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Groton Community Calendar

Saturday, May 13

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

Sunday, May 14

MOTHER'S DAY

Graduation, 2 p.m.

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: 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,

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

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



"We have all a better guide in ourselves, if we would attend to it, than any other person can be."

-Jane Austen

10:30 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; worship at Zion, 11 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.

Monday, May 15

School Lunch: Cook's choice for rest of year.

Senior Menu: Sloppy joe on bun, oven roasted potatoes, mixed vegetables, ice cream sundae, whole wheat bread.

The Pantry, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Girls Golf: NEC at Sisseton, 10 a.m.

NEC JH Track Meet at Sisseton, 10 a.m.

Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m..

Baseball, Softball and T-Ball Uniform pickup at City Hall, 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Christian Literature Circle, 7:30 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6 p.m.

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The Bulletin

by Newsweek

JANUARY 24, 2023

World in Brief

an agreement to raise or suspend the debt limit is not reached.

- An Idaho jury found Lori Vallow Daybell guilty of killing her two children in a doomsday plot and conspiring to kill her husband's ex-wife. She faces up to life in prison without parole.

- A 17-year-old migrant died in the custody of U.S. immigration officials in Florida earlier this week, according to multiple media reports. The White House said the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services opened a medical investigation on May 10 into the boy's death.

- Tesla is recalling more than 1.1 million vehicles in China due to problems with the acceleration and braking systems. The recall includes some Model S, Model X, Model 3 and Model Y vehicles produced between January 2019 and April of this year, according to the country's State Administration for Market Regulation.

- A Pakistani high court has ordered the release of former Prime Minister Imran Khan following his illegal arrest on corruption charges, and has warned he can not be re-arrested on those charges for at least two weeks.

- Comcast NBCUniversal executive Linda Yaccarino will serve as the new CEO of Twitter, Elon Musk announced. She will focus on business operations as Musk turns his attention to product design and new technology.

- In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russian troops are fleeing the city of Bakhmut, according to Wagner Group leader Yevgeny Prigozhin. The once-Putin ally recently threatened to withdraw his troops from the besieged city due to a lack of ammunition and lack of support.

WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAY AHEAD

- The ReAwaken America tour continues at Trump National Doral Miami in Florida. The tour is a conservative conference that travels across the U.S. and features conservative speakers who are Donald Trump supporters.

- President Joe Biden is expected to deliver the commencement address at Howard University today in Washington, D.C.

- Former President Donald Trump will hold a campaign rally in Des Moines, Iowa. Trump is scheduled to begin delivering remarks at 8 p.m. ET.

- The Eurovision Song Contest ends with the Grand Final in Liverpool. Peacock will be streaming the event live starting at 3 p.m. ET.

- Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan fights to keep his seat as the country's presidential and parliamentary elections take place Sunday. Thailand voters also head to the polls on Sunday, the Pheu Thai Party currently has a big lead in opinion polls after nearly a decade of military-backed rule.

- Don't forget to call your mom this weekend—Mother's Day is on Sunday.

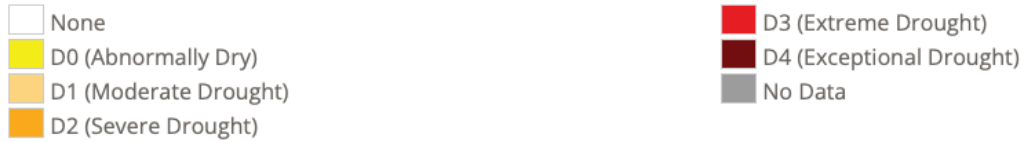
- Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has arrived in Rome ahead of a meeting with Pope Francis on Saturday. Over 1,000 police officers have been deployed and a no-fly zone put in place over Rome for what Zelensky described as "an important visit for approaching victory of Ukraine."

- President Joe Biden and congressional leaders will meet early next week to resume debt ceiling negotiations, the White House said. Meanwhile, a new Congressional Budget Office report stated the Treasury Department faces a "significant risk" of running out of money in early June if

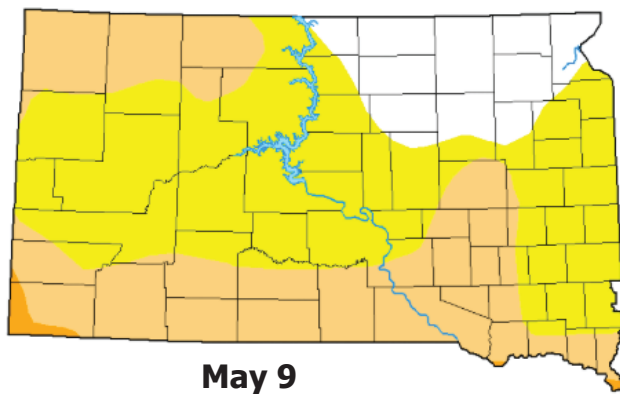
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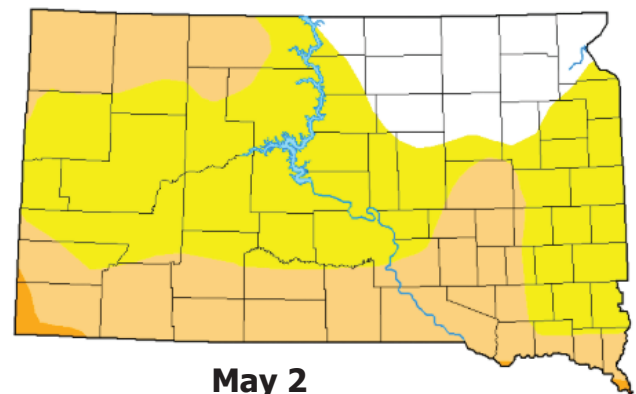
Drought Classification



Drought Monitor



May 9



May 2

Convective rainfall, typical for early May, occurred this past week across parts of Kansas and Nebraska. In areas such as central Nebraska, that received more than 2 inches of rainfall and there was a lack of support from SPI at various time scales and NDMC's objective drought blends, a 1-category improvement was made. However, in areas that missed out on this rainfall, a 1-category degradation was necessary for parts of southern Nebraska and central to eastern Kansas. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 64 and 68 percent of the pastures and ranges for Kansas and Nebraska, respectively, are rated poor to very poor. Abnormal dryness (D0) was expanded westward near and along the Colorado Rockies based on SPIs at various time scales, while an increase in severe drought (D2) coverage was justified for parts of the High Plains of eastern Colorado that missed out on the recent heavier precipitation. Based on multiple indicators including Condition Monitoring Observer Reports, abnormal dryness (D0) was reduced across northern parts of North Dakota.

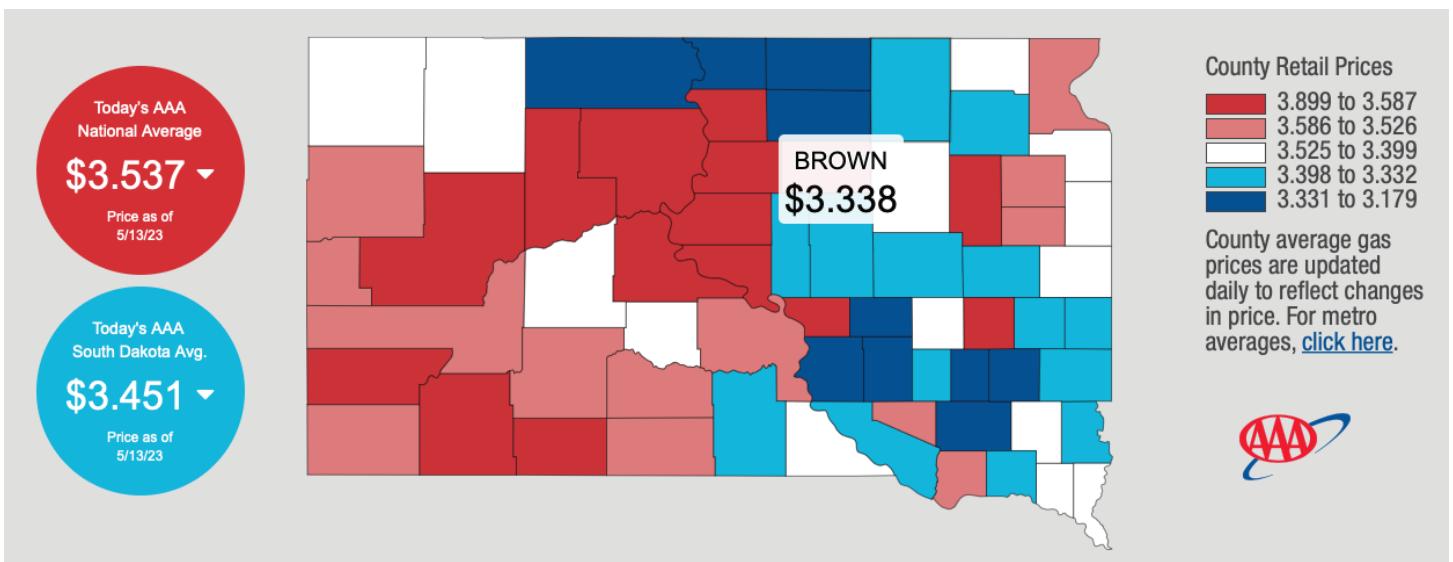
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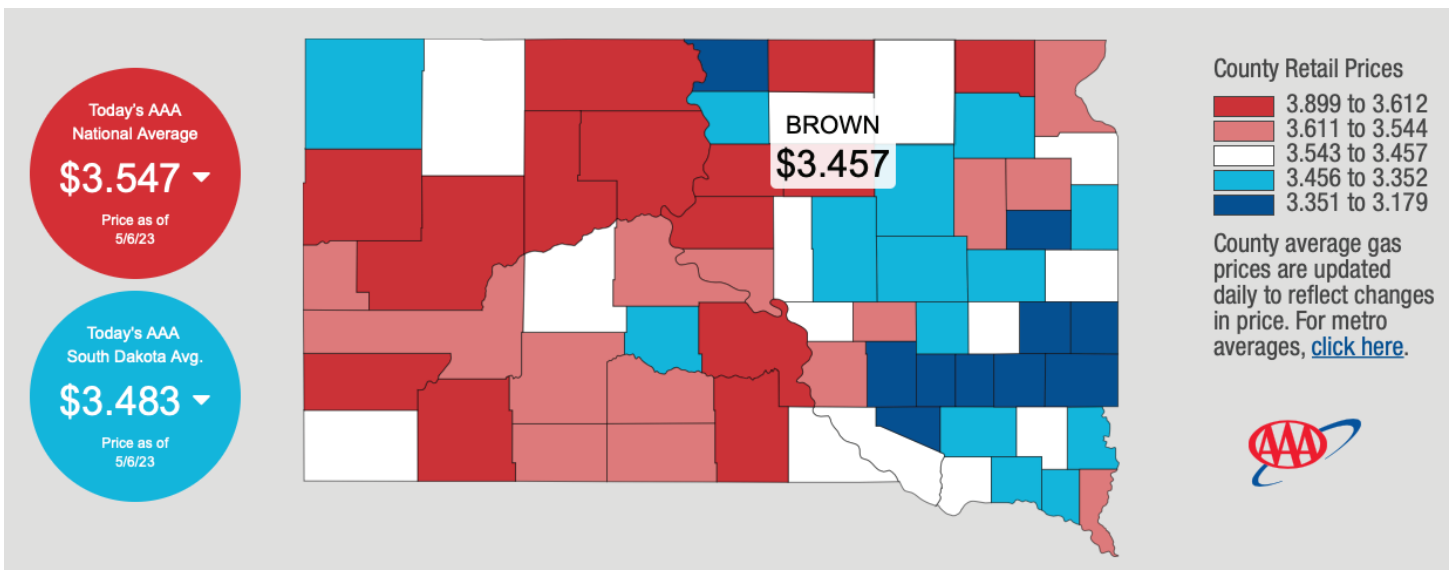
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.451	\$3.592	\$4.043	\$3.801
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.455	\$3.589	\$4.060	\$3.810
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.483	\$3.617	\$4.075	\$3.843
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.503	\$3.646	\$4.068	\$3.914
Year Ago Avg.	\$4.138	\$4.235	\$4.600	\$5.369

This Week



Two Weeks Ago



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Northeast Conference Track Meet Photos



Faith Traphagen hands the baton off to Ashlyn Warrington in the 3200m Relay event.

(Photo by Bruce Babcock)



Laila Roberts ran in three relay events including the winning 1600m Relay at the Northeast Conference Track Meet held in Groton. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)

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Taylor Diegel hands the baton off to Keegen Tracy for the final leg of the 4x100m relay. Groton Area won the event. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



Jayden Schwan ran in the 800m and 1600m run. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)

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Caden McInerney placed seventh in the 110m Hurdles as he is pictured on the far left. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)

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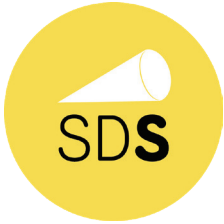
Korbin Kucker placed fifth and Teylor Diegel placed sixth in the 100m dash. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)

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Aspen Johnson was the Northeast Conference champion in the triple jump. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Before and after ban, South Dakotans seek abortions elsewhere: 'They're going to find a way' **BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - MAY 12, 2023 4:04 PM**

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first story in a three-part series about the impacts of South Dakota's abortion ban. The next story, on Monday, will examine the effects of South Dakota's "life of the mother" exception, which some critics believe is ill-defined.

Nobody knows exactly how many women are traveling out of the state for abortions, but several advocacy groups say they've helped more than 75 South Dakotans with abortions in other states in the first three months of 2023, continuing a trend that predates the triggering of the state's abortion ban last summer.

Some of those women sat in their vehicle just past the Minnesota or Wyoming borders as a doctor prescribed medication over the phone to end their pregnancy.

Others drove more than 10 hours round-trip to a clinic — taking off work and paying for a hotel and gas. It is illegal in South Dakota to undergo an abortion, unless the mother's life is in jeopardy. But that's not stopping these women, said Kim Floren, co-founder and director of the South Dakota Justice Empowerment Network.

The organization, which started in 2020, provides funding for abortion procedures and practical support for South Dakotans and Midwesterners. JEN and other organizations retain lawyers for legal advice as they continue to operate.

"There are a handful of people who will continue their pregnancies, but most of the time if someone needs an abortion they're going to get one," Floren said. "They're going to find a way and we're going to help them."

Majority of South Dakotans' abortions sought out-of-state in 2021, reports show

In reality, South Dakotans have been traveling out-of-state for reproductive care for years. The majority of South Dakotans who received abortions in 2021 got them in other states, according to the latest abortion reports from the departments of health in South Dakota and surrounding states.

While 175 South Dakota women reportedly received abortions in-state, another 158 women received abortions in Minnesota, 145 in Colorado, 57 in North Dakota and 77 in Nebraska. Wyoming, Montana and Iowa do not separate non-resident abortion data by state residency in their annual reports.

South Dakota had one operating abortion clinic in 2021 located in Sioux Falls (the clinic no longer performs abortions but offers other family planning services).

In 2021, South Dakota had a 72-hour waiting period requirement, mandatory counseling and mandatory parental consent for minors, requirements that made it more difficult to get an abortion in-state rather than hopping over the border. The Sioux Falls clinic would often have week-long wait times to schedule an appointment as well. Clinics in surrounding states are closer for many South Dakotans outside of the southeastern part of the state, making out-of-state care more feasible.

The numbers show at least 71% of the South Dakotans who had abortions in 2021 received their care in other states — and likely more, given the lack of complete data.

Colorado and Minnesota have become designated safe havens for abortion and gender-affirming care in recent months. And in North Dakota, the Fargo clinic has hopped to the other side of the river in Moorhead, Minnesota — just 2 miles away from its former location.

In 2005, South Dakota passed a law that would make abortions illegal when the U.S. Supreme Court

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officially overturned Roe v. Wade. One of the largest impacts after the South Dakota trigger ban went into effect last summer has been on medication abortions in the state. Gov. Kristi Noem banned telehealth appointments in 2021 for medication abortion, and prohibited the pills from being delivered by mail or courier. She and Attorney General Marty Jackley announced in January the state would prosecute pharmacists who dispense abortion-inducing pills.

That means that South Dakotans can no longer pick up abortion medication at their nearby pharmacy or have it mailed inside the state without fear of prosecution. That's why Minnesota-based Just The Pill has had 31 South Dakotans drive just across the border to Minnesota, Wyoming or Montana to receive abortion pills through the mail this year.

Patients will drive across the border for an initial telehealth consultation with a doctor who'll prescribe them the medicine. Then they'll either stay in a hotel or drive back across the border a couple days later to pick up the medication.

"There are lots of hoops still," said Julie Amaon, medical director of Just The Pill. "You have to drive several hours, twice — for the appointment and to pick up the medication — when you really should get this care in the comfort and safety of your own home. It's hard for a lot of patients to still do what we're doing."

The cost of traveling out-of-state

The cost alone for Just The Pill's medication is \$350, Amaon said. Medicaid doesn't cover such costs, and private insurance doesn't typically cover it either.

But that doesn't include the cost of gas, plane or bus tickets if the patient doesn't have a vehicle, the cost of food, taking time off work, or arranging child care or lodging. Costs can often exceed \$1,000.

"It can often cost more to get someone to the appointment than for the actual abortion procedure," Floren said.

Access to abortion before and after the Dobbs decision, in which the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade in 2022, has always "depended on what zip code you live in," said Alison Dreith, director of strategic partnerships at the Midwest Access Coalition, based in Illinois.

Several organizations offer help to cover the cost of the abortion itself and additional support, such as the Justice Empowerment Network and Midwest Access Coalition.

Dreith said her organization has worked with more than 475 clients around the Midwest so far this year, with just two from South Dakota. Floren said she sees about 40 to 50 requests a month at Justice Empowerment Network, with about a third of those coming from South Dakota.

Given that there is more confusion about what is legal since the Supreme Court decision, Floren and Dreith said they're seeing more abortions later in pregnancies. This means more invasive and costly procedures.

"They're not going to not get abortions with these laws," Floren said. "They're just going to cost more, take more effort and be more difficult."

For some of the women calling Floren, it's a life or death situation.

"When you look someone in the eye and she has three kids and she's saying she's going to kill herself before she has another baby, you're not going to say no," Floren said. "You think about those people who are out there and don't have any other options."

Organizations vow to provide services 'no matter what'

Figuring out how to provide abortion and support services since last summer has felt like whiplash for these organizations. Patients have expressed fear and confusion about what is still available and legal.

"It feels like everybody's guessing," Floren said.

It further complicates the issue since people generally aren't aware of the restrictions and difficulty accessing abortion until they're directly involved, she added.

"Most people in South Dakota are not thinking about this issue until they need an abortion or someone they love needs an abortion," Floren said. "Then it's there and they're like, 'I had no idea it was this awful. It's 400 times more stressful than it needs to be.'"

The latest development in the political tug-of-war was the Supreme Court emergency-basis decision in April, maintaining Food and Drug Administration regulations that allow access to the abortion pill mife-

pristone.

The FDA policies made abortion pills easier to access by removing the requirement for in-person provider visits, but Texas-based U.S. District Judge had issued a ruling earlier in the month that threatened to halt authorization of the pill. After going through the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, the Supreme Court issued a stay on the appeals ruling and reverted abortion access while the legal battle continues until the Supreme Court makes a final determination on the legality of the FDA rules.

But Amaon says Just The Pill will simply dispatch mobile clinics near the border if the FDA regulations require in-person appointments or change its medication regimen if mifepristone is restricted. Instead of providing two medications for the abortion (mifepristone and misoprostol), which is the typical medication abortion practice in the United States, they'll simply prescribe misoprostol alone.

"We're ready to keep providing service no matter what happens," Amaon said.

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

Early childhood groups come out against proposed daycare rules

Changes would cut training hours in half, allow providers to care for more children at once

BY: JOHN HULT - MAY 12, 2023 3:17 PM

Child care organizations came out in force on Friday against looser rules for daycares that would let adults care for more children at once. The pushback came even as some daycare providers lauded the changes as "actionable" steps to address what they described as the state's child care crisis.

Among other adjustments, the proposal from the Department of Social Services would:

- Up the number of children five or older who could be cared for by a single adult to 15, up from 10 in the current rules,
- Allow an in-home provider to care for up to three infants and up to nine other children, and allow up to four of those additional children to be younger than two;
- Allow children older than 18 months to be monitored by hearing during naptimes at child care centers, rather than by both hearing and seeing,
- Cut the number of required training hours for child care providers from 20 a year to 10;
- Require providers to follow the safe sleep guidelines for infants and young children offered by the American Academy of Pediatrics, and;
- Count a provider's children toward their adult-to-child ratios.

The proposed administrative rules, which will have a hearing before the Legislature's Rules Review Committee on June 13, are meant to address a severe shortage in openings at daycares.

Ratios trouble advocates

While many of the advocates who gathered at the DSS building in Sioux Falls for the public hearing acknowledged the dire nature of the shortage, the vast majority of those offering comments were opposed to the change in adult-to-child ratios and reduced training hours.

Kayla Klein of Early Learner South Dakota, for example, said "we fully understand that there is a child care crisis" in the state, but that the new rules would do a disservice to children.

"We need to bring in other entities, like economic development and businesses (to address this)," she said.

"It shouldn't just be on the state, nor should we find quick fixes," Klein said. "Why don't we instead look for ways to incentivize and support providers and give them more and help?"

