant "Not my king" as the royal procession goes by.

"We'll try and keep the atmosphere light, but our aim is to make it impossible to ignore," said Graham Smith, chief executive of the anti-monarchist group Republic.

The coronation, he said, is "a celebration of a corrupt institution. And it is a celebration of one man taking a job that he has not earned."

Republican activists have long struggled to build momentum to dislodge Britain's 1,000-year-old monarchy. But they see the coronation as a moment of opportunity.

Queen Elizabeth II, who died in September after 70 years on the throne, was widely respected because of her longevity and sense of duty. Charles is another matter, a 74-year-old whose family feuds and firm opinions on everything from architecture to the environment have been headline fodder for decades.

Opinion polls suggest opposition and apathy to the monarchy are both growing. In a recent study by the National Center for Social Research, just 29% of respondents thought the monarchy was "very important" — the lowest level in the center's 40 years of research on the subject. Opposition was highest among the young.

"I think it's definitely shifting," said Smith, whose group wants to replace the monarch with an elected head of state. "People are quite happy to criticize Charles in a way they weren't willing to necessarily in public about the queen."

Millions in Britain will watch broadcasts when Charles is crowned in Westminster Abbey. Tens of thousands will line the streets, and neighborhoods across the country will hold parties.

But millions more will ignore the ceremonies. Some will attend alternative events, including a gig in Glasgow by tribute band the Scottish Sex Pistols, recapturing the spirit of punks who sang "God save the queen, the fascist regime" during the late queen's 1977 silver jubilee.

London's Newington Green Meeting House, a gathering place for religious dissenters and radicals for 300 years, is holding an "alternative community party," complete with food, drink and "radical and republican" music.

General manager Nick Toner said that the event is for people who "don't want to sit through hours of footage of ceremonies, carriages and endless Union Jacks, perhaps because they think it's a waste of taxpayers' money or even just plain old boring."

While the BBC, Britain's publicly owned national broadcaster, will offer wall-to-wall coronation coverage on Saturday, rival Channel 4 offers an alternative schedule including a musical about disgraced royal Prince Andrew, irreverent sitcom "The Windsors" and documentary "Farewell to the Monarchy."

Some argue that it's grotesque to spend millions on pomp and pageantry amid a cost-of-living crisis that has brought 10% inflation, driven thousands to food banks and triggered months of strikes by nurses, teachers and other workers seeking higher pay.

Even Charles' slimmed-down ceremony — with about 2,000 guests instead of the 8,000 who attended the queen's coronation in 1953 — carries a big price tag for British taxpayers. The full cost won't be known until afterward, but Elizabeth's 1953 coronation cost 912,000 pounds, the equivalent of 20.5 million pounds

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(\$26 million) today.

Deputy Prime Minister Oliver Dowden, who helps oversee coronation arrangements, has argued that “people would not want a dour scrimping and scraping” at such a “marvelous moment in our history.” Coronation supporters argue that the celebrations will be a boost for brand Britain, attracting tourists and stimulating sales.

Not everyone is convinced.

“I disagree with it,” said Philippa Higgins, a 24-year-old receptionist in London. “I just think it seems a bit silly when we’ve got so many people struggling, to have something so extravagant right now. But some people argue tradition, I suppose.”

Opposition to the lavish coronation is especially strong in Scotland and Wales, where some pro-independence nationalists see the monarchy as part of the U.K. state they want to leave.

Some Scottish nationalists object to the Stone of Destiny — a 275-pound (125-kilogram) chunk of sandstone linked to both Scottish and English monarchs — being sent from Edinburgh to London to take its traditional place under the coronation chair. The iconic rock, a symbol of Scottish nationhood seized by an English king in the 13th century and not returned until 1996, had to be moved to Westminster Abbey in secrecy and amid tight security.

Charles is keen to be seen as a modern monarch, and Buckingham Palace has adapted some of the coronation’s ancient traditions for the 21st century. His coronation will be the first to feature contributions from Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh leaders, and the first to include female bishops.