Klein ran through a series of comparisons to show that South Dakota already allows more children to be

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supervised by a single adult than neighboring states. The training requirement change, meanwhile, would mean fewer hours for South Dakota providers than their counterparts in all neighboring states but Iowa, which requires 10 hours a year.

If the ratio changes don't pass, Klein said, "we need to remember that we will still allow more children in a home than any other state."

The question of ratios was also top of mind for Karen Rieck, a child care provider from Sioux Falls and a board member of the South Dakota Association for the Education of Young Children.

Adding one more infant would ease the crisis, Rieck said, but she said adjusting ratios isn't the right approach.

"While I do not have a proposed solution, I am also willing to discuss and throw ideas back and forth to come up with a plausible solution," Rieck said.

Huron provider Marianne Freng was more blunt. "Even if she's superwoman," Freng said, no single provider would be able to get three infants and nine other children out of a center during a fire, especially if four of the other children are younger than two.

"I honestly feel with the infant ratio, we're going backwards," Freng said. "We're going backwards, so far backwards it's an unsafe environment."

Kerri Tietgen, meanwhile, the CEO of EmBe in Sioux Falls, said her organization wouldn't take advantage of higher ratios for younger children. It would likely benefit from higher ratios in school-age children, but "we'll still be observing a 1-to-10 ratio in our four- and five-year-old classrooms," she said.

'Moving in the right direction'

Most of the advocates and providers who disagreed with the new ratios and training changes nonetheless praised the new infant sleep safety guidelines and the streamlining and simplification of the guidelines that accompany the 51-page rules proposal.

Several providers listened to the hearing remotely but did not offer comments for or against. At least two who did offer comments told the group that the changes represent concrete, workable solutions that would make an impact for parents immediately.

Without a change to ratios, said Corri Poore, of Little Tykes University in Sioux Falls, the work of rewriting child care rules would do little to ease the burden for the desperate families he says call on a daily basis seeking care.

"I hope we can also enhance quality systems that will keep things safe, but I don't think anything less than at least changing the ratios to what has been presented will make a difference," said Poore, who described the changes as "actionable" steps to address the problem.

Leslie Rodriguez of Rapid City said she also fields daily desperation calls from parents at her daycare in Blackhawk. More needs to be done, she said, but the new rules will help those parents.

"I do feel that the changes that the state has proposed are moving in the right direction to try to help us achieve mitigating this crisis," she said.

The DSS will continue to take written comments online at <https://rules.sd.gov/> until May 22.

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

Minnehaha County's new petition rules already blocked by judge

Temporary restraining order knocks out 9-day-old rules on signature collection, protest

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR AND JOHN HULT - MAY 12, 2023 10:07 AM

The free speech zones designated for political petitioning on Minnehaha County property survived nine days before being halted by a federal judge.

A temporary restraining order inked late Thursday afternoon by U.S. District Judge Roberto Lang blocked the county's rules for petitioners the day after a nonprofit group filed a lawsuit challenging their constitutionality.

Dakotans for Health, a health care advocacy network and ballot question committee, filed its lawsuit on Wednesday. The complaint alleges that the new rules would hamper the First Amendment rights of South Dakotans.

The policy would limit political speech by blocking petition activity on 99.3% of the previously accessible outdoor area. The two rectangular areas established for circulators are inadequate, the group contends.

Lang's temporary restraining order says that the policy could harm the petitioners' rights in a manner that cannot be remedied by monetary damages at a future date.

That's one of the elements needed for a judge to issue a restraining order before a defendant, in this case Minnehaha County, can respond to legal allegations.

"The new policy generally makes it much less likely that those entering or exiting the Minnehaha County buildings will engage at all with petition circulators," Lang wrote.

Additionally, the lawsuit argues that a requirement for all petition circulators and political speakers to pre-register with the auditor's office infringes on the right to anonymous speech and leaves them vulnerable to harassment.

The registration and geographic restrictions in the new policy would be unlikely to survive a legal challenge, Lang wrote, though some parts of the rules, such as barring petitioners from following people into the building, might pass constitutional muster.

Pre-registration and area restrictions "seem to do more to deter and frustrate petition circulating at Minnehaha County buildings than addressing 'unnecessary disruptions or inconvenience' to county operations or to those visiting county buildings," Lang wrote.

Commission unanimously approved

The new policy for petitioning in the state's most populous county was originally passed by the Minnehaha County Commission on a 5-0 vote May 2.

The policy update was informed by suggestions from Auditor Leah Anderson. The current policy does not designate an area for petition circulators and protestors, she told commissioners, and had minimal rules on conduct.

"While we appreciate the citizens and those who wish to take an active role in government decisions, at all levels, the county building must accommodate many people every day without any unnecessary delay or inconvenience," Anderson said during the May 2 meeting.

Anderson said she'd consulted with other departments and the state's attorney. Deputy State's Attorney Eric Bogue reassured commissioners that the policy did not restrain First Amendment rights.

There was little public comment on the measure on the day of the vote. Commissioner Dean Karsky asked Anderson during the proposal's hearing, however, if the rule would mean petition circulators would be "confined to that area."

"The idea would be that they would be in that designated area. Now, I'm not going to watch the parking lot all day," Anderson said. "We need to make the building as accessible as possible, without having three of four people standing right by the door, grabbing people as they come in and out."

Commissioner Joe Kippley said he felt that the restrictions fell within the bounds of government entities' rights to restrict speech without infringing on the First Amendment.

"From a legal perspective, restraining political speech is generally frowned upon," Kippley said. "This

feels like reasonable time, place and manner restrictions.”

Kippley then asked Anderson what would happen if more people attended an event than could fit in the designated space.

“For larger events like that, they do have to get a permit,” Anderson said.

Rules target longstanding petition-gathering location

The Minnehaha County Courthouse and Administration Building in Sioux Falls are popular locations for collecting signatures to place a measure on the ballot.

Dakotans for Health is currently gathering signatures for petitions focused on restoring abortion rights and eliminating the state sales tax on food. Initiated measures and referendums require about 17,500 signatures from registered voters, and initiated constitutional amendments require about 35,000 signatures.

Dakotans for Health said in an emailed statement that Federal District Judge Roberto Lange’s ruling “recognizes the importance of preserving the right to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”

“South Dakota has a longstanding tradition of circulating petitions and collecting signatures to enact laws and constitutional changes through the citizen initiative process. These new rules severely obstruct that activity and undermine direct democracy and free speech,” said Rick Weiland, cofounder of Dakotans for Health.

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.

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

U.S. risks debt default in early June, congressional budget office agrees

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - MAY 12, 2023 3:44 PM

WASHINGTON — The federal government could default on its debt during the first two weeks of June without action on bipartisan legislation, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

The nonpartisan budget scorekeeper issued an updated report Friday, warning that “if the debt limit remains unchanged, there is a significant risk that at some point in the first two weeks of June, the government will no longer be able to pay all of its obligations.”

The projection lines up with an estimate from the Treasury Department, which says default could occur as soon as June 1, and the Bipartisan Policy Center, which projects a default window between early June and early August.

The Congressional Budget Office’s estimate adds more pressure on congressional leaders and President Joe Biden to broker a deal in the days ahead, in order to give the U.S. House and U.S. Senate time to debate and vote on the measure.

Biden and the four top congressional leaders met at the White House on Tuesday, though neither side reported significant progress following the meeting.

Staff and aides for the five have been meeting daily since, searching for a path forward.

Biden, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, Speaker Kevin McCarthy and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries were supposed to get back together Friday, but the meeting was canceled. White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Friday they intend to meet again early next week.

Congress has just one week left this month in which both chambers are scheduled to be in Washington,

D.C. Biden is set to leave next week for the G7 Summit in Hiroshima, Japan, beginning May 19.

CBO's projections, included in the updated 10-year budget outlook, say that without changes to current law, the annual deficit will nearly double during the next 10 years to \$2.7 trillion in 2033.

"As a result of those deficits, debt held by the public also increases in CBO's projections, from 98 percent of GDP at the end of this year to 119 percent at the end of 2033," CBO wrote. "At that time, debt measured as a share of GDP would reach the highest level ever recorded in the United States and would be on track to rise even further."

CBO notes that debt held by the public would be \$46.7 trillion at the end of 2033. That's an increase from \$24.3 trillion in debt held by the public at the end of 2022.

Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

Judge says Iowa's pipeline land survey law is constitutional

Last week, a different judge ruled the law was unconstitutional

BY: JARED STRONG - MAY 12, 2023 1:27 PM

An Iowa district court judge decided this week that a state law is constitutional that allows land surveys for carbon dioxide pipelines regardless of landowners' consent, according to court records.

The ruling — in a Hardin County case — is at odds with another judge's ruling last week in Clay County, which said the law does not provide compensation for intangible damages suffered by landowners when they are forced to allow the surveys and is unconstitutional.

The surveys are used to determine the depth and path of proposed pipelines, and state law says the pipeline companies can seek court-ordered injunctions to carry out the survey work despite landowners' objections.

The judge's decision Wednesday in the Hardin County case was the result of Summit Carbon Solutions seeking an injunction against a landowner in that county.

It's one of more than 10 lawsuits filed by Summit and Navigator CO2 Ventures against unwilling landowners in several Iowa counties for the injunctions, which created the potential for multiple, conflicting rulings.

Regardless of how the matter of constitutionality is ultimately settled, it might not prevent state regulators from issuing permits to construct the pipelines. There is nothing in state law that requires a hazardous liquid pipeline company to complete all of the survey work before the Iowa Utilities Board approves its permit, said Don Tormey, a spokesperson for the board.

Existing law allows the companies access to private land for the surveys after they host informational meetings about their projects and provide 10-day notices by certified mail.

A Boone County landowner unsuccessfully challenged it in 2015 for the Dakota Access oil pipeline.

In this week's ruling in Hardin County, regarding landowner Kent Kasischke, Judge Amy Moore decided that Summit's proposed pipeline meets a "public use" requirement for eminent domain to be used to construct it and that the state's survey law appropriately provides compensation to landowners for any actual damages that might arise from the survey work.

"For the foregoing reasons, the court finds that Mr. Kasischke has failed to establish that (the survey law) is unconstitutional beyond a reasonable doubt," Moore wrote.

Jesse Harris, director of public affairs for Summit, said the Hardin County decision aligns with the majority of court rulings so far in different states about the land surveys.

"Two courts in South Dakota upheld similar survey access statutes," he said. "One court in North Dakota did as well, plus this latest one in Iowa. Given this trend, I think it's fair to say the Clay County decision relative to Navigator is the outlier."

In Clay County in Iowa, Judge John Sandy said the mere entry onto private land without permission is deserving of compensation for the duress that landowners incur. That sort of compensation is not required by Iowa law.

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"The damages resulting from a landowner's loss of his right to exclusive use of his property are subjective in the same way that pain and suffering damages are as it relates to a victim of a tortious injury," Sandy wrote.

That ruling was the result of a lawsuit filed by Navigator, and the company is appealing the decision, according to court records.

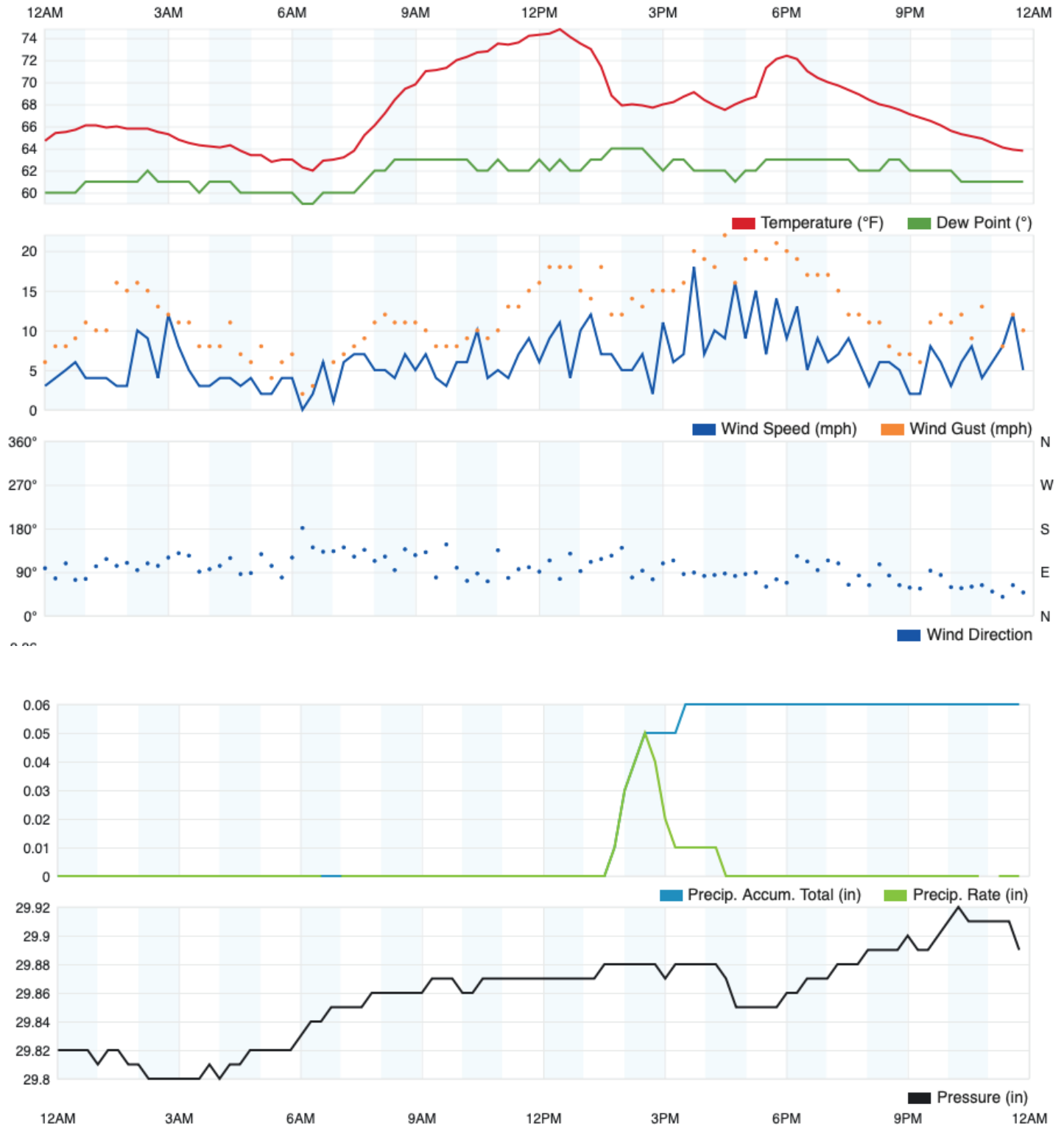
Another judge is poised to rule on the constitutionality of the law in Woodbury County.

Jared Strong is the senior reporter for the Iowa Capital Dispatch. He has written about Iowans and the important issues that affect them for more than 15 years, previously for the Carroll Times Herald and the Des Moines Register. His investigative work exposing police misconduct has notched several state and national awards. He is a longtime trustee of the Iowa Freedom of Information Council, which fights for open records and open government. He is a lifelong Iowan and has lived mostly in rural western parts of the state.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
						
Shows Likely and Breezy	Chance Showers and Breezy	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny
High: 61 °F	Low: 50 °F	High: 72 °F	Low: 44 °F	High: 75 °F	Low: 50 °F	High: 78 °F



Weekend Forecast

Saturday



Highs: 63 - 65°F

Lows: 47 - 52°F

Sunday



Highs: 65 - 74°F

Lows: 44 - 48°F

Some strong storms are possible in east central SD, but otherwise showers continue today. Rain chances move out tomorrow and temperatures start to increase.

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Severe Weather Threat Outlook

May 12, 2023
1:16 PM

late this afternoon through this evening

Tornado Potential

Very Low **Low** Medium High

Max Hail Size

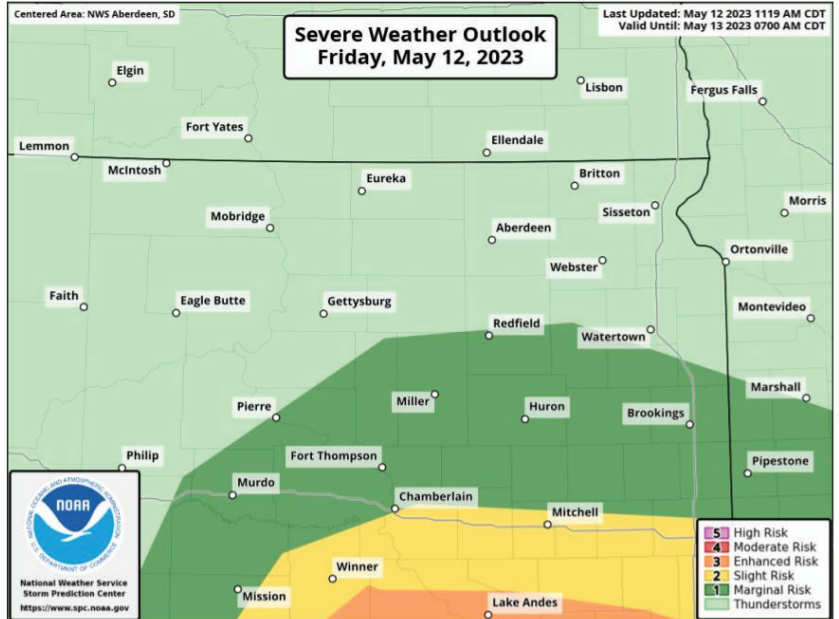
Dimes **Quarters** Golfball Baseball

Max Wind Speed

< 60 mph **60-70 mph** 70-80 mph > 80mph

Heavy Rain/Flooding Potential

Very Low Low **Medium** High



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 75 °F at 12:19 PM

Low Temp: 62 °F at 6:24 AM

Wind: 27 mph at 3:36 PM

Precip: : 0.06

Day length: 14 hours, 52 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 97 in 1932

Record Low: 24 in 1899

Average High: 69

Average Low: 43

Average Precip in May.: 1.43

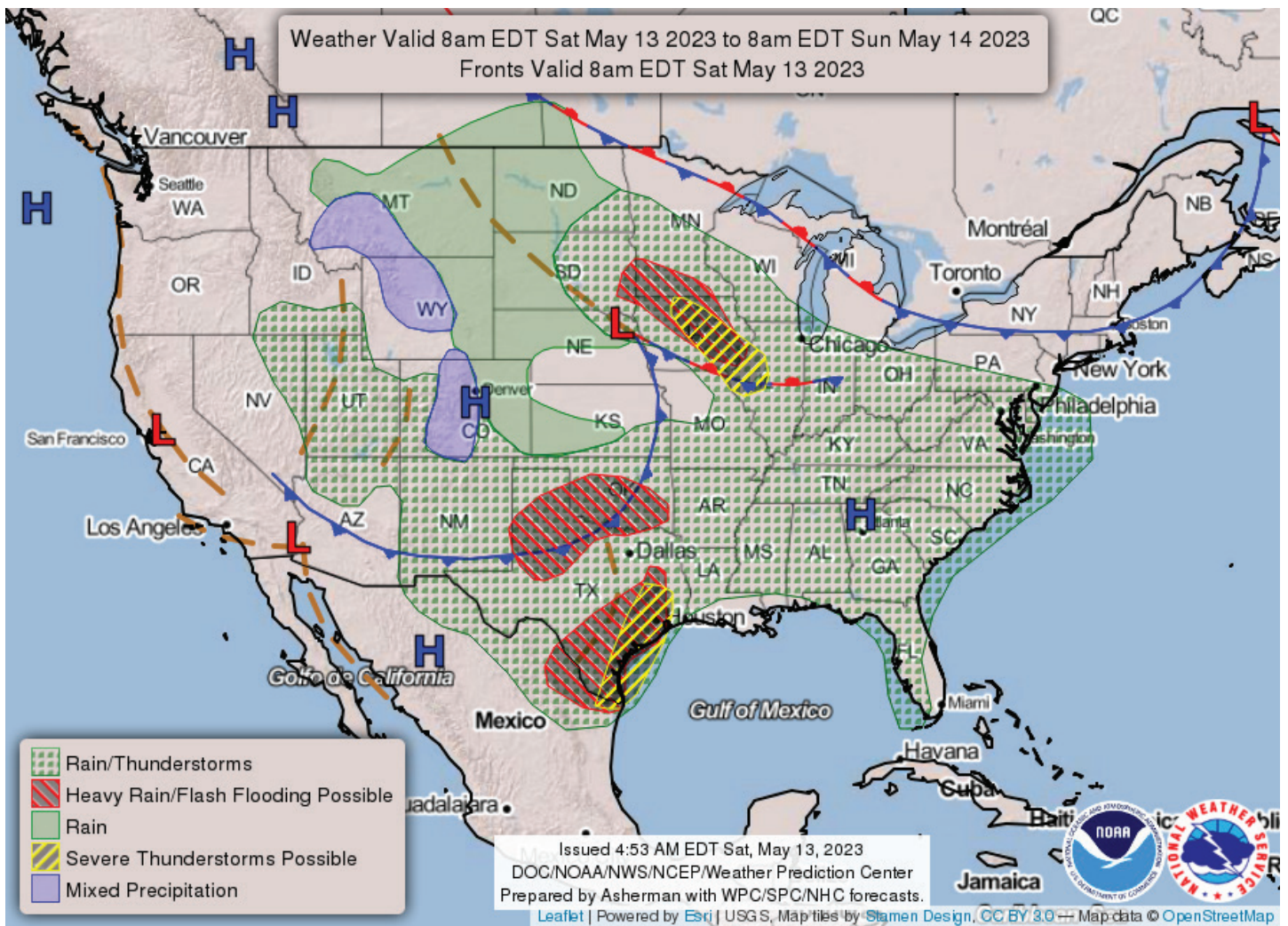
Precip to date in May.: 1.55

Average Precip to date: 5.40

Precip Year to Date: 7.27

Sunset Tonight: 8:55:04 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:01:14 AM



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Today in Weather History

May 13, 2005: Runoff from heavy rain resulted in minor flooding along the White River from south of Belvidere to Oacoma, affecting mainly agricultural land along the river. The river rose over its banks and flooded U.S. Highway 83 south of Murdo for a short time. No property damage was reported.

1930 - A man was killed when caught in an open field during a hailstorm northwest of Lubbock TX. It was the first, and perhaps the only, authentic death by hail in U.S. weather records. (David Ludlum)

1980: An F3 tornado ripped directly through the center of Kalamazoo, Michigan, killing five people, injuring 79, leaving 1,200 homeless and causing \$50 million in damage. The tornado passed directly over the American Bank, where a barograph reported a pressure drop of 0.59 inches.

1981 - A tornado 450 yards in width destroyed ninety percent of Emberson TX. People did not see a tornado, but rather a wall of debris. Homes were leveled, a man in a bathtub was hurled a quarter of a mile, and a 1500 pound recreational vehicle was hurled 500 yards. Miraculously no deaths occurred in the tornado. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A cold front brought an end to the early season warm spell in the north central U.S., but not before the temperature at Sioux City IA soared to a record warm 95 degrees. Strong southwesterly winds ahead of the cold front gusted to 52 mph at Marais MI. Evening thunderstorms produced golf ball size hail at Rockford MN, and wind gusts to 75 mph at Belmont IA. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Strong winds along a cold front ushering cold air into the northwestern U.S. gusted to 69 mph at Myton UT. Temperatures warmed into the 80s ahead of the cold front, as far north as Montana. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing along a warm front produced severe weather in the Southern Plains Region during the afternoon and night. A thunderstorm at Killeen TX produced wind gusts to 95 mph damaging 200 helicopters at Fort Hood causing nearly 500 million dollars damage. Another thunderstorm produced softball size hail at Hodges TX. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front spawned ten tornadoes from eastern Wyoming to northern Kansas, including seven in western Nebraska. Thunderstorms forming ahead of a cold front in the eastern U.S. spawned five tornadoes from northeastern North Carolina to southern Pennsylvania. Thunderstorms over southeast Louisiana deluged the New Orleans area with four to eight inches of rain between 7 AM and Noon. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1995: This outbreak produced tornadoes extending from the Mississippi River near Burlington, Iowa, to the west of Bloomington, Illinois. Two violent tornadoes, each ranked at F4 intensity, were reported. The first tornado traveled 60 miles from near Fort Madison, Iowa, to the southeast of Galesburg, Illinois producing over \$10 million damage. The town of Raritan, Illinois was hit the hardest. The second violent tornado traveled 7 miles across Fulton County from Ipava to Lewistown, Illinois producing \$6 million damage. Another strong tornado took a 25-mile path across parts of Fulton, Mason, and Tazewell Counties. The storms also produced softball-size hail south and northwest of Macomb in Illinois. Five men were injured in Lawrence County, Indiana when lightning struck one of them and traveled to the other four. There were 184 reports of severe weather, including over three dozen tornadoes.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

THE BEST ADVICE EVER

Derek Jeter, formerly a New York Yankee, is acknowledged by some to be one of the greatest shortstops who ever played baseball. One day a reporter asked him, "What's the best advice your father ever gave you?"

Came the quick reply, "Don't let anyone ever outwork you!"

It was hard, relentless work over many years that led Jeter to the pinnacle of his profession. And, it is the same hard work that kept him there and served as a model that many seek to follow. His efforts have rewarded him lavishly and brought him friends, fame, and fortune.

There are some of us, however, who work just as hard but get relatively little recognition. No one sees us and no one knows how hard we try. We may even wonder if what we do really matters to anyone. We ask: "Does what I do make a difference?"

Yes, it does - at least to God. One day He will reward us personally in front of everyone in heaven for the good we have done for others in His Name.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to realize that You will reward each one of us for all that we have ever done. Give us a desire to develop every gift we have! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do, whether we are slaves or free. Ephesians 6:7-8



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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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.12.23

1 2 23 40 45 15

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$113,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.10.23

9 13 14 17 26 2

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,850,000

NEXT 13 Hrs 10 Mins 23
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.12.23

1 2 13 24 35 14

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 12 Hrs 40 Mins
DRAW: 24 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.10.23

3 6 9 10 13

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$55,000

NEXT 13 Hrs 10 Mins 24
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.10.23

21 22 24 52 58 3

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 13 Hrs 9 Mins 24
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.10.23

21 24 33 55 69 3

Power Play: 10x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$125,000,000

NEXT 13 Hrs 9 Mins 24
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Funeral for slain Wisconsin sheriff's deputy draws 3,000 mourners

HUDSON, Wis. (AP) — Some 1,500 law enforcement officers from several states were among 3,000 mourners paying final respects Friday to a Wisconsin sheriff's deputy who was fatally shot by a suspected drunken driver during a traffic stop.

The funeral for St. Croix County Sheriff's Deputy Kaitlin "Kaitie" R. Leising was held in the gymnasium of Hudson High School while a montage of photos from her life were shown on a large screen overhead. Leising's family, including her wife, Courtney, and their 3-month-old son, Syler, stood to the side of the casket, hugging visitors.

In less than a year with the sheriff's office, Leising earned commendations and the admiration of her colleagues, Sheriff Scott Knudson said.

"There was so much to like about Kaitie," he said, the Minneapolis Star Tribune reported.

Services lasted more than six hours as officers first arrived for three hours of visitation, then sat for the funeral before silently marching to the high school parking lot for an honor guard, gun salute and helicopter flyover. A law enforcement procession drove the casket to a private gathering of family in Baldwin, Wisconsin.

Courtney Leising said she was "completely heartbroken" that their son will grow up without Kaitlin. Leising's sister, Jordyn Stevens, remembered her as inspiring and confident, with a competitive streak that went beyond golf and basketball to board games and cribbage.

Mourners included a large delegation from the Pennington County, South Dakota, Sheriff's Office, where Leising worked before moving to St. Croix County last year.

Leising, 29, was slain May 6 in Glenwood, about 60 miles (97 kilometers) east of Minneapolis. Leising and the driver she pulled over, Jeremiah Johnson, were discussing field sobriety tests when he drew a handgun and shot her, the Wisconsin Department of Justice has said. She discharged her weapon three times, but none of the rounds hit Johnson before he fled to a nearby wooded area. Leising was pronounced dead at a hospital.

An hour after the shooting, an officer heard a gunshot in the woods. Johnson, 34, killed himself, investigators said.

Leising's death was the third fatal shooting of an on-duty law enforcement officer in western Wisconsin in a month, the Star Tribune reported.

Forced from Grand Canyon National Park, the Havasupai Tribe embraces spiritual homecoming

By FELICIA FONSECA Associated Press

GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK, Ariz. (AP) — Carletta Tilousi hit the trail as the sun rose, the light revealing a grouping of cottonwood and ash trees deep in the Grand Canyon.

Birds soared above and reptiles scampered across the rocks as the canyon walls grew taller and taller behind her. This was home, yet she rarely had been there over the years.

"I can't believe how far I've come, it's amazing," she said about halfway through the 4.5-mile hike over steep, rocky terrain. "I can't believe my ancestors used to do this all the time."

Tilousi's journey marked a pivotal moment in the Havasupai Tribe's relationship with the U.S. government nearly a century after the last tribal member was forcibly removed from what's now Grand Canyon National Park — one of the biggest tourist draws in the world. They recently partnered on events marking the rededication of a popular campground in the inner canyon from Indian Garden to Havasupai Gardens or "Ha'a Gyoh."

Tribal members are hopeful it means a new era of cooperation that will give them more access to sites

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in the canyon and to tell their story through their lens and language.

The U.S. Board on Geographic Names approved the name change for Havasupai Gardens, the tribe's traditional farming area, in November after the tribe lobbied for years to reclaim a part of its heritage and force a historical reckoning over the treatment of Havasupai people.

Descendants of the last Havasupai man to leave, Captain Burro, recall how he carried watermelon in a basket to sell to tourists and how his heart broke when he was ordered to leave. Some family members later changed the name Burro, Spanish for "donkey," to Tilousi, or "storyteller."

Park Superintendent Ed Keable acknowledged the removal and sometimes violent injustices over decades on the part of the federal government. Speaking after the ceremony at Havasupai Gardens last Friday, he said the renaming marked a new era of collaboration with Havasupai and other Native American tribes associated with the canyon.

"That took some time to build some trust because of the history of how this land was established as a national park, against the will of the people who have lived here since time immemorial," Keable said.

The Havasupai Tribe was landless for a time after the removal until the federal government set aside a plot in the depths of the Grand Canyon for tribal members. It was slashed to less than a square mile (2.6 square kilometers) and, nearly a century later, enlarged substantially in 1975 in what was one of the biggest land transfers to a tribe.

Today about 500 of the nearly 770 tribal members live in Supai Village on the reservation adjacent to the national park, so remote it can be reached only by foot, mule or helicopter.

It's known for the towering waterfalls that give the Havasupai, or Havasu 'Baaja, their name — "people of the blue-green waters." Thousands of tourists from around the world visit annually, providing the tribe's largest source of income.

Events marking the rededication of Havasupai Gardens began late last week, when dozens of tribal members and others gathered for a public event at the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. Dancers from the Guardians of the Grand Canyon, a traditional and multigenerational group, performed, with men wearing ram horns representing the bighorn sheep that roam the canyon, and women carrying woven baskets. Bells on their feet jingled as they moved in a circle.

Many had their faces marked with red ochre, a pigment from the walls of the Grand Canyon that by tradition is tied to everything from a child's birth and its first steps to protection and as an expression of beauty.

"No matter where we go, where we are, we are still the Grand Canyon," said Rochelle Tilousi, a great, great, great granddaughter of Burro and a cousin of Carletta Tilousi.

"It is our home, it is our land and it is our well-being," said another cousin, tribal Vice Chairman Edmond Tilousi.

That evening and the following morning, a smaller group traveled below the rim for the private ceremony, descending 3,000 feet (900 meters) on a hike that typically takes two to four hours. Some went by foot, while others took a quick ride on a helicopter.

Carletta Tilousi trekked steadily along the rocky switchbacks, stopping occasionally to rest and talk to fellow hikers. One said the Havasupai Gardens name would be hard to get used to.

She arrived at Ha'a Gyoh just as the helicopter landed, smiling broadly as a handful of Havasupai got off. She and Ophelia Watahomigie-Corliss introduced themselves to the canyon, greeted the ancient beings in prayer next to a creek and joined others in letting the canyon know it was never forgotten despite the displacement of their people.

"We have always maintained our connection to this place, not by showing or by boasting. It's just that we came here and we did our prayers, we did our songs on the rim," said Dianna Sue Uqualla, an elder who participated in the blessing at a small amphitheater off Bright Angel Trail. "Through that, I think the spirits heard and awoke and said, 'Yes, you are still here.'"

Her brother, Uqualla — who goes by a single name — sat with a drum before a fire pit and next to a set of antlers holding a water-filled gourd, preparing to conduct the ceremony.

He encouraged those present to set aside their egos, to see the canyon as a source of medicine and

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hear it, feel it. And also to connect to the elements that Havasupai view as relatives — trees, rocks, birds, clouds, wind.

“When your heart is open, it’s a master receiver of everything,” said Uqualla, who had been making monthly pilgrimages to the canyon at each full moon. “What is coming through is the speak of all that is down here.”

A few hikers wandered into the amphitheater, and he assured them that anyone who was there was meant to be.

Kris Siyuja, 14, took seriously his duties over the two days of events, which included untying bundles of sage, carrying a staff and tapping a drum that he said would amplify Havasupai voices.

“One day the grandparents, the parents and some of the family members might pass away, and they’ll just have to carry on that tradition ... wearing the headdress, the regalia, and just walking in their footsteps,” Siyuja said of his generation.

As the sage was lit, Uqualla placed red ochre and corn pollen in the fire. Tribal members guided the smoke using a bundle of feathers onto themselves as a blessing. They prayed and sang in Havasupai and in English. Before leaving, they placed a staff on a hillside to honor the spirits.

Some signs nearby already bore the Havasupai Gardens name among the lush landscape that includes a campground and cabins, one of which Keable recently set aside for Havasupai members to use. More signs and programming is planned with history as told by the tribe, according to park officials.

It parallels a broader trend in which the park has been working with nearly a dozen Native American tribes with ties to the Grand Canyon on exhibits, cultural demonstrations and first-person audio and video. The work has gained the attention of other national park units such as the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Point Reyes National Seashore in California, plus the American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association, said Jan Balsom, Grand Canyon’s chief of communications, partnerships and external affairs.

“The more of this we have provided, the more the visiting public is interested,” Balsom said.

Carletta Tilousi wants to see more Havasupai involved in shaping how the Grand Canyon and its resources are managed, something that Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, the first Native American Cabinet-level official, has pushed for within federal agencies.

At Ha’a Gyoh, Tilousi imagines a return to traditional farming with apricot trees, melons, corn and sunflowers. She has also pushed for the Havasupai language to be on maps, posters and ranger badges.

The day after her emotional trek, she awoke with a sense of calmness knowing she and others had returned home and the canyon recognized their voices, songs and prayers.

“It was a very growing experience that I’ll probably hold dear to my heart for a long time, and I’d like to return sooner than later,” Tilousi said. “I want to take full advantage of getting to know the trail more, feeling the animals, the air, enjoying the environment.”

Census rejecting some big-city complaints of 2020 undercounts

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

Some of the largest U.S. cities challenging their 2020 census numbers aren’t getting the results they hoped for from the U.S. Census Bureau — an effort by Memphis to increase its official population resulted in three people being subtracted from its count during an initial appeal.

Some successes have come from challenges to totals of “group quarters” — dorms, jails and nursing homes. They were among the most difficult to count as campuses closed and prisons and nursing homes were locked down at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Census Bureau created a separate program to handle these challenges.

The Census Bureau has received more than 100 submissions in total for its two challenge programs from cities, towns and villages of all sizes across the U.S.

The challenges won’t affect how many congressional seats each state got during the apportionment process, or the more detailed numbers used for redrawing political boundaries. But new numbers could shape how the federal government distributes \$1.5 trillion for transportation, health programs and other

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funding, which is most pertinent for cities.

State, tribal and local governments have until the end of June to file challenges, and any changes will be reflected in future population estimates that are calculated each year between censuses.

Here's where the challenges stand for Austin, Boston, Detroit, Memphis, Milwaukee and Phoenix.

AUSTIN

Austin, determined to be the 11th most populous U.S. city with 964,000 residents, claimed that 7,329 housing units were missed. With an average Austin household size of almost 2.4 people in 2020, that could mean more than 17,500 residents overlooked.

The Census Bureau, however, added only a single housing unit, and provided little information on its methodology, officials in Texas' capital said.

"This outcome is incredibly disappointing and disheartening," Mayor Kirk Watson said in a letter to the bureau.

City officials plan to meet with Census Bureau officials in the near future to get a more detailed explanation of how bureau officials reached their decision.

BOSTON

Officials in Boston, a hub of higher education, believed the 2020 census missed more than 6,000 students living in university housing and 419 inmates at local jails. The Census Bureau approved the submission from Boston, which had 675,647 residents in the 2020 census, of which the city claimed 41,776 were students living in student housing.

"It's no surprise that many of these special populations were miscounted due to the untimely and completely unanticipated emergence of a global pandemic that just happened to perfectly coincide with the 2020 count," said Susan Strate, senior program manager at the UMass Donahue Institute, which assisted Boston in its challenge.

DETROIT

Detroit filed two challenges. One said the count shortchanged Michigan's largest city by 8% of its occupied homes, overlooking tens of thousands of residents. The 2020 census found 639,111 Detroit residents, down from its 2019 population estimate of 670,052.

Detroit succeeded only with its group quarters challenge, adding 1,478 more people in 61 group quarters, said Corey McIsaac, the city's deputy director of media relations.

Detroit plans to challenge its annual population estimates through a separate program.

MEMPHIS

Memphis launched two challenges, saying the census missed 15,895 residents, and that Memphis grew since 2010, for the first time in 50 years. The 2020 census, however, found 633,104 residents, a drop of 13,785 residents from 2010.

Memphis was unsuccessful in its appeal of its housing count in which the city said more than 10,700 people were missed. The Census Bureau actually subtracted a housing unit and three residents, a result Memphis is disputing. The other challenge deals with misapplied geographic boundaries impacting more than 5,100 people, and is still pending.

"The Census count was wrong," Allison Fouche, Memphis' chief communications officer, said in an email. "The gains we have seen in investments in Memphis, especially in the core city, over the last few years tell a different story."

MILWAUKEE

Wisconsin's largest city succeeded with its claim that more than 800 jail inmates were missed, part of a challenge organized with other Wisconsin municipalities.

Milwaukee's other appeal is still pending, claiming 16,500 residents were overlooked in houses and apartments, primarily in communities of color. The 2020 census put Milwaukee at 577,222 residents, down about 3% from 2010.

PHOENIX

Phoenix awaits a response to its challenge of its group quarters count, claiming 3,500 people in 192 facili-

ties were missed, according to a letter from Mayor Kate Gallego obtained through a public records request.

The city said two jails were overlooked, along with drug and alcohol treatment centers, a group home for people with diabetes and Alzheimer's disease and a residential facility for juveniles needing mental health treatment.

The census determined that Phoenix was the fastest-growing big city in the U.S. between 2010 and 2020, increasing by 11.2% to 1.6 million residents and making it the fifth most populous U.S. city.

Follow Mike Schneider on Twitter at @MikeSchneiderAP

Scabby the Rat gives bite to union protests, but is he at the tail end of his relevancy?

By MAE ANDERSON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — For decades, a giant, inflatable rat with beady eyes, sharp teeth and a pustule-covered belly has loomed over union protests, drawing attention to various labor disputes.

As New York City deals with an influx of actual rats, Scabby the Rat has become that rare thing, like Pizza Rat or Buddy the Rat — a rodent New Yorkers can rally behind.

But in the era of TikTok and influencer culture, middle-aged Scabby faces a new challenge: staying relevant.

"It's kind of unfortunate, changing times, older members of the public know exactly what the rat is for," said James Smith, union activity administrator for the NYC District Council of Carpenters. "The newer generation sometimes doesn't — one person thought that we were protesting a building that needed an exterminator."

Nevertheless, Scabby's not collecting hard-won retirement benefits just yet. Most recently, Scabby has been making the rounds at various picket lines in New York for the Hollywood writers strike organized by the Writers Guild of America East and other unions. Scabby is the "true rat czar of New York City," said WGA East communications director Jason Gordon, referencing the more fun title for the city's new director of rodent migration.

At the picket line near HBO and Amazon's New York offices on Wednesday, screenwriter Lisa Kron, 61, said she was "thrilled to see that we were being chaperoned by Scabby the Rat."

She's seen Scabby out and about during her four decades living in New York, but this was her first time picketing with the rat.

"It's one of those great enduring symbols, it's a great piece of visual protest," she said. "It's got humor and it's got a shaming kind of message. And it's very New York."

"It's an attention grabber," said Benjamin Serby, a professor at Adelphi University who has written about the history of Scabby. "It's something that just is very effective, for whatever reason, at making people walking by or driving by, stop and ask: 'What's going on here?'"

Although having a rat as a mascot seems quintessentially New York, Scabby the Rat was actually invented by a union in Chicago around the late 1980s (several claim credit), and other unions around the country quickly adopted the practice of using inflatables to draw attention to actions (pigs, roaches and cats are other popular inflatables to use as well, although they lack a catchy nickname).

There are many Scabbys. At another union action in March at a Petco, Marty Flash sat in the cab of his truck used to ferry one of the NYC District Council of Carpenters' eight rats around (most unions have several, or borrow from unions that do). Most of the District Council's rats, along with a generator and gas can, stay in a locker at union headquarters or in organizers' trucks so they can be quickly deployed.

Flash, a carpenter for 35 years, has seen many reactions to the 10-foot-tall (3-meter-tall) rat, which, at the moment, was towering over Union Square in the truck's bed.

"In midtown Manhattan, it's a tourist attraction. Little children get a real kick out of it. They come over, they want to touch it. Dogs are petrified of it," he said. Flash said Scabby can inflate in about a minute and

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a half with a generator and deflate in about 30 seconds. Bigger rats — the rats range from 8 to 20-plus feet (more than 6 meters) — can take 15 minutes to fill up.

Scabby's name is a play on "scabs," the derogatory term dating back to the 1800s for strikebreakers who cross picket lines to work. The oozing sores on his belly are a visual reference to the term. But Flash said workers at the sites visited by Scabby shouldn't take offense, since the rat is protesting against contractors and companies, not the workers themselves.