Still, a suggestion from the Church of England that people watching the coronation on TV might want to swear allegiance to the king from their sofas has struck a sour note with some.

Charles is monarch of 14 former British colonies as well as the U.K., and the king has tentatively addressed the legacy of empire. He supports research into the monarchy’s links to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and last year expressed “personal sorrow” at the suffering caused by slavery — though he stopped short of saying sorry.

The number of Charles’ realms is likely to dwindle during his reign. Barbados became a republic in 2021 and Jamaica plans to do the same. New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins said this week he wants his country to jettison the crown, though he added that it’s not an “urgent priority.”

Craig Prescott, a constitutional law expert at Bangor University in Wales, says that in the U.K., the monarchy is probably safe for now because of Britain’s tendency to “muddle through” and gradually adapt its politics and constitution to changing times.

“Clearly, if you were going to start from scratch, you would probably never choose one family and say, ‘They’re going to provide a head of state forever,’” he said. But the arrangement mostly works, and abolishing the crown “isn’t on the horizon of any political party.”

Still, he sees danger ahead if a young generation that has endured years of austerity, pandemic and economic pinch continues to struggle.

“If the monarchy stands for the status quo, the status quo isn’t necessarily great, in generational terms, for a certain section,” Prescott said. “If that continues, then that may be a problem for a lot of national institutions in 20 or 30 years’ time.”

Associated Press videojournalist Kwiyeon Ha contributed to this story.

Follow AP’s coverage of King Charles III and the coronation at <https://apnews.com/hub/king-charles-iii>

Feds fine McDonald’s franchisees with workers as young as 10

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Two 10-year-olds are among 300 children who worked at McDonald’s restaurants illegally, a Labor Department investigation of franchisees in Kentucky found.

Agency investigators found the 10-year-olds received little or no pay at a McDonald’s in Louisville, the

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Labor Department said. The franchisee for the Louisville store was among three McDonald's franchisees fined \$212,000 in total by the department.

Louisville's Bauer Food LLC, which operates 10 McDonald's locations, employed 24 minors under the age of 16 to work more hours than legally permitted, the agency said. Among those were two 10-year-old children. The agency said the children sometimes worked as late as 2 a.m., but were not paid.

"Below the minimum age for employment, they prepared and distributed food orders, cleaned the store, worked at the drive-thru window and operated a register," the Labor Department said Tuesday, adding that one child also was allowed to operate a deep fryer, which is prohibited task for workers under 16.

Franchise owner-operator Sean Bauer said the two 10-year-olds cited in the Labor Department's statement were visiting their parent, a night manager, and weren't employees.

"Any 'work' was done at the direction of — and in the presence of — the parent without authorization by franchisee organization management or leadership," Bauer said Wednesday in a prepared statement, adding that they've since reiterated the child visitation policy to employees.

Federal child labor regulations put strict limits on the types of jobs children can perform and the hours they can work.

The Kentucky investigations are part of an ongoing effort by the Labor Department's Wage and Hour Division to stop child labor abuses in the Southeast.

"Too often, employers fail to follow the child labor laws that protect young workers," said division Director Karen Garnett-Civils. "Under no circumstances should there ever be a 10-year-old child working in a fast-food kitchen around hot grills, ovens and deep fryers."

In addition, Walton-based Archways Richwood LLC and Louisville-based Bell Restaurant Group I LLC allowed minors ages 14 and 15 to work beyond allowable hours, the department said. Archway Richwood didn't immediately return a call seeking comment and Brdancat Management Inc., which Bell Restaurant Group is part of, declined comment.

"These reports are unacceptable, deeply troubling and run afoul of the high expectations we have for the entire McDonald's brand," McDonald's USA spokeswoman Tiffanie Boyd said. "We are committed to ensuring our franchisees have the resources they need to foster safe workplaces for all employees and maintain compliance with all labor laws."

No Mow May? Good intentions, bad approach, critics say

By JESSICA DAMIANO Associated Press

If you're reading this, chances are you've heard about the #NoMowMay movement that's been gaining steam on social media and in eco-conscious circles these past few years.

Started in 2019 by citizen scientists in the United Kingdom, the call for homeowners to abstain from mowing their lawns during the month has spread to other countries, including the U.S.

The intention is admirable: Let your grass and weeds grow and bloom to provide food and shelter for essential pollinators like bees and butterflies early in the season, when such necessities may be scarce.

Frankly, I think it's a terrible idea.

Some of those pollinators you set out to protect will likely get shredded up with the first mow of the season. Grass will no doubt get shaded by tall weeds, which can lead to fungal diseases. And weeds and invasive plants that take hold during the month won't simply disappear once the mowing commences. That might lead people to apply chemical pesticides they wouldn't otherwise use.

And what about rodents, snakes and other undesirables that also will likely avail themselves of the shelter?

Perplexed by the seemingly runaway-train popularity of the now-annual event, I called Tamson Yeh, turf specialist with the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County in New York. "Is it me?" I asked.

"I think it's a terrible idea, too," she said. "It's such a nice slogan, but letting the grass grow high and allowing it to do its thing, and then suddenly mowing it back is really counterproductive."

Yeh sees the movement as a "feel-good, stop-gap measure, because if you want to have an impact, you need to establish a permanent cover for insects," not merely temporary housing.

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"Bees tell each other where the food is, and pollinators (when they discover an unmown lawn) will remember to come back to it again and again," Yeh said. "Then on June 1st, when the food disappears, it's not good for them."

Hibernating insects have memories that span not only from day to day but from year to year, Yeh said. So she recommends planting early blooming shrubs, trees and plants to establish a permanent food source they can remember and rely on as adults when they emerge from dormancy.

Other problems with the practice, Yeh noted, include "confusing insects when the grass is suddenly low again. That gives predators the opportunity to take advantage of them."

There's also the potential to disturb a nest of bunnies when mowing, she said, calling the discovery "the most horrible experience you can have."

An all-or-nothing approach would be better. If you really want to make a difference, consider replacing the entire lawn, or part of it, with native plants or planting a wildflower meadow. Both will provide permanency for birds and pollinators while shrinking or eliminating the lawn, which frankly, has no redeeming value aside from subjective aesthetics, anyway.

When planting for beneficial insects, Yeh advises creating a corridor or path of pollen- and nectar-rich plants for migratory pollinators to travel along instead of spacing plants far apart.

Postponing fall cleanup until spring, which spawned another movement called #LeaveTheLeaves, will create safe havens for pollinators to lay their eggs and hibernate within. To allow time for them to emerge from dormancy, wait until after spring temperatures have remained above 50 degrees for an entire week before clearing away last season's plant debris.

For those set on letting their lawns go wild this month, Yeh cautions that "allowing grass to go to seed will kill it," so remove seedheads if they form.

It's also important to reintroduce mowing gradually.

"The best height for grass is 3 inches tall, but if you're mowing it down from 5 or 6 inches, do it over several sessions," she advised, adding that cutting grass by more than one-third of its height at one time can cause it to go into shock.

The gradual approach "also will give insects a chance to realize it's not a good place for them anymore," she said. Hopefully, they'll take the hint and move on to safer spaces.

Jessica Damiano writes regular gardening columns for The Associated Press. She publishes the award-winning Weekly Dirt Newsletter. Sign up here for weekly gardening tips and advice.

For more AP gardening stories, go to <https://apnews.com/hub/gardening>.

Today in History: May 5, Shepard is first American in space

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, May 5, the 125th day of 2023. There are 240 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 5, 1961, astronaut Alan B. Shepard Jr. became America's first space traveler as he made a 15-minute suborbital flight aboard Mercury capsule Freedom 7.

On this date:

In 1494, during his second voyage to the Western Hemisphere, Christopher Columbus landed in Jamaica.

In 1821, Napoleon Bonaparte, 51, died in exile on the island of St. Helena.

In 1925, schoolteacher John T. Scopes was charged in Tennessee with violating a state law that prohibited teaching the theory of evolution. (Scopes was found guilty, but his conviction was later set aside.)