"Some workers think that we are against them. We're actually fighting to get them more money, better pay and better benefits," he said. "But it's perceived as the rat is calling them a rat or implying that they're 'less than.' Which is not our intention. ... It's to imply that a rat contractor is not paying their workers the fair pay."

Rats are made of PVC vinyl and cost between \$8,000 to \$20,000, according to Flash. One company, Blue Sky Balloons outside of Chicago, is responsible for most of the rats found in NYC. But they seem to be distancing themselves from the inflatables, The Guardian reported earlier this year. Blue Sky Balloons responded to an Associated Press query by saying they were new owners who weren't associated with the rat, and didn't respond to follow-up queries.

But Flash says his union still sends their rats to Big Sky for repairs, which can cost up to \$2,000. Repairs are needed often since most are years or decades old — so the unions try to take good care of their rats.

"I baby this one with my life," Flash said. "We have a pool of rats and generators that you take when you need. I just always keep mine with me because I'm familiar with this operation."

Not everyone likes Scabby. Sometimes the inflatable rat gets slashed or attacked by anyone from random passersby to disgruntled workers at sites. The rat has often been the subject of legal challenges by the companies Scabby targets. If he blocks the sidewalk or street, police can boot him. But Scabby is a survivor, winning its most recent legal challenge in 2021, when the National Labor Relations Board ruled that it was a protected form of expression.

These days, Scabby also has to contend with new technology and social media. Its Facebook page, run by a retired union organizer, lets various unions post photos of Scabby at protests around the country, and some rats feature QR codes that give people information about campaigns. But Mike Piccirillo, president of Local 20 Carpenters Union, said a more recent addition to the union's arsenal might overshadow Scabby.

"Our LED sign truck is a lot more effective than the rat," he said. "I've been in construction for 25 years, and most New Yorkers are numb to the rat. They just walk by it. Now the LED sign with its flashing lights actually gets their attention."

Yet — much like the currently surging rat population in New York — Scabby is unlikely to completely disappear anytime soon, as long as the rat keeps conveying his message of fair pay for workers.

"People are drawn to it in part because it's like an ironic symbol of defiance," Serby said. "Something about this giant, ugly, toothy kind of scary-looking rat makes people feel permitted to express anger and defiance and outrage at employers."

'We're at your side,' Italian president tells Zelenskyy in Rome before Ukraine leader meets pope

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in Rome before talks on Saturday with Pope Francis at the Vatican, received assurances from Italian leaders of continued military and other aid as his country fights to liberate itself from Russia's military invasion launched last year.

Francis recently said that the Vatican has launched a behind-the-scenes initiative to try to end the war launched last year by Russia.

In a tweet, sent shortly after his arrival in the Italian capital late Saturday morning, Zelenskyy cited his schedule of meetings with Francis, Italian President Sergio Mattarella and Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni. "An important visit for approaching victory of Ukraine!" Zelenskyy tweeted.

When Zelenskyy arrived at a military airfield at Rome's Ciampino airport, Italian Foreign Minister Antonio

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Tajani was on hand to greet him. Tajani told reporters that Italy will continue to support Ukraine “360 degrees” and press for a just peace, one that safeguards Ukraine’s independence.

Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni staunchly backs military and other aid for Ukraine.

But while her far-right Brothers of Italy party fiercely champions the principle of national sovereignty, Meloni has had to contend with leaders of two coalition partners who have openly professed for years their admiration for Russian President Vladimir Putin. Coalition ally Silvio Berlusconi, a former premier, has boasted of his friendship with Putin, while another government ally, League leader Matteo Salvini, has questioned the value of economic sanctions against Russia.

Zelenskyy began his official meetings by calling on Mattarella at the presidential Quirinale Palace.

“We are fully at your side,” Mattarella told Zelenskyy as he welcomed him. Later, after their meeting, presidential palace sources said Mattarella assured his guest that Italy would continue supporting Ukraine militarily and financially, as well as with reconstruction and humanitarian aid, in both the short and long term.

Since the war began, Italy has furnished about 1 billion euros (\$1.1 billion) in military and financial aid, as well as humanitarian assistance.

At his next stop, the premier’s office, Meloni and Zelenskyy embraced in the palace courtyard, before beginning their closed-door talks.

Zelenskyy is believed to be heading to Berlin next. Zelenskyy’s exact schedule hadn’t been publicly announced because of security concerns, and the Vatican only confirmed a papal meeting shortly before the Ukrainian president’s plane touched down.

Italian state radio reported that as part of protective measures, a no-fly zone was ordered for Rome skies and police sharpshooters were strategically placed on high buildings.

Meloni met with Zelenskyy in Kyiv, shortly before the anniversary of Russia’s full-scale invasion on Feb. 24, 2022.

Francis, who is eager for peace, last met with the Ukrainian leader in 2020.

The pontiff makes frequent impassioned pleas on behalf of Ukraine’s “martyred” people, in his words.

At the end of April, flying back to Rome from a trip to Hungary, Francis told reporters on the plane that the Vatican was involved in a behind-the-scene peace mission but gave no details. Neither Russia nor Ukraine has confirmed such an initiative.

He has said he would like to go to Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital, if such a visit could be coupled with one to Moscow, in hopes a papal pilgrimage could further the cause of peace.

Last month, Ukraine’s prime minister met with Francis at the Vatican and said he asked the pontiff to help Ukraine get back children illegally taken to Russia during the invasion.

The German government, meanwhile, said it was providing Ukraine with additional military aid worth more than 2.7 billion euros (\$3 billion), including tanks, anti-aircraft systems and ammunition.

The announcement Saturday came as preparations were underway in Berlin for a possible first visit to Germany by Zelenskyy since Russia invaded his country last year.

Defense Minister Boris Pistorius said Berlin wants to show with the latest package of arms “that Germany is serious in its support” for Ukraine.

“Germany will provide all the help it can, as long as it takes,” he said.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS:

— Some Ukrainian units continue to push forward near Bakhmut, the commander of Ukraine’s land forces said Saturday, just a day after Ukrainian commanders said their troops recaptured territory at the scene of the war’s longest and bloodiest battle. “The defensive operation in the Bakhmut area continues. Our soldiers are moving forward in some sectors of the front, and the enemy is losing equipment and manpower,” Oleksandr Syrskyy wrote in a Telegram update.

— Russian shelling on Saturday wounded at least seven civilians in Ukraine’s south and northeast, regional Ukrainian officials said. Two women, a man and a teenage boy suffered wounds as Russian forces shelled the village of Khatnie, in the northeastern Kharkiv region, the local prosecutor’s office said.

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— Shelling also hit the center of Huliaipole, a town in the southern Zaporizhzhia province, and wounded a civilian, presidential aide Andriy Yermak said. Two other civilians were hurt in the village of Chornobaivka, in the neighboring Kherson region, another official said.

— A “massive” Russian barrage overnight damaged an energy facility in Ukraine’s western Khmelnytskyi region, the Ukrainian energy ministry said Saturday morning. It added that power supply in the region wasn’t affected. The mayor of the regional capital said that 11 civilians were wounded or injured overnight as a result of a Russian missile strike. He added that “hundreds” of residential buildings in the city were also damaged in the strike.

— Russian forces on Friday and overnight resumed their shelling of Ukraine’s northeastern Kharkiv region, killing a civilian, local Gov. Oleh Syniehubov reported on Telegram on Saturday. Four civilians were killed over the same period in Ukraine’s front-line Donetsk province in the east, its Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said Saturday.

— Russian forces overnight launched at least 21 Iranian-made Shahed drones at Ukrainian territory, 17 of which were shot down, Ukraine’s air force said Saturday. One of the drones hit unspecified “infrastructure facilities” in the western Khmelnytskyi region, the update said in a likely reference to the energy facility in the province that was damaged in the nightly strike, according to Ukraine’s energy ministry.

— Russian shelling overnight wounded three civilians in the southern Ukrainian city of Mykolaiv, the mayor said Saturday. One person was hospitalized, while the two others were treated on the spot. Multiple fires were reported within the city.

Frank Jordans in Berlin, Joanna Kozłowska in London, and Gianfranco Stara in Rome, contributed to this report.

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

Before Musk picked Yaccarino as Twitter CEO, she challenged him on policies, and his own tweets

By DAVID HAMILTON AP Business Reporter

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — On Friday, Elon Musk announced that NBC Universal’s Linda Yaccarino will serve as the new CEO of Twitter. Yaccarino is a longtime advertising executive credited with integrating and digitizing ad sales at NBCU. Her challenge now will be to woo back advertisers that have fled Twitter since Musk acquired it last year for \$44 billion.

Since taking ownership, Musk has fired thousands of Twitter employees, largely scrapped the trust-and-safety team responsible for keeping the site free of hate speech, harassment and misinformation, and blamed others — particularly mainstream media organizations, which he views as untrustworthy “competitors” to Twitter for ad dollars — for exaggerating Twitter’s problems.

In April, the two met for an on-stage conversation at a marketing convention in Miami Beach, Florida. Here are some highlights of their conversation:

MUSK AND YACCARINO SPAR OVER CONTENT MODERATION

The Miami discussion was cordial, although both participants drew some distinct lines in the sand. On a few occasions, Yaccarino steered the conversation toward issues of content moderation and the apparent proliferation of hate speech and extremism since Musk took over the platform. She couched her questions in the context of whether Musk could help advertisers feel more welcome on the platform.

At one point, she asked if Musk was willing to let advertisers “influence” his vision for Twitter, explaining that it would help them get more excited about investing more money — “product development, ad safety, content moderation — that’s what the influence is.”

Musk shut her down. “It’s totally cool to say that you want to have your advertising appear in certain places in Twitter and not in other places, but it is not cool to try to say what Twitter will do,” he said. “And if that means losing advertising dollars, we lose it. But freedom of speech is paramount.”

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MUSK REPEATS: NO SPECIAL INFLUENCE FOR ADVERTISERS

Yaccarino returned to the issue a few moments later when she asked Musk if he planned to reinstate the company's "influence council," a once-regular meeting with marketing executives from several of Twitter's major advertisers. Musk again demurred.

"I would be worried about creating a backlash among the public," he said. "Because if the public thinks that their views are being determined by, you know, a small number of (marketing executives) in America, they will be, I think, upset about that."

Musk went on to acknowledge that feedback is important, and suggested Twitter should aim for a "sensible middle ground" that ensures the public "has a voice" while advertisers focus on the ordinary work of improving sales and the perception of their brands.

PRESSING ELON ON HIS OWN TWEETS

Musk didn't pass up the opportunity to sell the assembled marketers a new plan to solve Twitter's problems with objectionable tweets, which the company had announced the day before. Musk called the policy "freedom of speech but not freedom of reach," describing it as a way to limit the visibility of hate speech and similar problems without actually removing rule-breaking tweets.

Yaccarino took a swing. "Does it apply to your tweets?" Musk has a history of posting misinformation and occasionally offensive tweets, often in the early morning hours.

Musk acknowledged that it does, adding that his tweets can also be tagged with "community notes" that provide additional context to tweets. He added that his tweets receive no special boosts from Twitter.

"Will you agree to be more specific and not tweet after 3 a.m.?" Yaccarino asked.

"I will aspire to tweet less after 3 a.m.," Musk replied.

This story has been edited to correct Linda Yaccarino's name.

Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza trade fire; 2 Palestinians killed in West Bank raid

By FARES AKRAM and ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel and Palestinian militants unleashed salvos of fire for a fifth day on Saturday, with the Islamic Jihad militant group launching dozens more rockets and the Israeli military pounding targets inside the Gaza Strip.

Missile shrapnel that slammed into an agricultural community in Israel's southern Negev desert severely wounded two Palestinians from Gaza in their 40s who had been working in Israel and moderately wounded another 36-year-old man, Israeli medics said.

But in a reminder of the combustible situation in the occupied West Bank, the Israeli military raided the Balata refugee camp near the northern city of Nablus, sparking a firefight that killed two Palestinians.

The Palestinian Health Ministry identified the two as 32-year-old Said Mesha and 19-year-old Adnan Araj. At least three other Palestinians were wounded in the raid, the latest of near-daily Israeli arrest operations against suspected militants in the territory.

Meanwhile, hopes for an imminent cease-fire between Israel and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad were fading as the Israeli military Saturday bombed an apartment belonging to Islamic Jihad commander Mohammed Abu Al Atta, among other targets including rocket launchers, it said.

Islamic Jihad militants fired a barrage of rockets toward southern Israel, where tens of thousands of Israelis were instructed to remain close to safe rooms and bomb shelters. Hundreds of residents near the border were evacuated to hotels farther north.

Islamic Jihad promised a further onslaught. "As assassinations and the bombing of apartments and safe houses continue, the Palestinian resistance will renew its rocket fire ... to emphasize the continuation of the confrontation," the group said. Mortar shells fired by Palestinian militants crashed into the Erez crossing between Gaza and Israel, the Israeli civil defense body said, sharing footage of a fiery explosion at

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the main passageway into Israel.

Israeli officials told media that Egyptian-led efforts to broker a cease-fire were still underway but that Israel has ruled out the conditions presented by Islamic Jihad in the talks. Israel has said only that quiet will be answered with quiet, while Islamic Jihad has been reportedly pressing Israel to agree to halt targeted assassinations, among other demands. If the rocket fire continues from Gaza, Israeli officials told local media, "the strikes (on Gaza) will continue and intensify."

The hostilities erupted on Tuesday when Israel targeted and killed three senior Islamic Jihad commanders who it said were responsible for firing rockets toward the country last week. At least 10 civilians, including women, young children and uninvolved neighbors were killed in those initial strikes, which drew regional condemnation.

Over the past few days, Israel has conducted more airstrikes, killing other senior Islamic Jihad commanders and destroying their command centers and rocket-launching sites. On Friday, Israel killed Iyad al-Hassani, an Islamic Jihad commander who had replaced a leader of the group's military operations killed in a Tuesday airstrike.

The Palestinian Health Ministry has reported 33 Palestinians killed — six of them children — and over 147 wounded.

On Saturday, Palestinians ventured out to assess the damage wrought by Israeli warplanes and salvage whatever they could. One man carefully pulled documents out from under the rubble. Another carried away a mattress.

Four homes in densely populated residential neighborhoods were reduced to dust in the pre-dawn attacks. The Israeli military alleged the targeted homes belonged to or were used by Islamic Jihad militants. The residents denied the army's claims and said they had no idea why their homes were targeted.

"We have no rocket launching pads at all. This is a residential area," said Awni Obaid, beside the debris of what was his three-story house in the central town of Deir al-Balah.

The nearby house of his relative, Jihad Obaid, was also leveled. He had been standing some hundred meters away when his apartment was bombed.

"I felt like vomiting because of the dust," he said. "This is extraordinary hatred. They claim they don't strike at children, but what we see is craziness, destruction."

Islamic Jihad has retaliated by firing a thousand rockets toward southern and central Israel. On Friday, the group escalated its assaults and fired rockets toward Jerusalem, setting off air raid sirens in the Israeli settlements south of the contested capital.

Most of the rockets have fallen short or been intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome aerial defense system. But a rocket on Thursday penetrated missile defenses and sliced through a house in the central city of Rehovot, killing an 80-year-old woman and wounding several others.

Hamas, the larger militant group that has controlled Gaza since seizing power in 2007, has praised Islamic Jihad's strikes but remained on the sidelines, according to Israeli military officials, limiting the scope of the conflict.

As the de facto government held responsible for the abysmal conditions in the blockaded Gaza Strip, Hamas has recently tried to keep a lid on its conflict with Israel. Islamic Jihad, on the other hand, a more ideological and unruly militant group wedded to violence, has taken the lead in the past few rounds of fighting with Israel.

On Saturday, the deadly Israeli raid into the Balata refugee camp turned the focus of the conflict back to the long-simmering West Bank. Residents said that Israeli forces besieged a militant hideout, sharing footage of a large explosion and smoke billowing from the crowded camp. Ejected bullet casings littered the alleys. Blood soaked the streets.

The Israeli military said the targeted apartment harbored militants who had planned attacks against Israeli soldiers and manufactured improvised explosive devices. It said the blast and fire erupted after Israeli security forces detonated explosives inside the hideout. The two Palestinians were killed when Israeli forces opened fire on a group of gunmen who were shooting at them, the military said.

Israeli-Palestinian fighting has surged in the West Bank under Israel's most right-wing government in

history. Since the start of the year, 111 Palestinians have been killed in the occupied territory, at least half of them affiliated with militant groups, according to a tally by The Associated Press — the highest death toll in some two decades. In that time, 20 people have been killed in Palestinian attacks on Israelis.

DeBre reported from Jerusalem

Tribes whose lands are cut in two by US borders push for easier crossings

By HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

For four hours, Raymond V. Buelna, a cultural leader for the Pascua Yaqui Tribe, sat on a metal bench in a concrete holding space at the U.S.-Mexico border, separated from the two people he was taking to an Easter ceremony on tribal land in Arizona and wondering when they might be released.

It was February 2022 and Buelna, a U.S. citizen, was driving the pair — both from the sovereign Native American nation's related tribal community in northwestern Mexico — from their home to the reservation southwest of Tucson. They'd been authorized by U.S. officials to cross the border. But when Buelna asked an agent why they were detained, he was told to wait for the officer who brought him in.

"They know that we're coming," said Buelna, who has made the trip for a variety of ceremonies for 20 years. "We did all this work and then we're still sitting there."

Now, the Pascua Yaqui Tribe is trying to change this — for themselves and potentially dozens of other tribes in the U.S.

Tribal officials have drafted regulations to formalize the border-crossing process, working with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's recently formed Tribal Homeland Security Advisory Council, comprised of 15 Native officials across the U.S.

Their work could provide a template for dozens of Native American nations whose homelands, like the Pascua Yaquis, were sliced in two by modern-day U.S. borders.

If approved, the rules would become the first clearly established U.S. border crossing procedures specific to a Native American tribe that could then be used by others, according to Christina Leza, associate professor of anthropology at Colorado College.

The regulations would last five years, to be renewed and amended as needed, and require training local U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents and consular personnel on the tribe's cultural heritage, language and traditions. It would require a Yaqui interpreter to be available when needed. It also would require close coordination with the tribe so border crossings are prompt.

"This is just something that will help everybody," said Fred Urbina, attorney general for the Pascua Yaqui Tribe. "It will make things more efficient."

Urbina said the tribe has met with Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas about the proposal. DHS did not immediately respond to repeated requests for comment by phone and email on the status of the regulations.

When family members, deer dancers or musicians living in Sonora, Mexico, make the trip into the U.S. for ceremonies, tribal recognition celebrations or family events, they are typically issued an ID card from the tribe and a visitor visa or parole permit from the U.S. government. Still, they still face border officials who they say lack the cultural awareness to process them without problems.

In the last two years, Buelna said, he has made the roundtrip about 18 times and was detained on four of them. He said border officials question the people he's escorting, whose first language is Yaqui, without an interpreter, and cultural objects, such as deer and pig hooves, have been confiscated. Officials have touched ceremonial objects, despite only certain people being permitted by the tribe to do so.

Urbina explained that the tribe encountered new challenges when Homeland Security was formed after 9/11 and border security was heightened. It became more pronounced in 2020, when the U.S. prohibited "non-essential" travel across the border to control the spread of the coronavirus. That ban ended this

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The contours of an agreement between the White House and Congress are within reach even if the political will to end the standoff is uncertain. Negotiators are considering clawing back some \$30 billion in unused COVID-19 funds, imposing spending caps over the next several years and approving permitting reforms to ease construction of energy projects and other developments, according to those familiar with the closed-door staff discussions. They were not authorized to discuss the private deliberations and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The White House has been hesitant to engage in talks, insisting it is only willing to negotiate over the annual budget, not the debt ceiling, and Biden's team is skeptical that McCarthy can cut any deal with his far-right House majority.

"There's no deal to be had on the debt ceiling. There's no negotiation to be had on the debt ceiling," said White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre.

McCarthy's allies say the White House has fundamentally underestimated what the new Republican leader has been able to accomplish — first in the grueling fight to become House speaker and now in having passed the House bill with \$4.5 trillion in savings as an opening offer in negotiations. Both have emboldened McCarthy to push hard for a deal.

"The White House has been wrong every single time with understanding where we are with the House," said Russ Vought, president of Center for American Renewal and Trump's former director of the Office of Management and Budget. "They're dealing with a new animal."

The nation's debt load has ballooned in recent years to \$31 trillion. That's virtually double what it was during the last major debt ceiling showdown a decade ago, when Biden, as vice president to President Barack Obama, faced the new class of tea party Republicans demanding spending cuts in exchange for raising the debt limit.

While the politics of the debt limit have intensified, the nation's debt is nothing new. The U.S. balance sheets have been operating in the red for much of its history, dating to before the Civil War. That's because government expenditures are routinely more than tax revenues, helping to subsidize the comforts Americans depend on — national security, public works, a federal safety net and basic operations to keep a civil society running. In the U.S., individuals pay the bulk of the taxes, while corporations pay less than 10%.

Much of the COVID-19 spending approved at the start of the pandemic has run its course and government spending is back to its typical levels, experts said. That includes the free vaccines, small business payroll funds, emergency payments to individuals, monthly child tax credits and supplemental food aid that protected Americans and the economy.

"Most of the big things we did are done — and they did an enormous amount of good," said Sharon Parrott, president of the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities in Washington.

"We actually showed that we know how to drive down poverty and drive up health insurance amid what would have been rising hardship," she said.

Last year, Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, which was signed into law over Republican opposition, was largely paid for with savings and new revenues elsewhere.

The popularity of some spending, particularly the child tax credits in the COVID-19 relief and the Inflation Reduction Act's efforts to tackle climate change, shows the political hunger in the country for the kinds of investments that some Americans believe will help push the U.S. fully into a 21st century economy.

A case in point: A core group of Midwestern Republican lawmakers prevented a rollback of the Inflation Reduction Act's biofuel tax credits their colleagues wanted to scrap, persuading McCarthy to leave that out of the House bill. The federal money is propping up new investments in corn-heavy agriculture states.

As McCarthy's House Republicans now demand budget reductions in exchange for raising the debt limit, they have a harder time saying what government programs and services, in fact, they plan to cut.

House Republicans pushed back strenuously against Biden's claims their bill would slash veterans and other services.

McCarthy, in his meeting with the president, went so far as to tell Biden that's "a lie."

The Republicans promise they will exempt the Defense Department and veterans' health care once they

draft the actual spending bills to match up with the House debt ceiling proposal, but there are no written guarantees those programs would not face cuts.

In fact, Democrats say if Republicans spare defense and veterans from reductions, the cuts on the other departments would be as high as 22%.

Budget watchers often reiterate that the debt problem is not necessarily the amount of the debt load, approaching 100% of the nation's gross domestic product, but whether the federal government can continue making the payments on the debt, especially as interest rates rise.

From the White House on Friday, Mitch Landrieu, the infrastructure implementation coordinator, talked up the \$1.2 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill Biden signed into law 18 months ago. He said it is creating jobs, spurring private investment and showing what can happen when the sides comes together.

"We say once in a generation because it hasn't happened in our lifetimes, and quite frankly it may not happen again in the near future," he said.

AP White House Correspondent Zeke Miller contributed to this report.

Brittney Griner plays in first WNBA preseason game since detainment in Russia

By DAVID BRANDT AP Sports Writer

PHOENIX (AP) — Brittney Griner strolled down the sideline about 1 1/2 hours before the Phoenix Mercury played Friday night, giving hugs and high-fiving her teammates, coaches and opposing players.

Then it was a little stretching, a little shooting and a little agility work to prepare for a basketball game. Just like old times.

"I'm grateful to be here, that's for sure," Griner said. "I'm not going to take a day for granted."

Griner returned to game action for the first time since a nearly 10-month detainment in Russia on drug-related charges ended with a prisoner swap in December. The seven-time All-Star, who missed the entire 2022 season because of the detainment, finished with 10 points and three rebounds in a WNBA preseason game against the Los Angeles Sparks.

The 6-foot-9 Griner looked good, especially considering the long layoff, casually throwing down a one-handed dunk during warmups. She stood with her teammates while the national anthem was played and received a loud ovation from the home crowd when she was introduced before tipoff.

"Hearing the national anthem, it definitely hit different," Griner said. "It's like when you go for the Olympics, you're sitting there, about to get gold put on your neck, the flags are going up and the anthem is playing, it just hits different.

"Being here today ... it means a lot."

Mercury coach Vanessa Nygaard said the anthem and introductions were emotional for the entire team.

"We looked at each other and we just had chills," Nygaard said. "We were here last year for all of it. I'm getting emotional about it now. Just to see her back out there — it's an absolute miracle. It was amazing. It's giving me chills again."

Once the game started, the 32-year-old Griner immediately went to work, scoring on a turnaround jumper early in the first quarter. A few minutes later, she was fouled on another turnaround and sank both free throws.

She even had a cameo with the medical staff in the third quarter. Teammate Sophie Cunningham went down with a knee injury and Griner helped carry her off the court so she didn't have to put weight on her leg.

"When one of us goes down, we're always right there," Griner said. "That's one thing about this team — we're always there for each other. We've got each others' backs, big time."

Griner's return to the Mercury rekindles hope the franchise can make another run to the WNBA Finals. The former Baylor star helped the franchise win its third title in 2014 and has averaged 17.7 points and 7.6 rebounds during her nine-year career. She was runner-up for Most Valuable Player in 2021, when the

Mercury also played in the Finals but lost to the Chicago Sky.

Griner said she was more rusty on the court than expected. But given the trials and emotions of the past 18 months, it was a pretty good night.

"Not where I want it to be, but on the right track," Griner said. "We're making the right moves."

Phoenix opens the regular season in Los Angeles next Friday.

The extra exposure from being detained in Russia for having vape cartridges containing cannabis oil in her luggage has given Griner a platform to advocate for other Americans being detained abroad. She was already an LGBTQ+ activist since publicly coming out in 2013 and became the first openly gay athlete to be sponsored by Nike.

Griner announced in April that she is working with Bring Our Families Home, a campaign formed last year by the family members of American hostages and wrongful detainees held overseas. She said her team has been in contact with the family of Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich, who is being detained in Russia on espionage charges.

AP Sports Writer John Marshall contributed to this report.

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

Healthy and happy: LeBron James, Anthony Davis lead Lakers back to conference finals

By GREG BEACHAM AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — After every twist and turn in the soap opera saga of LeBron James' four seasons alongside Anthony Davis with the Los Angeles Lakers, one truth remains perfectly clear.

This is a championship-caliber partnership when James and Davis are both healthy.

One or both superstars have been injured for long stretches of the three seasons since their 2020 bubble championship, and the Lakers' road back to contention has been incredibly rocky because of it. The entire roster around them has been completely changed since that ring, but James and Davis are still here, still fighting.

Now they're both healthy at the same time again, and the rest of the NBA has been reminded what happens when this dynamic duo can fly at full strength.

James and Davis were at their best while the Lakers eliminated the defending champion Golden State Warriors in six games, capping a masterful effort with a 122-101 victory Friday night.

When asked why the seventh-seeded Lakers find themselves four games from the NBA Finals just three months after they were six games below .500 and in 13th place in the Western Conference, James praised the front office for overhauling the roster around the trade deadline with the arrivals of D'Angelo Russell, Rui Hachimura and Jarred Vanderbilt.

But James quickly added a second reason: "Also, staying healthy. We weren't as healthy as we would like to be, but we still played good basketball after the break to put us in the position."

LeBron and AD have won six of their seven playoff series together, losing only when Davis was hurt in the first round against Phoenix in 2021. The Lakers are 95-49 when James and Davis are playing together, and this postseason has been an archetypal example of what they can do.

They're coming off a tremendously disappointing 2021-22 season in which they missed the playoffs while going 33-49, leading to Frank Vogel's firing and Darvin Ham's arrival. Davis' injury problems limited him to 40 games, while James played in only 56.

But these Lakers are almost nothing like those Lakers: Other than James and Davis, only Austin Reaves and backup big man Wenyen Gabriel remain from last year's roster.

"When you have guys like Bron and AD who have won championships, you always feel like you have a chance, especially with the roster that we have, the talent that we have," said Reaves, the undrafted free

agent who seized a starting role down the stretch.

James had 30 points, nine rebounds and nine assists in Game 6, repeatedly making stunning plays that answered anybody who thinks the top scorer in NBA history has lost anything at 38.

Davis was no less impressive with 17 points, 20 rebounds and the looming, athletic defensive presence that changes every opponent's game plan.

Both stars are in remarkably good health as they head into the conference finals against the Denver Nuggets on Tuesday night. Davis came back solidly at home Friday night after missing the end of Game 5 at Golden State following a blow to the head, and he'll be ready to take on Nikola Jokic.

The Lakers had to fight just to get into the postseason, only getting into a play-in spot for good with 2 1/2 weeks left in the regular season. But Los Angeles is 27-12 since the trade deadline, with no back-to-back losses since March 17.

Ham never hesitates to credit his superstars for the Lakers' success, even while he does impressive work in molding the team around them.

"One of the things I wanted to reestablish here was our competitiveness, and then work toward building a team, a roster of players that were together and that weren't afraid to acknowledge what we're doing wrong and how we can fix it," Ham said. "It started with themselves, how can we all be better individually, and then come together as a group, and I think just throughout the season, the work ethic of LeBron, the persistence of AD, both of those guys."

The Lakers' season has gone from a probable disaster to an undeniable success in the past two months, but nobody appears to be satisfied. After handling every challenge thrown at them in recent weeks, the Lakers are headed into their showdown with top-seeded Denver carrying much more confidence than almost any seventh seed could possess — no surprise, since no seventh seed has reached the West finals since the 1986-87 Seattle SuperSonics.

"From Day One, we've always said we need those three elements to be able to do anything, to have any type of success within an NBA season, and that's the competitiveness, togetherness and accountability," Ham said. "Moreover from that, our work and our preparation will carry us as far as that takes us, and we stayed true to form with that."

"Everyone in the building, through those tough times at the beginning of the season, stayed positive, stayed encouraging."

AP Sports Writer Janie McCauley in San Francisco contributed.

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

Heat embracing challenge, find way to return to the Eastern Conference finals

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

MIAMI (AP) — Inside the Miami Heat locker room, now officially halfway to the season's ultimate goal, Erik Spoelstra stepped onto the NBA championship logo on the center of the floor and gathered his team around him.

His message was simple.

"There's been nothing about this season that's been easy," Spoelstra said.

He's right, and the Heat aren't complaining about that, either — since this anything-but-easy season is still going.

They were a No. 1 seed last year and got to the Eastern Conference finals, and this year, they were a No. 8 seed and still got to the Eastern Conference finals. It took six games to get past New York — the revival of a playoff rivalry from the late 1990s and early 2000s — but the job is done, the clincher coming in a 96-92 win in Game 6 of their East semifinal matchup Friday night.

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"It's a crazy story being written," Heat center Bam Adebayo said. "Through all the ups and downs of the season, a lot of people counted us out. We weren't even going to make it past the first round and now we're in the Eastern Conference finals. It just shows the determination and the will this team has."

It's a wild time in South Florida, and the Heat are only half of that story right now.

The Florida Panthers — they seed a little differently in the NHL, but they're basically a No. 8 seed as well, just like their NBA neighbors in Miami — are also headed to the conference finals, winning in Toronto on Friday night in overtime to clinch that series in five games.

The Heat and Panthers are following the same path so far; up-and-down regular season, scramble just to get into the playoffs, then beat the No. 1 overall seed in Round 1 — for the Heat it was the Milwaukee Bucks, for the Panthers it was the Boston Bruins — followed by a win over another favored opponent in Round 2. And all that comes on the heels of Miami and Florida Atlantic going to the men's college basketball Final Four last month, Miami going to the women's Elite Eight and Nova Southeastern winning the Division II men's national title.

"I wish I could actually go to some of these events," Spoelstra said.

He'd rather be busy for a few more weeks. Game 1 of the East finals — at either Boston or Philadelphia, two teams that will play a Game 7 of their East semifinal series on Sunday — awaits on Wednesday. If the Celtics win, it'll be two rematches of the conference finals from the 2020 bubble restart, with Denver set to face the Los Angeles Lakers for the Western Conference title as well.

"We've got eight more (wins) to get," Heat star Jimmy Butler said. "Like I always say, we're always going to be in this thing together. I'm so, so proud of all of my guys for playing as hard as we did today. And like I said, we've got eight more."

The Heat lost their first play-in game to Atlanta and missed a chance at the No. 7 seed, then needed a 15-1 run to close the second play-in game against Chicago, rally from a late deficit and sneak into the playoffs as the No. 8 seed.

They're 8-3 since and nobody in the playoffs has a better record. Miami has the same record West No. 1 seed Denver posted in its first two rounds, would be the same record as Philadelphia through two rounds if the 76ers win on Sunday, and is a bit better than the 8-4 mark by the Lakers to this point.

"Hopefully we keep it rolling, man," Heat point guard Gabe Vincent said.

The series against the Knicks was not aesthetically pleasing. The Heat shot 43% to New York's 44% and both teams struggled from 3-point range — 31% for Miami, 30% for New York.

But the Heat found a way, even after losing a potential clincher in Game 5 and falling behind by 14 early in Game 6. The Heat had a one-point lead at the half and never trailed after halftime, dodging everything the Knicks threw their way.

It wasn't easy. But it was fitting, as Spoelstra said.

"Just an absolute grind," Spoelstra said.

The grind continues, with a trip to Boston or Philadelphia awaiting.

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

Vatican experts uncovering gilded glory of Hercules statue struck by lightning

By FRANCESCO SPORTELLI Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Scaffolding in a niche of the Vatican Museums' Round Hall conceal from view the work of restorers who are removing centuries of grime from the largest known bronze statue of the ancient world: the gilded Hercules Mastai Righetti.

For more than 150 years, the four-meter-tall (13-foot-tall) figure of the half-human Roman god of strength has stood in that niche, barely garnering notice among other antiquities because of the dark coating it had acquired.

But it was only after removing a layer of wax and other material from a 19th-century restoration that

week, but new restrictions are in place.

As a sovereignty issue, Native American nations should be able to determine their people's ability to cross the border to preserve the ceremonial life of their communities, Leza said.

"If the federal government is saying our particular priorities, our interests in terms of securing our borders, trump your interests as a sovereign nation, then that's not really a recognition of the sovereignty of those tribal nations," she said.

Tribes along the U.S.-Canada border face similar problems.

The Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians is headquartered in Michigan, but 173 of its more than 49,000 enrolled members live in Canada. Kimberly Hampton, the tribe's officer-secretary and vice chair of the Tribal Homeland Security Advisory Council, said those members cross the border for powwows, fasting and to visit with traditional healers and family, but border officials have rudely rifled through eagle feathers and other cultural objects they are carrying.

Hampton wants an agreement that includes having tribal liaisons at border crossings and training developed by the tribe for border personnel.

Members of the Sault Ste. Marie tribe and the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, which has about 8,000 members in the U.S. and about 8,000 in Canada, said they have also been asked at the border to prove that they possess at least 50% "blood of the American Indian race." It stems from a requirement under the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act that "American Indians" born in Canada cannot be denied entry into the U.S. if they can prove this — often through a letter from the tribe.

Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe Chief Michael L. Connors wants to eliminate the requirement and boost education for border agents on local and national tribal issues. Drafting regulations specific to the tribe, like the ones the Pascua Yaqui are doing, "would bring a lot of peace of mind to our whole community," he said.

For Buelna, waiting in that concrete holding space, he was reunited with the pair only after he told a border official he thought they'd been overlooked following a shift change, he said.

"Why can't there be a system?" Buelna asked. "Why can't there be already a line for us where we can present the proper paperwork, everything that we need and go about our way?"

Debt ceiling standoff shows how era of pandemic spending is giving way to focus on stemming deficits

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — One outcome is clear as Washington reaches for a budget deal to end the debt ceiling standoff: The ambitious COVID-19 era of government spending to cope with the pandemic and rebuild in its aftermath is giving way to a new fiscal focus on tailored investments and stemming deficits.

President Joe Biden has said recouping unspent coronavirus money is "on the table" in budget talks with Congress. While the White House has threatened to veto Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy's debt ceiling bill with its "devastating cuts" to federal programs, the administration has signaled a willingness to consider other budget caps.

The end result is a turnaround from just a few years ago, when Congress passed and then-president Donald Trump signed the historic \$2.2 trillion CARES Act at the start of the public health crisis in 2020. It's a dramatic realignment even as Biden's bipartisan infrastructure law and Inflation Reduction Act are now investing billions of dollars into paving streets, shoring up the federal safety net and restructuring the U.S. economy.

"The appetite to throw a lot more money at major problems right now is significantly diminished, given what we've seen over the past several years," said Shai Akabas, director of economic policy at the Bipartisan Policy Center, a nonpartisan organization in Washington.

The Treasury Department has warned it will begin running out of money to pay the nation's bills as soon as June 1, though an estimate Friday by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget office put the deadline at the first two weeks of June, potentially buying the negotiators time.

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Vatican experts understood the statue's true splendor as one of the most significant gilded statues of its time. Museum-goers will be able to see its grandeur for themselves once the restoration is finished, which is expected in December.

"The original gilding is exceptionally well-preserved, especially for the consistency and homogeneity," Vatican Museum restorer Alice Baltera said.

The discovery of the colossal bronze statue in 1864 during work on a banker's villa near Rome's Campo dei Fiori square made global headlines.

Visitors drawn to the ancient wonder at the time included Pope Pius IX, who later added the work to the papal collection. The statue depicting Hercules after he finished his labors had the last names of the pope — Mastai — and of the banker, Pietro Righetti, added to its title.

The statue has been variously dated from the end of the first to the beginning of the third centuries. Even in its day, the towering Hercules was treated with reverence.

The inscription FCS accompanying the statue on a slab of travertine marble indicates it was struck by lightning, according to Claudia Valeri, curator of the Vatican Museums department of Greek and Roman antiquities. As a result, it was buried in a marble shrine according to Roman rites that saw lightning as an expression of divine forces.

FCS stands for "fulgur conditum summanium, a Latin phrase meaning "Here is buried a Summanian thunderbolt." Summanus was the ancient Roman god of nocturnal thunder. The ancient Romans believed that not only was any object stricken imbued with divinity, but also the spot where it was hit and buried.

"It is said that sometimes being struck by lightning generates love but also eternity," Vatican Museums archaeologist Giandomenico Spinola said. The Hercules Mastai Righetti "got his eternity ... because having been struck by lightning, it was considered a sacred object, which preserved it until about 150 years ago."

The burial protected the gilding, but also caused dirt to build up on the statue, which Baltera said is very delicate and painstaking to remove. "The only way is to work precisely with special magnifying glasses, removing all the small encrustations one by one," she said.

The work to remove the wax and other materials that were applied during the 19th-century restoration is complete. Going forward, restorers plan to make fresh casts out of resin to replace the plaster patches that covered missing pieces, including on part of the nape of the neck and the pubis.

The most astonishing finding to emerge during the preliminary phase of the restoration was the skill with which the smelters fused mercury to gold, making the gilded surface more enduring.

"The history of this work is told by its gilding. ... It is one of the most compact and solid gildings found to date," said Ulderico Santamaria, a University of Tuscia professor who is head of the Vatican Museums' scientific research laboratory.

G7 finance leaders vow to contain inflation, strengthen supply chains but avoid mention of China

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

NIIGATA, Japan (AP) — The Group of Seven's top financial leaders united Saturday in their support for Ukraine and their determination to enforce sanctions against Russia for its aggression but stopped short of any overt mention of China.

The finance ministers and central bank chiefs ended three days of talks in Niigata, Japan, with a joint statement pledging to bring inflation under control, help countries struggling with onerous debts and strengthen financial systems.

They also committed to collaborating to build more stable, diversified supply chains for developing clean energy sources and to "enhance economic resilience globally against various shocks."

The statement did not include any specific mention of China or of "economic coercion" in pursuit of political objectives, such as penalizing the companies of countries whose governments take actions that anger another country.

Talk this week of such moves by China had drawn outraged rebukes from Beijing. Officials attending the

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talks in this port city apparently balked at overtly condemning China, given the huge stake most countries have in good relations with the rising power and No. 2 economy.

The finance leaders' talks laid the groundwork for a summit of G-7 leaders in Hiroshima next week that President Joe Biden is expected to attend despite a crisis over the U.S. debt ceiling that could result in a national default if it is not resolved in the coming weeks.

Japanese Finance Minister Shunichi Suzuki said that Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen mentioned the issue in a working dinner, but he refrained from saying anything more.

While in Niigata, Yellen warned that a failure to raise the debt ceiling to enable the government to continue paying its bills would bring an economic catastrophe, destroying hundreds of thousands of jobs and potentially disrupting global financial systems. No mention of the issue was made in the finance leaders' statement.

The G-7's devotion to protecting what it calls a "rules-based international order" got only a passing mention.

The leaders pledge to work together both within the G-7 and with other countries to "enhance economic resilience globally against various shocks, stand firm to protect our shared values, and preserve economic efficiency by upholding the free, fair and rules-based multilateral system," it said.

G-7 economies comprise only a tenth of the world's population but about 30% of economic activity, down from roughly half 40 years ago. Developing economies like China, India and Brazil have made huge gains, raising questions about the G-7's relevance and role in leading a world economy increasingly reliant on growth in less wealthy nations.

China had blasted as hypocrisy assertions by the U.S. and other G-7 countries that they are safeguarding a "rules-based international order" against "economic coercion" from Beijing and other threats.

China itself is a victim of economic coercion, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said Friday.

"If any country should be criticized for economic coercion, it should be the United States. The U.S. has been overstretching the concept of national security, abusing export controls and taking discriminatory and unfair measures against foreign companies," Wang said in a routine news briefing.

China accuses Washington of hindering its rise as an increasingly affluent, modern nation through trade and investment restrictions. Yellen said they are "narrowly targeted" to protect American economic security.

Despite recent turmoil in the banking industry, the G-7 statement said the financial system was "resilient" thanks to reforms implemented during the 2008 global financial crisis.

"Nevertheless, we need to remain vigilant and stay agile and flexible in our macroeconomic policy amid heightened uncertainty about the global economic outlook," it said.

Meanwhile, inflation remains "elevated" and central banks are determined to bring it under control, it said.

Since prices remain "sticky," some countries may see continued rate hikes, said Kazuo Ueda, Japan's central bank governor. "The impact of the rate hikes has not been fully realized," he told reporters.