In 1942, wartime sugar rationing began in the United States.

In 1945, in the only fatal attack of its kind during World War II, a Japanese balloon bomb exploded on Gearhart Mountain in Oregon, killing the pregnant wife of a minister and five children. Denmark and the

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Netherlands were liberated as a German surrender went into effect.

In 1973, Secretariat won the Kentucky Derby, the first of his Triple Crown victories.

In 1981, Irish Republican Army hunger-striker Bobby Sands died at the Maze Prison in Northern Ireland on his 66th day without food.

In 1994, Singapore caned American teenager Michael Fay for vandalism, a day after the sentence was reduced from six lashes to four in response to an appeal by President Bill Clinton.

In 2009, Texas health officials confirmed the first death of a U.S. resident with swine flu.

In 2014, a narrowly divided Supreme Court upheld Christian prayers at the start of local council meetings.

In 2016, former Los Angeles trash collector Lonnie Franklin Jr. was convicted of 10 counts of murder in the "Grim Sleeper" serial killings that targeted poor, young Black women over two decades.

In 2020, Tyson Foods said it would resume limited operation of its huge pork processing plant in Waterloo, Iowa, with enhanced safety measures, more than two weeks after closing the facility because of a coronavirus outbreak among workers.

Ten years ago: In Afghanistan, seven Americans and one German soldier were killed in three separate attacks. Former U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, seriously wounded in a 2011 shooting at a Tucson, Arizona, shopping mall, received the 2013 Profile in Courage award at the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston. LeBron James of the Miami Heat was the overwhelming choice as the NBA's Most Valuable Player. Brett Rumford won the China Open by four strokes to become the first Australian in 41 years to win consecutive European Tour titles. Five years ago: Russians demonstrated in scores of cities across the country against the impending inauguration of Vladimir Putin to a new term as president, and police responded by reportedly arresting nearly 1,600 of them. North Korea readjusted its time zone to match South Korea's, saying it was an early step toward making the longtime rivals "become one." NASA launched the Mars InSight lander from California on a flight of more than six months to the red planet, where the robot geologist would dig deeper in to the Martian surface than ever before. Justify, on his way to a Triple Crown sweep, splashed through the slop at Churchill Downs to win the Kentucky Derby by 2½ lengths, becoming the first horse since Apollo in 1882 to win the Derby without having raced as a 2-year-old. One year ago: Ukrainian fighters in the tunnels underneath Mariupol's pulverized steel plant held out against Russian troops in an increasingly desperate effort to deny Moscow what would be its biggest success of the war yet: the full capture of the strategic port city. (The siege would end with Russia capturing the city May 20.) Hong Kong reopened beaches and pools in a relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions, while China's capital Beijing began easing quarantine rules for arrivals from overseas. President Joe Biden named Karine Jean-Pierre to be White House press secretary, the first Black woman and openly LGBTQ person to serve in the role.

Today's Birthdays: Country singer-musician Roni Stoneman is 85. Actor Michael Murphy is 85. Actor Lance Henriksen is 83. Comedian-actor Michael Palin is 80. Actor John Rhys-Davies is 79. Rock correspondent Kurt Loder is 78. Rock musician Bill Ward (Black Sabbath) is 75. Actor Melinda Culea is 68. Actor Lisa Eilbacher is 66. Actor Richard E. Grant is 66. Former broadcast journalist John Miller is 65. Rock singer Ian McCulloch (Echo and the Bunnymen) is 64. Broadcast journalist Brian Williams is 64. Rock musician Shawn Drover (Megadeth) is 57. TV personality Kyan (KY'-ihn) Douglas is 53. Actor Tina Yothers is 50. R&B singer Raheem DeVaughn is 48. Actor Santiago Cabrera is 45. Actor Vincent Kartheiser is 44. Singer Craig David is 42. Actor Danielle Fishel is 42. Actor Henry Cavill is 40. Actor Clark Duke is 38. Soul singer Adele is 35. Rock singer Skye Sweetnam is 35. R&B singer Chris Brown is 34. Figure skater Nathan Chen is 24.