Japan won support for its call for a "partnership" to strengthen supply chains to reduce the risk of disruptions similar to those seen during the pandemic, when supplies of items of all kinds, from medicines to toilet paper to high-tech computer chips, ran short in many countries.

Suzuki said details of that plan would be worked out later.

"Through the pandemic, we learned that supply chains tended to depend on a limited number of countries or one country," he said, adding that economic security hinges on helping more countries develop their capacity to supply critical minerals and other products needed as the world switches to carbon-emissions-free energy.

Tensions with China, and with Russia over its war on Ukraine, inevitably loomed large during the talks in Japan, the G-7's only Asian member.

"We call for an immediate end of Russia's illegal war against Ukraine, which would clear one of the biggest uncertainties over the global economic outlook," the joint statement said.

The financial leaders took time to listen to ideas on how to focus more on welfare in policymaking, rather than just GDP and other numerical indicators that often drive decisions with profound impacts on

people's well being.

"These efforts will help preserve confidence in democracy and a market-based economy, which are the core values of the G-7," the finance leaders' statement concluded.

Suzuki said he and other leaders learned much from a seminar by Columbia University economist Joseph Stiglitz, a Nobel prize winner who worked in the Clinton administration and who has championed what he calls "progressive capitalism."

It's a "very interesting view," Suzuki said, adding that "so far, we've been mostly focused on GDP and other numerical indicators."

Associated Press journalist Haruka Nuga contributed.

LeBron James, Lakers eliminate champion Warriors with 122-101 victory in Game 6

By GREG BEACHAM AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Six months and a day after the Los Angeles Lakers fell to 2-10 to start the regular season, they emphatically eliminated the defending NBA champions to reach the Western Conference finals.

Although the Lakers' transformation has become increasingly incredible over the past several weeks, the primary forces behind it are LeBron James and Anthony Davis. The superstars won a ring together only three years ago, and they shared a joyous hug Friday night after they led their team to its biggest home victory in over a decade.

James had 30 points, nine rebounds and nine assists and the Lakers ended the Golden State Warriors' reign with a 122-101 victory in Game 6 of the second-round series.

"It was great to be able to play one of our most efficient games, one of our best games of the series, and it started because of the defensive matchup we had," James said. "We defended at a high level, and when we do that, we can be extremely good. I thought we were locked in for as close to 48 minutes as possible tonight."

Davis had 17 points and 20 rebounds for the seventh-seeded Lakers, who never trailed in their third home victory over Golden State in seven days. Austin Reaves scored 23 points — highlighted by a 54-footer from midcourt at the halftime buzzer — along with six assists and five rebounds while Los Angeles inexorably pulled away, weathering every attempt by Stephen Curry to will the Warriors back into it.

"It's special to get that win to beat a team that's so established and so good," Reaves said. "I think the seeding things are just numbers. When you have guys like Bron and AD who have won championships, you always feel like you have a chance, especially with the roster that we have, the talent that we have."

After the Lakers unseated the champs with remarkable style, they will face Nikola Jokic and the top-seeded Nuggets in the Western Conference finals starting Tuesday night in Denver. It's a rematch of the conference finals in the 2020 Florida bubble, won in five games by Los Angeles.

While routing the Warriors one last time, the Lakers improved to 7-0 at home since the regular season ended. They also snapped Golden State's streak of 28 playoff series with at least one road victory — an NBA-record run encompassing Curry's entire career.

"It's been a challenging year, to say the least, but we kept powering through," first-year head coach Darvin Ham said. "Our vibes stayed positive, and finally our new pieces came together."

James, Davis and the Lakers are the first team since 2014 to eliminate Curry's Warriors from the playoffs before the NBA Finals. Golden State has played in six of the last eight NBA Finals, missing the playoffs entirely in the other two seasons.

"The better team won, and I can't fault our players for the effort," Golden State coach Steve Kerr said. "Because these guys are such competitors, it's going to hurt. But that's why we play: To compete against the best and see what we've got. Didn't quite have enough, but it wasn't for a lack of heart or effort."

Curry scored 32 points while missing 10 of his 14 3-point attempts for the sixth-seeded Warriors, whose

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pursuit of their fifth championship in nine seasons ended with three straight road losses and an inept offensive performance by Curry's teammates in Game 6, including a 3-of-19 effort by Klay Thompson, who missed 10 of his 12 3-point attempts.

"We didn't have a changeup pitch to throw, which led to the result," Curry said of the Warriors' poor shooting.

The Splash Brothers were far too dry when it mattered against the Lakers: Thompson went 10 for 36 on 3-pointers in the series' final four games, while Curry was 14 for 49.

Donte DiVincenzo had a playoff-high 16 points for the Warriors, but Curry was their only starter in double figures, with the other four shooting 11 for 38.

"Definitely disappointing," Draymond Green said. "It's been a long time since we finished in May, just trying to process the feelings. In the end, they were the better team."

The Lakers took charge early, survived the Warriors' rallies and blew it open in the fourth quarter with a balanced effort led by the 38-year-old James, who produced his first 30-point playoff game since the 2020 NBA Finals.

The 20-year veteran can still assert his will as forcefully as almost any elite player, and he quarterbacked the Lakers' offensive effort while Davis — who left Game 5 early after taking a shot to the head — played another standout defensive game.

D'Angelo Russell scored 19 points as the Lakers capably survived the third-quarter ejection of Dennis Schröder, the sparkplug guard and primary defender on Curry. Schröder had five assists and defended doggedly in his first start of the postseason for the Lakers, but the German point guard was ejected with his second technical foul on a curious call after Green pushed the ball into Schröder's face.

His absence scarcely seemed to help the Warriors, who simply couldn't make their open shots.

TIP-INS

Warriors: Golden State went 13-35 on the road this year, including the postseason. ... Curry moved into 11th place on the NBA's career playoff scoring list, passing Dwyane Wade. ... Andrew Wiggins scored six points while playing with fractured rib cartilage, apparently resulting from a tussle with James in the fourth quarter of Game 5.

Lakers: Schröder took the starting spot of defensive specialist Jarred Vanderbilt. ... James passed Shaquille O'Neal for fourth place on the NBA's career playoff rebounds list. ... Jack Nicholson was courtside for the third time in the Lakers' last four playoff games. Others in attendance: Seven-time Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton, Bad Bunny, Elon Musk, Kim Kardashian, Michael B. Jordan, Los Angeles Kings captain Anze Kopitar, Jack Harlow, Dr. Dre, Woody Harrelson, Tyler the Creator and Trae Young.

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

Democrats in Minnesota Senate hold firm to pass contentious gun control measures

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Democratic Minnesota senators held firm despite only a one-vote majority Friday to pass gun control legislation strongly supported by the governor that would align the battleground state with others nationally that have taken steps to keep guns out of the hands of people in crisis and criminals.

The proposals include a "red flag law" that would allow authorities to ask courts for "extreme risk protection orders" to temporarily take guns away from people deemed to be an imminent threat to others or themselves. The provision is part of a broad public safety budget bill that also contains expanded background checks for gun transfers.

The bill passed 34-33 on a party-line vote late Friday after around nine hours of debate.

"What we are going to be providing — finally — is a path forward for families and law enforcement who know that someone's exhibiting signs of crisis and danger," said Democratic Sen. Rob Latz of St. Louis Park, chairman of the Senate public safety committee. "And it will give them lawful tools to separate people in

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crisis from the firearms that are around them.”

Nineteen other states have some kind of red flag laws, Latz noted at a news conference, including several red states.

Across the country, a few cracks have been opening up in the pattern of Republican-controlled states loosening gun laws while Democratic states like Minnesota tighten them. GOP Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee wants to call a special session to pass what he has avoided calling a red flag law, calling it a “toxic political label.” And two Republicans in a Texas legislative committee broke ranks to back raising the age for buying semi-automatic rifles from 18 to 21. But it’s far too soon to say the GOP is changing direction even amid a record-setting pace for mass killings in the U.S.

Some of Minnesota’s rural Democratic senators had long been on the fence. But a key moment came Wednesday when one of them, Sen. Grant Hauschild of Hermantown, announced that he would support the overall bill. The two gun measures were not part of the public safety budget bill that the Senate passed earlier. But they were added Wednesday in the House-Senate conference committee that negotiated the final version, providing some political cover to holdouts by wrapping them into a much bigger public safety package.

Senators from the Republican minority decried several non-firearms provisions that were added to the public safety bill in conference committee that weren’t in the original Senate-passed version of the bill.

Democrats who have a more comfortable majority in the Minnesota House scheduled the package for debate late Friday night on the presumption that the Senate would pass it first, but postponed the debate until Saturday. The House had already passed the gun measures as part of its original public safety bill. Democratic Gov. Tim Walz has repeatedly said he will sign the legislation.

The package also includes tougher restrictions on the use by police of no-knock warrants. While it stops short of a ban, it allows only very limited exceptions.

GOP leaders objected to how the final version of the 522-page bill wasn’t posted until around 2:30 a.m. Friday. Members can vote only up or down on a conference committee report. They can’t amend it. And Republicans were upset at their voices being shut out of shaping the final version, which they oppose on Second Amendment and other grounds.

“This bill is actually what bad legislating looks like,” Republican House Minority Leader Lisa Demuth of Cold Spring said at a separate news conference. “Democrats have full control, but a very small margin.”

The Minnesota Legislature is rushing to complete work on the major budget bills of the session before the May 22 adjournment deadline. Democratic House Speaker Melissa Hortman of Brooklyn Park told reporters Thursday that she wants to adjourn early — either next Thursday night or early next Friday morning. Senate Democratic leaders, however, have not agreed to that.

Unusually early heat wave in Pacific Northwest could break records

By CLAIRE RUSH Associated Press/Report for America

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Temperatures are expected to start climbing significantly Saturday in parts of the Pacific Northwest as an early heat wave takes hold, possibly breaking records and worsening wildfires already burning in western Canada.

The historically temperate region has grappled with scorching summer temperatures and unprecedented wildfires fueled by climate change in recent years.

The National Weather Service issued a heat advisory lasting from Saturday through Monday for much of the western parts of both Oregon and Washington state. It said the temperatures could raise the risk of heat-related illness, particularly for those who are dehydrated or don’t have effective cooling.

Temperatures in Portland, Oregon, are expected to hover around 94 F (34.4 C) throughout the weekend, according to the weather service. The current daily temperature records for May 13 and 14 stand at 92 F (33.3 C) and 91 F (32.8 C), dating from 1973 and 2014, respectively.

Temperatures in the Seattle area could also meet or surpass daily records, according to National Weather

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Service meteorologist Jacob DeFlicht. The mercury could near 85 F (29.4 C) on Saturday and reach into the low 90s (32.2 C) on Sunday, he said.

The unseasonal high temperatures could further flame the dozens of fires burning in Canada's western Alberta province, where officials have ordered evacuations and declared a state of emergency. Residents and officials in the Northwest have been trying to adjust to the likely reality of longer, hotter heat waves following the deadly "heat dome" weather phenomenon in 2021 that prompted record temperatures and deaths across the region.

Elizabeth Romero and her three children were among those cooling off at a fountain in downtown Portland on Friday afternoon.

"We decided to stop by ... until we all feel better," she said, adding that she plans to seek out shaded parks during the weekend.

King County, home to Seattle, directed transportation operators such as bus drivers to let people ride for free if they're seeking respite from the heat or heading to a cooling center. The county's regional homeless authority said several cooling and day centers will be open across the county.

Authorities also urged people to be wary of cold water temperatures, should they be tempted to take a river or lake swim to cool off. River temperatures are probably in the low- to mid-40s (4.4 to 7.2 C), National Weather Service meteorologist Higa said.

Residents and officials in the Pacific Northwest have become more vigilant about heat wave preparations after some 800 people died in Oregon, Washington and British Columbia during the heat dome weather event in late June and early July 2021. The temperature at the time soared to an all-time high of 116 F (46.7 C) in Portland and smashed heat records in cities and towns across the region. Many of those who died were older people who lived alone.

In response, Oregon passed a law requiring all new housing built after April 2024 to have air conditioning installed in at least one room. The law already prohibits landlords in most cases from restricting tenants from installing cooling devices in their rental units.

Last summer, Portland launched a heat response program with the goal of installing portable heat pump and cooling units in low-income households, prioritizing residents who are older and live alone, as well as those with underlying health conditions. Local nonprofits participating in the program installed more than 3,000 units last year, according to the city's Bureau of Planning and Sustainability.

Officials in Multnomah County, home to Portland, said they weren't planning on opening special cooling centers for now but are monitoring the forecast and can do so if needed.

"This is the first significant event ... and it is early for us," said Chris Voss, the county's director of emergency management. "We're not seeing a situation where we are hearing that this is extremely dangerous. That being said, we don't know if it's going to drift."

Associated Press writer Ed Komenda contributed from Seattle.

Claire Rush 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.

A year after Buffalo supermarket massacre, city's Black youth still shaken

By CAROLYN THOMPSON Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — It's hard for Jamari Shaw, 16, to have fun at the park with his younger brothers in their East Buffalo neighborhood. He's too busy scanning for danger, an aftereffect of a gunman's attack that killed 10 Black people at a local grocery store.

Sometimes, 17-year-old Alanna Littleton stays in the car when her family drives to that supermarket from their home just down the street.

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"It's such a level of tension," Alanna said.

As the city on Sunday marks one year since the racist massacre, many young Black people in Buffalo are grappling with a shaken sense of personal security and complicated feelings about how their community was targeted.

While the white supremacist got life in prison for the killings, others face a lifetime of healing.

"I'm definitely gonna carry this with me," Jamari said after school last week.

On May 14, 2022, an 18-year-old emerged from his car and began shooting people at the Tops Family Market, with the stated goal of killing as many Black people as possible. He wore body armor and livestreamed as he fired on shoppers and workers, killing 10 and wounding three more.

The killer from Conklin, New York, a small town about 200 miles from Buffalo, wrote online that his motivation was preserving white power in the U.S., and he chose to target Buffalo's East Side because it had a large percentage of Black residents.

Since the mass shooting, Jamari notices emptier basketball courts in his neighborhood. People seem to stay inside more. He feels a hesitancy to drop into Tops now to get water or Gatorade before sports practice like he used to — a gnawing feeling of danger anywhere, from anyone.

"The fact that he (the shooter) wasn't that much older, it's really taken a toll," said Jamari, who feels especially protective of his four siblings, the youngest of whom is 5. "You get to thinking, 'Who's going to do what?' It could be your best friend. You just never know."

It's on 17-year-old Abijah Johnson's mind when he walks near the store.

"I get the sense of like, 'What am I doing here? Didn't 10 people die over here with my skin color from a racist person?'" he said at a recent conference put together by the family of shooting victim Ruth Whitfield, who was 86.

The oldest of those killed, Whitfield died buying seeds for her garden after spending time with her husband at a nursing home. Among the other victims was a man getting a birthday cake for his 3-year-old son, a church deacon helping people get home with their groceries, a popular community activist, and a retired Buffalo police officer who was working as a security guard.

"It was really hard to watch my family grieve like this, also to understand Black people anywhere are just under constant threat. It's so sad," Whitfield's great-granddaughter, Nia Funderburg, 19, said at the conference. "I hate carrying this pain for us."

Wayne Jones' mother, Celestine Chaney, was among those killed. A youth football coach, he said the discussions Black families often have with their sons about how to interact with law enforcement have broadened.

"That conversation that you have with young Black males about police? Now, it's watch everybody," he said, describing how even grocery shopping, an activity he enjoyed with his mother, puts him on high alert.

Jamari holds out hope that the community's lingering pain will eventually lessen, but he can't fathom ever understanding what motivated the shooter.

"We come together, we rejoice, we feast together, all that," he said. "And then to have somebody — it doesn't matter that he's white — he just he did it out of spite."

"It's bigger than race," Jamari said, "it's more like a mentality."

As for the feelings of trauma experienced by people in the community over the attack, they could last for many years, ready to surface on anniversaries or when a similar mass shooting is in the news.

"A lot of times it diminishes over time, but these triggering things can last life-long," said Dr. Anita Everett, director of the Center for Mental Health Services at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The agency has provided the city with grant funding to address the trauma.

"In one way or another," she said, "it affects almost everyone that's in and around a community."

DeSantis, Trump look to sway Iowa GOP activists at dueling events

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and former President Donald Trump will share the spotlight in Iowa on Saturday, providing a chance to sway influential conservative activists and contrast their campaign styles in Republicans' leadoff voting state.

DeSantis, expected to announce his 2024 presidential campaign any day, is set to wade into Iowa's hand-to-hand politicking at a congressman's annual picnic and an Iowa Republican Party fundraiser, while Trump, a candidate since November, hopes to show strength with an outdoor rally with supporters.

Although the two men will be hours away from each other, the split-screen moment in Iowa is a first for the two national Republican powerhouses. It's an early preview of a match-up between the former president, well ahead of his party rivals in early national polls, and DeSantis, who is viewed widely as his strongest potential challenger.

It will be DeSantis' first trip to the early testing ground since the Florida legislature adjourned last week after spending months delivering the governor a conservative agenda that he's expected to tout once he announces his campaign.

Trump, meanwhile, will be returning to the comfort of the campaign stage after a tumultuous week. On Tuesday, a civil jury in New York found him liable for sexually abusing and defaming advice columnist E. Jean Carroll and awarded her \$5 million. A day later, during a contentious CNN town hall, he repeatedly insulted Carroll, reasserted lies about his 2020 election loss and minimized the violence at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

DeSantis has burnished his reputation as a conservative governor willing to push hard for conservative policies and even take on a political fight with Disney. But so far, he hasn't shown the same zest for taking on Trump, and even before he's entered the race, he's facing questions about his ability to court donors and woo voters.

His visit to Iowa will provide a test of his personal appeal as he mingles with local Iowa Republican officials, donors and volunteers, all under the glare of the national media.

DeSantis made his first visit to Iowa in March, promoting his memoir at events that drew more than 1,000 people in Davenport and Des Moines. Although DeSantis shook hands along the rope line near the stage after the events, he didn't have a lot of interaction with voters. This time, he can expect a crush of introductions to influential caucus activists in a more conversational setting who will be taking his measure for the first time.

More than 700 people are expected to attend the Sioux Center fundraising event for Rep. Randy Feenstra at Dean Classic Car Museum, as well as dozens of news reporters from around the country. Later, DeSantis plans to headline a state party fundraiser in Cedar Rapids that's expected to draw about 300 influential eastern Iowa Republicans.

Trump, by contrast, is headlining a rally expected to draw several thousand people to an outdoor amphitheater in Des Moines' Water Works Park on Saturday evening.

Although Trump aides said the Des Moines event was in the works before DeSantis' plans were made public, he and his team have long seen the governor as his only serious challenger. They hope a large rally of Trump supporters Saturday fuels comparisons to the scale of their respective events.

While Saturday is their first time in Iowa at the same time, Trump held a rally in Davenport three days after DeSantis did in March and took aim at him on renewable fuel and federal entitlements.

Saturday's dueling appearances come as the emerging rivalry has turned increasingly personal.

DeSantis has largely ignored Trump's jabs, which have included suggesting impropriety with young girls as a teacher decades ago, questioning his sexuality and dubbing him "Ron DeSanctimonious."

DeSantis' most pointed barb at Trump came in March, just before Trump was indicted on charges related to hush money paid to a porn actor. Asked by reporters about the prospect of an indictment, DeSantis said, "I don't know what goes into paying hush money to a porn star to secure silence over some type of

alleged affair. I just can't speak to that."

Trump's campaign began airing an ad mocking DeSantis for yoking himself to the former president in 2018 when he ran for governor, even using some Trump catchphrases as a nod to his supporters in Florida.

Trump's super PAC, MAGA Inc., also has been airing spots highlighting DeSantis' votes to cut Social Security and Medicare and raise the retirement age. The group even targeted DeSantis' snacking habits, running an ad that called for him to keep his "pudding fingers" off those benefits, a reference to a report in The Daily Beast that the governor ate chocolate pudding with his fingers instead of a spoon on a plane several years ago.

DeSantis has said he does not remember doing that.

A pro-DeSantis super PAC, Never Back Down, has hired Iowa staff and begun trying to organize support for the governor ahead of his announcement. The group has already begun knocking doors and announced Thursday that Iowa Senate President Amy Sinclair and Iowa House Majority Leader Matt Windschitl would endorse DeSantis' candidacy. The group Friday rolled out another roughly three dozen GOP state lawmakers who would endorse him.

The super PAC also has been providing a more forceful response to Trump, suggesting that he should leave Florida if he's unhappy with DeSantis' governance, accusing Trump of not sufficiently supporting gun rights and siding with liberal Democrats.

"Trump should fight Democrats, not lie about Gov. DeSantis," the narrator says in one ad. "What happened to Donald Trump?"

Chaos on Mexico border averted, for now, as US turns page in migration rules

By VALERIE GONZALEZ, ELLIOT SPAGAT and GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO Associated Press

EL PASO, Texas (AP) — The U.S. turned the page on pandemic-era immigration restrictions with relative calm at its border with Mexico as migrants adapted to strict new rules aimed at discouraging illegal crossings and awaited the promise of new legal pathways for entering the country.

A full day after the rules known as Title 42 were lifted, migrants and government officials on Friday were still assessing the effects of a switch to new regulations adopted by President Joe Biden's administration in hope of stabilizing the Southwest border region and undercutting smugglers who charge migrants to get there.

Migrants are now essentially barred from seeking asylum in the U.S. if they did not first apply online or seek protection in the countries they traveled through. Families allowed in as their immigration cases progress will face curfews and GPS monitoring. And for those expelled from the U.S., they can now be barred from entering the country for five years and face possible criminal prosecution.

Across the river from El Paso, Texas, in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, many migrants watched their cellphones in hopes of getting a coveted appointment to seek entry. The official app to register to enter the U.S. underwent changes this week, as it offers appointments for migrants to enter through land crossings.

Many migrants in northern Mexico resigned themselves to waiting for an appointment rather than approaching the border without authorization.

"I hope it's a little better and that the appointments are streamlined a little more," said Jeremy Depablos, 21, a Venezuelan traveling with seven cousins who has been waiting in Ciudad Juárez for a month. Fearing deportation, Depablos did not want to cross illegally. "We have to do it the legal way."

The U.S. Homeland Security Department said it has not witnessed any substantial increase in immigration.

But in southern Mexico, migrants including children still flocked to railways at Huehuetoca on Friday, desperate to clamor aboard freight trains heading north toward the U.S.

The legal pathways touted by the Biden administration consist of a program that permits up to 30,000 people a month from Haiti, Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela to enter if they apply online with a financial sponsor and enter through an airport.

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About 100 processing centers are opening in Guatemala, Colombia and elsewhere for migrants to apply to go to the U.S., Spain or Canada. Up to 1,000 can enter daily through land crossings with Mexico if they snag an appointment on the app.

If it works, the system could fundamentally alter how migrants come to the southern border. But Biden, who is running for reelection, faces withering criticism from migrant advocates, who say he's abandoning more humanitarian methods, and from Republicans, who claim he's soft on border security. Two legal challenges already loom over the new asylum restrictions.

Title 42 was initiated in March 2020 and allowed border officials to quickly return asylum seekers back over the border on grounds of preventing the spread of COVID-19. But with the national emergency officially over, the restrictions have ended.

While Title 42 prevented many from seeking asylum, it carried no legal consequences for expulsion like those under the new rules.

In El Paso on Friday, a few dozen migrants lingered outside Sacred Heart Catholic Church and shelter, on streets where nearly 2,000 migrants were camped as recently as Tuesday.

The Rev. Daniel Mora said most of the migrants took heed of flyers distributed by U.S. immigration authorities offering a "last chance" to submit to processing and left. El Paso Mayor Oscar Leeser said that 1,800 migrants turned themselves over to Customs and Border Protection on Thursday.

Melissa López, executive director for Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services at El Paso, said many migrants have been willing to follow the legal pathway created by the federal government, but there is also fear about deportation and possible criminal penalties for people who cross the border illegally.

Border holding facilities in the U.S. were already far beyond capacity in the run-up to Title 42's expiration.

In Florida, a federal judge appointed by former President Donald Trump has temporarily halted the administration's plans to release people into the U.S.

Customs and Border Protection said it would comply, but called it a "harmful ruling that will result in unsafe overcrowding" at migrant processing and detention facilities.

A court date has been scheduled on whether to extend the ruling.

Migrant-rights groups also sued the Biden administration on allegations that its new policy is no different than one adopted by Trump — and rejected by the same court.

The Biden administration says its policy is different, arguing that it's not an outright ban but imposes a higher burden of proof to get asylum and that it pairs restrictions with other newly opened legal pathways.

At the Chaparral port of entry in Tijuana on Friday, a few migrants approached U.S. authorities after not being able to access the appointment app. One of them, a Salvadoran man named Jairo, said he was fleeing death threats back home.

"We are truly afraid," said Jairo who was traveling with his partner and their 3-year-old son and declined to share his last name. "We can't remain any longer in Mexico and we can't go back to Guatemala or El Salvador. If the U.S. can't take us, we hope they can direct us to another country that can."

Gonzalez reported from Brownsville, Texas; Spagat reported from Tijuana, Mexico. Associated Press writers Colleen Long and Rebecca Santana in Washington; Gisela Salomon in Miami; Christopher Sherman in Mexico City; Gerardo Carrillo in Matamoros, Mexico; Maria Verza in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico; Julie Watson in Tijuana; Morgan Lee in Santa Fe, New Mexico; and Suman Naishadham in Tijuana, Mexico contributed to this report.

Heat back to the NBA's final four, top Knicks 96-92 for 4-2 series win

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

MIAMI (AP) — Heat coach Erik Spoelstra walked into the postgame interview room, a cup of a celebratory beverage in his hand, took a seat and began explaining how difficult the journey has been for Heat.

The regular season was a struggle. They needed to survive the play-in. They were three minutes away from going home before the playoffs even started, needing a rally just to earn the right to play top-seeded Milwaukee.

All forgotten. They're in the NBA's final four — getting there as a No. 8 seed.

Jimmy Butler scored 24 points, Bam Adebayo added 23 and the Heat are headed back to the Eastern Conference finals after topping the New York Knicks 96-92 in Game 6 on Friday night.

"It is really frickin' hard to get to the Eastern Conference finals," Spoelstra said.

Maybe for some franchises. Not for Miami. The Heat are headed there for the 10th time overall, the seventh time in the last 13 years and the third time in the past four seasons. They'll play Game 1 at either Boston or Philadelphia on Wednesday; those teams will decide their East semifinal series Sunday.

"It means we're one step closer to our goal," Butler said.

Max Strus scored 14 points and Kyle Lowry had 11 points and nine assists for the Heat. They're the second No. 8 seed in NBA history to make the conference finals — joining the Knicks, who pulled it off in 1999.

Jalen Brunson was spectacular for New York, scoring 41 points on 14-for-22 shooting. But his teammates combined for only 51 points — Julius Randle had 15 and RJ Barrett 11 on 1-for-10 shooting. Josh Hart also had 11 points for the Knicks.

"Congratulations to the Heat, to the organization, to the coaching staff, Spo and Pat Riley and all their players," Knicks coach Tom Thibodeau said. "They played tough in this series and hats off to them. But I'm proud of our guys. There's always disappointment in the end of the season and in the end, there'll be one team standing. ... Proud of the way this team worked all year."

It was dicey at the end, but Miami survived. Gabe Vincent was called for a flagrant-1 against Brunson with just under a minute left, starting a run where the Knicks scored four points in 4.6 seconds.

Brunson made the free throws, Hart added a layup and a 92-86 lead was down to 92-90.

The Knicks got a stop at the other end, but never got a shot off on the next possession. Lowry knocked the ball away for a steal, Butler made two free throws with 14.4 seconds left and the countdown back to the conference finals was on.

"It was a battle," Lowry said. "A Tom Thibodeau-coached team, they're always going to play hard. ... This was a grind and we found a way."

The Heat had to dodge one dicey situation after another. The Knicks tied it once after halftime, about four minutes in, but missed 10 other field-goal attempts in the second half — along with two free throws — that would have pulled them into a tie or given them the lead.

"Just got to give them a lot of credit. They didn't play like an 8 seed — at all," Brunson said. "They were unbelievable. The utmost respect for them and that organization. I liked the way we fought."

Brunson had 22 points in the first half, tying his third-most before intermission in any game this season — and his most ever by halftime of a playoff game. He had 15 in the first quarter when the Knicks came out flying to grab early control.

New York led 14 in the opening quarter, and Miami never led by more than two in the first 24 minutes. But it was Miami with the lead at the half, going up 51-50 by the break in large part because it finally kept New York off the line.

The Knicks made 11 free throws in the first quarter — the most by any Heat opponent this season and tying the fourth-most against Miami in an opening period over the last decade. But they didn't even get to the line in the final 15:16 of the half.

The score to that point: Knicks 29, Heat 17. The score over the rest of the half: Heat 34, Knicks 21. And the Knicks never had the lead again.

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"We've got guys that just want it," Lowry said.

TIP-INS

Knicks: Brunson and Quentin Grimes played all 48 minutes of Game 5, but that was quickly off the table in Game 6. Grimes sat for 6:41 of the opening half, Brunson for 2:44, though some of that was because he got his third foul with 37.6 seconds left. ... Immanuel Quickley (sprained left ankle) missed his third consecutive game. ... New York finished 53-40, its best record in a season since going 60-34 in 2012-13.

Heat: Victor Oladipo was at the game, on crutches and braced after surgery to repair his torn patellar tendon. ... The Heat had three starters (Vincent, Strus and Butler) all shorter than the Miami Marlins' starting pitcher a couple miles away — rookie Eury Perez, who made his big-league debut, is 6-foot-8. ... Miami had 3-point tries as time expired in each of the first three quarters. They all missed.

CELEB WATCH

Among those at the game: Miami Dolphins coach Mike McDaniel — even on a rookie minicamp weekend for his team — and Dallas (and former Knicks) guard Tim Hardaway Jr., whose father's jersey is among those retired by the Heat.

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

New menopause drug for hot flashes gets FDA approval

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. health regulators on Friday approved a new type of drug for women dealing with uncomfortable hot flashes caused by menopause.

The Food and Drug Administration approved the once-a-day pill from Astellas Pharma to treat moderate-to-severe symptoms, which can include sweating, flushing and chills.

Astellas' drug, Veozah, uses a new approach, targeting brain connections that help control body temperature. The FDA said the medication will provide "an additional safe and effective treatment option for women," in a statement.

More than 80% of women experience hot flashes during menopause, the FDA noted, as the body gradually produces lower levels of reproductive hormones between the ages of 45 and 55.

The most common treatment consists of hormonal pills aimed at boosting levels of estrogen and progestin. But the treatment isn't appropriate for some women, including those with a history of stroke, blood clots, heart attack and other health conditions. Large studies have found that the hormones can increase the chances of those problems reoccurring, although the risks vary based on a number of individual factors.

The new pill is not a hormone. It carries an FDA warning about potential liver damage. Women will need to be screened for liver damage or infection before getting a prescription, then get a blood test every three months for nine months to monitor for safety problems, according to the FDA label.

Astellas said the drug will cost \$550 for a one-month supply. That's the price before insurance coverage and other discounts typically negotiated by insurers and pharmacy benefit managers.

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A Texas woman was fatally shot by her boyfriend after she got an abortion, police say

DALLAS (AP) — A man who didn't want his girlfriend to get an abortion fatally shot her during a confrontation in a Dallas parking lot, police said.

He was jailed on a murder charge as of Friday.

Texas banned abortions after roughly six weeks of pregnancy in September 2021. But nearly all abortions have been halted in Texas since Roe v. Wade was overturned last summer, except in cases of medical

emergency.

Gabriella Gonzalez, 26, was with her boyfriend, 22-year-old Harold Thompson, on Wednesday when he tried to put her in a chokehold, according to an arrest warrant affidavit. She had returned the night before from Colorado, where she had gone to get an abortion.

"It is believed that the suspect was the father of the child," the affidavit said. "The suspect did not want (Gonzalez) to get an abortion."

Surveillance video from the parking lot shows Gonzalez "shrugs him off," police said, and the two continue walking. Thompson then pulls out a gun and shoots Gonzalez in the head. She falls to the ground and Thompson shoots her multiple times before running away, the affidavit said.

Thompson was arrested later Wednesday and is being held in the Dallas County Jail without bond. Court records did not list an attorney who could speak on his behalf.

Gonzalez's sister was at the scene and heard the shooting, police said. Another witness saw Thompson try to choke Gonzalez but couldn't call police because she did not have her cell phone.

At the time of the shooting, Thompson had been charged with assault of a family member, who accused him of choking her in March.

The affidavit from March does not specifically name Gonzalez as the person who was assaulted. But it does say the woman told police that Thompson "beat her up multiple times throughout the entirety of their relationship" and that Thompson told police the woman was pregnant with his child at that time.

The woman "reiterated that she is scared of the suspect because he had made threats to harm her family and her children," according to the affidavit.

Tennessee company refuses US request to recall 67 million potentially dangerous air bag inflators

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — A Tennessee company could be heading for a legal battle with U.S. auto safety regulators after refusing a request that millions of potentially dangerous air bag inflators be recalled.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is demanding that ARC Automotive Inc. of Knoxville recall 67 million inflators in the U.S. because they could explode and hurl shrapnel. At least two people have been killed in the U.S. and Canada, and seven others have been hurt as a result of defective ARC inflators, the agency said.

The recall would cover a large portion of the 284 million vehicles now on U.S. roads, but the percentage is difficult to determine. Some have ARC inflators for both the driver and front passenger.

In a letter posted Friday, the agency told ARC that it has tentatively concluded after an eight-year investigation that ARC front driver and passenger inflators have a safety defect.

"Air bag inflators that project metal fragments into vehicle occupants, rather than properly inflating the attached air bag, create an unreasonable risk of death and injury," Stephen Ridella, director of NHTSA's Office of Defects Investigation, wrote in a letter to ARC.

But ARC responded that it no defect exists in the inflators, and that any problems are related to isolated manufacturing issues.

The next step in the process is for NHTSA to schedule a public hearing. It could then take the company to court to force a recall.

"We disagree with NHTSA's new sweeping request when extensive field testing has found no inherent defect," ARC said in a statement Friday night.

Also Friday, NHTSA posted documents showing that General Motors is recalling nearly 1 million vehicles equipped with ARC inflators. The recall covers certain 2014-2017 Buick Enclave, Chevrolet Traverse, and GMC Acadia SUVs.

The automaker says an inflator explosion "may result in sharp metal fragments striking the driver or other occupants, resulting in serious injury or death."

Owners will be notified by letter starting June 25, but no fix is available yet. They'll get another letter

when one is ready.

GM says it will offer "courtesy transportation" on a case-by-case basis to owners who fear driving vehicles that are part of the recall.

The company said that it's doing the recall, which expands previous actions, "out of an abundance of caution and with the safety of our customers as our highest priority."

One of the two deaths was a mother of 10 who was killed in what appeared to be an otherwise minor crash in Michigan's Upper Peninsula in the summer of 2021. Police reports show that a metal inflator fragment hit her neck in a crash involving a 2015 Chevrolet Traverse SUV.

At least a dozen automakers have the allegedly faulty inflators in use, including Volkswagen, Ford, BMW and GM, NHTSA said.

The agency contends that welding debris from the manufacturing process can block an "exit orifice" for gas that is released to fill the air bag in a crash. Any blockage can cause pressure to build in the inflator, blowing it apart and hurling metal fragments, Ridella's letter says.

But in a response to Ridella dated May 11, ARC Vice President of Product Integrity Steve Gold wrote that NHTSA's position is not based on any objective technical or engineering conclusion about a defect, "but rather conclusory statements regarding hypothesized blockage of the inflator orifice from 'weld slag.'"

He wrote that welding debris has not been confirmed as the cause in any of the seven inflator ruptures in the U.S. ARC contends that only five have ruptured while in use, and that "does not support a finding that a systemic and prevalent defect exists in this population."

Gold also writes that manufacturers must do recalls, not equipment manufacturers like ARC. NHTSA's recall demand, he wrote, exceeds the agency's legal authority.

In a federal lawsuit filed last year, plaintiffs alleged that ARC's inflators use ammonium nitrate as a secondary propellant to inflate the air bags. The propellant is pressed into tablets that can expand and develop microscopic holes if exposed to moisture. Degraded tablets have a larger surface area, causing them to burn too fast and ignite too big of an explosion, according to the lawsuit.

The explosion can blow apart a metal canister housing the chemical, sending metal shards into the cabin. Ammonium nitrate, used in fertilizer and as a cheap explosive, is so dangerous that it can burn too fast even without moisture present, the lawsuit says.

The plaintiffs allege that ARC inflators have blown apart seven times on U.S. roads and two other times in testing by ARC. There have so far been five limited recalls of the inflators that totaled about 5,000 vehicles, including three recalls by GM.

This story has updated to clarify that the portion of U.S. vehicles on the road would be less than the one quarter because some vehicles have ARC driver and passenger inflators.

Little progress has been made in curbing too high inflation, Fed's Jefferson says

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal Reserve governor Philip Jefferson said Friday that inflation remains too high and there has been "little progress" made toward bringing it down to the central bank's 2% target, a pessimistic assessment given signs in a report earlier this week that price increases might be slowing.

Jefferson, who was nominated by President Joe Biden earlier Friday to the position of Fed vice chair, also said in a speech at the Hoover Institution in California that the turmoil in the U.S. financial system following the failure of three large banks will likely have only a limited impact on the economy.

Jefferson's potential elevation to the No. 2 spot on the Fed's seven-member board would give him greater influence over interest rate policy and make him a close colleague of Chair Jerome Powell.

While inflation has declined from its June peak by about 2.75 percentage points to 4.2% in March, compared with a year ago, Jefferson said that "nearly all" of the decline stemmed from falling energy and food prices.

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"The bad news is that there has been little progress on core inflation," he said. Core prices exclude the volatile food and energy categories and are considered to be a better measure of underlying inflation.

Jefferson also cited a closely watched metric often cited by Powell, which tracks the prices of services, from medical care to dining out, while excluding energy and housing costs. That measure "has not shown much sign of slowing," Jefferson said.

After the Fed's most recent policy meeting last week, the central bank suggested in a statement that it could pause its interest rate increases at its next meeting in June, after lifting its key rate 10 times in a row. The hikes are intended to slow spending, growth, and inflation.

Jefferson did not hint in his remarks whether he would support such a pause.

Many Fed officials are closely monitoring the impact of the failure of three large banks in the past two months. A recent Fed report showed that banks have been pulling back on lending for months and slightly accelerated that tightening in the wake of the bank failures.

If banks become more reluctant to lend, that could slow the economy and reduce the need for the Fed to lift its key rate.

Jefferson said he expected little impact from the bank failures, saying they will likely have "a mild retarding effect" on the economy, though he added that it is "too early to tell."

His comments followed a report Wednesday that showed inflation ticked down slightly in April, though remained high. Compared with a year ago, consumer prices rose 4.9%, down from a 5% yearly increase the previous month — lowest year-over-year increase in two years. But that index — the consumer price index — has fallen further than the Fed's preferred measure, which will be updated May 26.

One of Jefferson's fellow Fed governors, Michelle Bowman, spoke earlier Friday in Europe and also expressed disappointment with the progress made toward taming inflation so far. She hinted that she might support another rate hike at the June meeting.

"Should inflation remain high and the labor market remain tight," further rate increases "will likely be appropriate" to lower inflation, Bowman said.

So far, recent inflation and jobs reports "have not provided consistent evidence that inflation is on a downward path."

Tom Barkin, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, on Wednesday also expressed disappointment with stubbornly high levels of inflation in an interview with The Associated Press.

Core inflation has been stuck in a range of 0.3%-0.5% for months, Barkin said, "where you'd really like it to be moving down and in concert with our target."

Early heat wave in Pacific Northwest could break records

By CLAIRE RUSH Associated Press/Report for America

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — An early May heat wave this weekend could surpass daily records in parts of the Pacific Northwest and worsen wildfires already burning in western Canada, a historically temperate region that has grappled with scorching summer temperatures and unprecedented wildfires fueled by climate change in recent years.

"We're looking at record-breaking temperatures," said Miles Higa, meteorologist at the National Weather Service's Portland office, describing the warmth as "unusual for this time of year."

The unseasonal high temperatures could further flame the dozens of fires burning in Canada's western Alberta province, where officials have ordered evacuations and declared a state of emergency. Residents and officials in the Northwest have been trying to adjust to the likely reality of longer, hotter heat waves following the deadly "heat dome" weather phenomenon in 2021 that prompted record temperatures and deaths across the region.

The National Weather Service issued a heat advisory Friday lasting from Saturday through Monday for much of the western parts of both Oregon and Washington state. It said the temperatures could raise the risk of heat-related illness, particularly for those who are dehydrated or don't have effective cooling.

Temperatures in Portland, Oregon, are expected to hover around 94 F (34.4 C) throughout the weekend,

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according to the website of the National Weather Service office there. The current daily temperature records for May 13 and 14 stand at 92 F (33.3 C) and 91 F (32.8 C), dating from 1973 and 2014, respectively.

Elizabeth Romero and her three children were among those cooling off at a fountain in downtown Portland on Friday afternoon.

"We decided to stop by ... until we all feel better," she said, adding that she plans to seek out shaded parks during the weekend.

Temperatures in the Seattle area could also meet or surpass daily records, according to National Weather Service meteorologist Jacob DeFlicht. The mercury could near 85 F (29.4 C) on Saturday and reach into the low 90s (32.2 C) on Sunday, he said.

King County, home to Seattle, directed transportation operators such as bus drivers to let people ride for free if they're seeking respite from the heat or heading to a cooling center. The county's regional homeless authority said several cooling and day centers will be open across the county.

Authorities also urged people to be wary of cold water temperatures, should they be tempted to take a river or lake swim to cool off.

"Rivers are still running cold. We have snow melting and temperatures ... probably in the low- to mid-40s (4.4 to 7.2 C) right now," National Weather Service meteorologist Higa said. "You're nice and warm and jump into the cold water — that could pose a risk to getting cold water shock."

Residents and officials in the Pacific Northwest have become more vigilant about heat wave preparations after some 800 people died in Oregon, Washington and British Columbia during the heat dome weather event in late June and early July 2021. The temperature at the time soared to an all-time high of 116 F (46.7 C) in Portland and smashed heat records in cities and towns across the region. Many of those who died were older people who lived alone.

In response, Oregon passed a law requiring all new housing built after April 2024 to have air conditioning installed in at least one room. The law already prohibits landlords in most cases from restricting tenants from installing cooling devices in their rental units.

Last summer, Portland launched a heat response program with the goal of installing portable heat pump and cooling units in low-income households, prioritizing residents who are older and live alone, as well as those with underlying health conditions. Local nonprofits participating in the program installed more than 3,000 units last year, according to the city's Bureau of Planning and Sustainability.

One of those nonprofits, Verde, said interest in the units has been high. Verde has installed roughly 180 units so far this year, and their waitlist last year was nearly 500 people long, said Ricardo Moreno, a project manager for the group who oversees its heat response program.

"People we've talked to, mostly elderly people with some health conditions, they all shared that having these units have made a world of difference and definitely improved the quality of their lives through the summer," Moreno said.

Another local nonprofit, the African American Alliance for Homeownership, installed 1,200 units last year and 75 units so far this year, program manager Richard Hines-Norwood said.

Officials in Multnomah County, home to Portland, said they weren't planning on opening special cooling centers for now but are monitoring the forecast and can do so if needed.

"This is the first significant event ... and it is early for us," said Chris Voss, the county's director of emergency management. "We're not seeing a situation where we are hearing that this is extremely dangerous. That being said, we don't know if it's going to drift."

Outreach teams have started visiting homeless encampments to let them know about the resources available to them, Voss said. Air-conditioned libraries are an example of a public place where people can cool off, he added.

Associated Press writer Ed Komenda contributed from Seattle.

Claire Rush 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.

'He wanted to live the American Dream': Honduran teen dies in US immigration custody

By MARLÓN GONZALEZ and NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (AP) — The mother of a 17-year-old boy who died this week in U.S. immigration custody demanded answers from American officials Friday, saying her son had no known illnesses and had not shown any signs of being sick before his death.

The teenager was identified as Ángel Eduardo Maradiaga Espinoza, according to a tweet from Honduran foreign relations minister Enrique Reina. Maradiaga was detained at a facility in Safety Harbor, Florida, Reina said, and died Wednesday. His death underscored concerns about a strained immigration system as the Biden administration manages the end of asylum restrictions known as Title 42.

His mother, Norma Saraí Espinoza Maradiaga, told The Associated Press in a phone interview that her son "wanted to live the American Dream."

Ángel Eduardo left his hometown of Olanchito, Honduras, on April 25, his mother said. He crossed the U.S.-Mexico border some days later and on May 5 was referred to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which operates longer-term facilities for children who cross the border without a parent.

That same day, he spoke to his mother for the last time, she said Friday.

"He told me he was in a shelter and not to worry because he was in the best hands," she said. "We only spoke two minutes, I told him goodbye and wished him the best."

This week, someone who identified himself only as one of her son's friends at the shelter called her to say that when he had awakened for breakfast, Ángel Eduardo didn't respond and was dead.

His mother then called a person in the U.S. who was supposed to have received Ángel Eduardo, asking for help verifying the information. Hours later, that person called her back saying it was true that her son was dead.

"I want to clear up my son's real cause of death," she said. He didn't suffer from any illnesses and hadn't been sick as far as she knew.

"No one tells me anything. The anguish is killing me," she said. "They say they are awaiting the autopsy results and don't give me any other answer."

No cause of death was immediately available nor were circumstances of any illness or medical treatment.

HHS said in a statement Friday that it "is deeply saddened by this tragic loss and our heart goes out to the family, with whom we are in touch." A review of health care records was underway, as was an investigation by a medical examiner, the department said.

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre called the news "devastating" and referred questions about the investigation to HHS.

The asylum restrictions under Title 42 expired Thursday, with President Joe Biden's administration announcing new curbs on border crossers that went into effect Friday. Tens of thousands of people tried to cross the U.S.-Mexico border in the weeks before the expiration of Title 42, under which U.S. officials expelled many people but allowed exemptions for others, including minors crossing the border unaccompanied by a parent.

This was the first known death of an immigrant child in custody during the Biden administration. At least six immigrant children died in U.S. custody during the administration of former President Donald Trump, during which the U.S. at times detained thousands of children above the system's capacity.

HHS operates long-term facilities to hold children who cross the border without a parent until they can be placed with a sponsor. HHS facilities generally have beds and facilities as well as schooling and other activities for minors, unlike Border Patrol stations and detention sites in which detainees sometimes sleep on the floor in cells.

Advocates who oppose the detention of immigrant children say HHS facilities are not suited to hold

minors for weeks or months, as sometimes happens.

More than 8,600 children are currently in HHS custody. That number may rise sharply in the coming weeks amid the shift in border policies as well as sharply rising trends of migration across the Western Hemisphere and the traditional spike in crossings during spring and summer.

Angel Eduardo had studied until eighth grade before leaving school to work. Most recently he had been working as a mechanic's assistant. He had been a standout soccer player in Olanchito in northern Honduras since he was 7 years old, his mother said.

The teenager had hopes of reuniting with his father, who left Honduras for the U.S. years ago, and earning money to support her and two younger siblings still in Honduras, his mother said.

He had migrated with his mother's approval and financial support from his father in the United States, she said.

"Since he was 10 years old he wanted to live the American Dream to see his father and have a better life," she said. "His idea was to help me. He told me that when he was in the United States he was going to change my life."

Merchant reported from Washington. AP White House Correspondent Zeke Miller and AP writers Colleen Long in Washington and Christopher Sherman in Mexico City contributed to this report.

Atlantic City casino can't live without a beach, so it's rebuilding one

By WAYNE PARRY Associated Press

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. (AP) — What's an ocean without a beach?

One Atlantic City casino that takes its name from the sea doesn't want to find out, and so it's spending up to \$700,000 of its own money to rebuild a badly eroded beach in front of it.

The Ocean Casino Resort began the work Wednesday, and plans to have a new 110-foot-wide beach open for Memorial Day weekend. Chronic erosion near the casino has reduced the beach to just 5 to 8 feet (1.5 to 2.4 meters) wide in places.

Bill Callahan, the casino's general manager, said Ocean can't wait for the next government-funded beach replenishment project, which could take another year or two.

Callahan and several casino officials were on their daily coffee walk one day last fall when they looked out the window — and saw very little sand between the Boardwalk and the ocean.

Callahan feared there soon would be no beach.

"That would be a horrible guest experience. It's like, 'Come to an unbelievable \$2.5 billion resort and not have a beach.' We just couldn't have that," he said.

So the casino set about securing the many state and federal permits necessary to do the work on its own.

Stephen Rochette, a spokesman for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, said it is unusual but not unheard-of for private parties to carry out their own beach replenishment projects. But most are content to wait for the next round of government-paid projects, in which the cost is shared by the federal, state and local governments.

Veteran Atlantic City casino executives said they can not recall a casino paying to widen its own beach using its own money.

Ryan Burch, the casino's vice president of hotel operations, said the project will dump 12,810 tons of sand on the beach. About half of that had been placed as of Friday.

The work should be completed by next May 19. Crews will then smooth the sand, which was matched for color and grain size to the existing beach sand.

The sand is trucked in from a private company in Eagleswood Township, about a half-hour north of Atlantic City, said project manager Ian Jerome.

He said the particular spot in front of the Ocean casino has historically been the most eroded spot on all of Absecon Island, on which Atlantic City sits. Past beach widening projects have often not lasted for

the full three-year period before they qualify for renourishment by the government, and some wash away in as little as a year.

Callahan said if the beach needs to be rebuilt again with private money, it will be.

"This is part of the experience," he said. "You can't have a resort without a beach."

Follow Wayne Parry on Twitter at www.twitter.com/WayneParryAC

Oregon GOP walkout threatens bills on abortion, trans care — and senators' careers

By ANDREW SELSKY Associated Press

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — A boycott by Republican state senators in Oregon threatens to derail hundreds of bills, including on gun control, gender-affirming care and abortion rights, as a deadline looms that could also upend the protesters' political futures.

Democrats control the Statehouse in Oregon. But the GOP is leveraging rules that require two-thirds of lawmakers be present to pass legislation, which means Democrats need a certain number of Republicans to be there too.

Republican and Democratic legislative leaders met behind closed doors for a third day Friday to try to bridge the divide, as the boycott entered its ninth straight day. Lawmakers with 10 unexcused absences are barred from reelection under a constitutional amendment passed overwhelmingly last November by voters weary of repeated walkouts.

To give time for negotiations — and keep boycotters with nine unexcused absences from hitting that 10-day tripwire — Senate President Rob Wagner agreed to cancel Senate sessions on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. It would instead reconvene Monday.

"I think people, at least people who observe politics, are going to have a pretty anxious weekend," Priscilla Southwell, professor emerita of political science at the University of Oregon, said Friday.

Connor Radnovich, Wagner's spokesman, said: "Conversations are ongoing and will continue into the weekend."

Several statehouses around the nation, including Montana and Tennessee, have been ideological battlegrounds this year. Oregon — which pioneered marijuana decriminalization, recycling, and protecting immigrants — is often viewed as one of America's most liberal states. But it also has deeply conservative rural areas.

That clash of ideologies has put the Senate out of action since May 2. Pending bills are stacked up and the biennial state budget, which needs House and Senate approval before the end of June, is still unfinished.

Democratic Gov. Tina Kotek's office said many important bills are at stake.

"Oregonians are demanding that elected leaders deliver results on homelessness, behavioral health, education, and other major issues right now," Kotek spokesperson Elisabeth Shepard said Thursday.

About 100 people, including members of Moms Demand Action, a gun-safety group, protested the walkout late Thursday on the steps of the Oregon State Capitol in Salem.

"Get back to work," they chanted.

"We demand you show up!" Liz Marquez, a political organizer with PCUN, a farmworkers union, said over a loudspeaker. "Every day, Oregon workers show up for difficult and sometimes dangerous jobs."

Republican lawmakers have stymied several Oregon legislative sessions. In one boycott, dozens of truckers surrounded the Capitol while blasting their horns, fearing that a climate change bill would adversely impact them.

This time, Republican senators insist their stayaway is mostly due to a 1979 law — rediscovered last month by a GOP Senate staffer — that requires bill summaries to be written at an eighth grade level. Senate Minority Leader Tim Knopp said Republicans also want Democrats to set aside "their most extreme bills."

But to Democrats, it's obvious the readability issue is just an excuse to prevent progress on legislation like House Bill 2002, intended to protect abortion and gender-affirming health care for transgender people

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by boosting legal safeguards and expanding access and insurance coverage.

"It is abundantly clear that there is a concerted effort to undermine the will of people and bring the Legislature to a halt in violation of the Constitution of the state of Oregon," Wagner, the senate president, said as he gaveled closed the May 5 floor session because of the lack of quorum.

Knopp, the GOP Senate leader, said Thursday he hopes cancelling this weekend's Senate sessions "will give us time to work out a legitimate agreement that will benefit all Oregonians."

Wagner says the bill on abortion rights and gender-affirming care is not negotiable.

A prolonged boycott could also sow complications for next year's primaries and general election.

That's because it's unclear how the boycotters would be disqualified from running again. The 2022 ballot measure is now part of the Oregon Constitution, which disqualifies a lawmaker with 10 or more unexcused absences "from holding office" in the next term.

An explanatory statement for Ballot Measure 113, signed by a former state supreme court justice and others, says a disqualified candidate "may run for office ... and win, but cannot hold office."

However, the secretary of state's elections division wouldn't put a disqualified lawmaker on the ballot, according to Ben Morris, spokesperson for the secretary of state's office.

"While this may differ from the explanatory statement, the courts have interpreted the elections statutes to state that a filing officer can't allow a candidate on the ballot if it knows the candidate won't qualify for office," Morris said.

Disqualified Republicans are expected to file legal challenges.

The SEIU503 union, which represents care workers, nonprofit employees and public workers throughout Oregon, strongly backed the unexcused absence rule. Although Republicans boycotted anyway, Union Executive Director Melissa Unger said this doesn't mean Measure 113 was a failure.

"The reality is, all things take time to change," Unger said Thursday. "So I guess we'll have new senators in two years, and maybe they'll learn a lesson."

In El Paso, pastors offer waiting migrants shelter and counsel

By GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO Associated Press

EL PASO, Texas (AP) — As changing policies, rampant misinformation and exasperated, fearful crowds converge in this desert city, faith leaders are striving to provide shelter and uplift.

Along with prayers, they are counseling migrants about the daunting challenges that await them on U.S. soil, with enormous backlogs in asylum hearings and the Biden administration's newly announced measures that many consider stricter than the existing ones known as Title 42.

During Thursday morning Mass at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, a few blocks from the border with Mexico, the Rev. Daniel Mora prayed for goodwill in welcoming the crowds of migrants expected to arrive in the city and at the church's gym-turned-shelter when pandemic-era restrictions on asylum-seeking lifted overnight.

"May the asylum promises of this country be renewed," Mora noted in the Mass intentions. In an office next to the historic sanctuary, one of his fellow Jesuits prepared to visit a shelter at a different El Paso parish to counsel migrants who already had crossed illegally and were detained.

"One knows that that this is but one part, that we're halfway on our way," said Tatiana Gamez, a Colombian mother who was released by immigration authorities to a small shelter run by the Catholic parish of St. Francis Xavier, just across from one of El Paso's three international bridges.

"We don't know what's going to happen with asylum. But already to be here safe, it's a relief," she added. She had been listening intently to one of the several daily legal talks that the Rev. Mike Gallagher, who's also an attorney with Jesuit Refugee Service/USA, gives newly released migrants.

Gallagher visits multiple shelters to explain to migrants who have been apprehended for crossing illegally the conditions of their release — including the "notice to appear" in front of migration authorities and later before a judge to make their asylum case

Gamez and more than half a dozen family members, including a pregnant niece and the niece's 2-year-old daughter, decided to flee Colombia after being threatened over a piece of land they owned there.

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They crossed illegally through a hole in the concertina wire that Texas National Guard soldiers laid out for 17 miles along the dusty Rio Grande riverbanks to prevent mass crossings when Title 42 was originally expected to be lifted in December.

"We wanted to do things well," Gamez added in tears. But they saw more than 1,000 migrants lined up under the merciless sun and strong winds for a chance to be let in by U.S. officials, as has been happening for months.

Hearing that some migrants had slept out there for days under the constant threat of being kidnapped for ransom by Mexican cartels, and fearing a wave of rapid deportations starting Friday, they decided to slip through the hole and spent six days in detention before being released to the shelter.

Faith leaders said one reason for the big surge of migrants earlier this week was the widespread belief that the end of Title 42 restrictions would usher in more deportations of illegal migrants, who will now face a potential five-year ban from coming back to the U.S.

"Trying to get in is their main priority," said Maria Sajquim de Torres, the domestic program director for Jesuit Refugee Service/USA, which also provides counselors in shelters so that migrants can begin to process the traumas – from rape to extortion – most faced en route.

On Friday, after the expiration of Title 42 and the implementation of more asylum restrictions, several faith leaders said they feared migrants who have no option to return to their countries would still seek to enter the United States on more dangerous paths.

"I believe people will sit back and watch for a while. Once they realize only a small percentage will be able to enter legally, they'll search out more desperate, difficult, dangerous ways to cross," said Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso.

"Once again, we're playing into the hands of organized crime," added Seitz, who has a shelter in his backyard at the diocesan office near the border wall section where migrants congregated in recent days, hoping to surrender to U.S. authorities after crossing the Rio Grande.

Seitz, who is chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' migration committee, said he's concerned about growing numbers of injuries and deaths if migrants try to cross away from where the border is heavily guarded -- both for migrants and the agents and volunteers who conduct search and rescue operations, especially as summer looms with deadly heat.

Seitz said he also worries that images of chaos at the border might scare Americans away from helping the newcomers. He ran a public service announcement earlier this week, "trying to reassure people that we're on this and we're capable of dealing with these situations."

"The church doesn't want chaos," he added. "We've been calling for an orderly process by which those with great needs may have passage to our country."

More than 1,000 migrants gathered outside the Sacred Heart shelter alone earlier this week. Authorities closed off the street in front of it last Sunday, fearing another deadly incident like the one where migrants were run over in Brownsville, Texas, Mora said.

Some migrants have dates scheduled within a month of arrival in the cities where they're hoping to go. Others have court appearances not scheduled until 2026 or beyond, since the asylum system is straining under historic backlogs.

Wearing a rosary like a necklace, Juanuela Castillo, a Venezuelan, listened intently as Gallagher deciphered her court date – in June 2025 in Orlando, Florida, where she hopes to reach a family member.

She will need to find legal help to file an asylum application well before then – within a year – or she'll lose this temporary relief she's been granted from deportation, Gallagher told her.

With her three children, ages 8, 7 and 3, she traveled through the notoriously dangerous Darien jungle in Panama. After two months on the road, she also passed through a gap in the wall near El Paso and was detained for six days before being released to the St. Francis Xavier shelter.

"I still don't believe it," she said as her children smiled at the pigeons cooing in the shelter's small, shaded patio. "I never lost the faith, never, but one is like adrift, dependent on God."

In a hall set up with cots and tables, Susie Roman, a volunteer at shelter, said she noticed how confused

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migrants have been by changing policies, and feared the consequences of the latest switch.

"I'm scared they're all going to be out there, and we can't help them," she said.

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Review: In 'Still,' Michael J. Fox movingly tells his story

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

I've always liked Michael J. Fox and always will. I suspect most people feel the same way.

That's surely partly because, as Marty McFly in "Back to the Future" and Alex P. Keaton in "Family Ties," Fox was a fixture of so many childhoods. But there's also a way that Fox remains forever boyish — a charming pipsqueak, a plucky kid with a touch less confidence than he lets on. His sheer geniality and universal appeal has remained indomitable, even in the face of a degenerative brain disorder.

"I'm a cockroach," Fox says in Davis Guggenheim's glossy, entertaining and often affecting documentary, "Still: A Michael J. Fox Movie."

In Guggenheim's film, Fox recounts his life, career and arduous battle with Parkinson's disease, with which he was diagnosed at age 29. The documentary, debuting Friday on Apple TV+, does this through candid on-camera interviews with Fox along with narration read by the actor.

And while there's footage here of home movies, much of Fox's life story unspools on screen. Along with bits of reenactment, Guggenheim uses clips of Fox's film and TV series to illustrate his off-screen life.

And this is surprisingly effective, in part because Fox's screen presence has always been so genuine. Actors aren't the parts they play but I think they always exude something innate about themselves. And more than that, a surprising amount of Fox's life has really happened in front of cameras. He met his wife, Tracy Pollan, on "Family Ties"; she played a love interest. His first symptoms came during the filming of "Doc Hollywood." And for years after Fox's diagnosis, he masked his increasing tics on "Spin City" by fidgeting with props.

But dramatizing Fox's life like this can also feel like a shallow gimmick. Instead, the most memorable images in "Still" are those of a present-day Fox in frame, speaking straight into the camera. The effects of Parkinson's are visible but so is the jaunty, self-deprecating actor we've always known. After the continual mussing with his still-handsome head of curls, Fox begs the primpers to stop. "At at certain point, it is what it is," he says.

Again, it's hard to shake the feeling that the Fox we see on screen is the real him.

"Still" frames Fox's story, maybe a little too neatly, as an arc from headlong movement to stillness. Fox's rags-to-riches rise in Hollywood was meteoric and head-spinning. The Alberta-born actor landed "Family Ties" while penniless and negotiated from the payphone of a Pioneer Chicken. From there on, it was movie deals, women and Ferraris.

The diagnosis knocked Fox sideways. The doctor, he recounts, laid out the odds: "You lose this game." But after a period of heavy drinking, Fox says the disorder, despite sending tremors through his body, made him more present, stiller. Pollan and their children are surely a big reason for that. Fox is never so endearing as when he's extolling the level-headedness of his wife: "I could be the King of England and she would be her. I could be Elvis and she would be her."

"Still" finally makes you realize that even Fox's likability can be a burden. Being widely beloved while suffering through debilitating pain is another layer to his Parkinson's journey, one rarely so intimately observed. When Guggenheim follows him out of his Upper East Side apartment in Manhattan, the difficulty Fox has just walking is as apparent as his abiding will to remain a man of good cheer. After a stumble near a fan on the sidewalk, Fox brightly jokes: "Nice to meet you. You knocked me off my feet!"

"Still: A Michael J. Fox Movie," an Apple TV+ release is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for language. Running time: 94 minutes. Three stars out of four.

Follow AP Film Writer Jake Coyle on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/jakecoyleAP>

Kari Lake election challenge shouldn't proceed, Arizona officials say

By JACQUES BILLEAUD Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — The last remaining election misconduct claim by Kari Lake, the 2022 Republican candidate for Arizona governor, is playing out in court as state officials and the Democratic governor asked a judge to throw out the case Friday.

Lake was among the most vocal of last year's Republican candidates promoting former President Donald Trump's election lies, which she made the centerpiece of her campaign. While most other election deniers around the country conceded after losing their races in November, Lake did not.

Courts have dismissed most of the former TV anchor's lawsuit. On Friday, a judge heard arguments on whether or not Lake's final claim should move ahead to a trial next week.

Attorneys representing Arizona election officials and Democratic Gov. Katie Hobbs say Lake's allegation that the election was rigged is based on unsubstantiated speculation.

Lake's lawyers say there was a flood of mail-in ballots in Maricopa County, home to more than 60% of the state's voters, at a time when there were too few workers to verify ballot signatures. Her attorneys say the county ultimately accepted thousands of ballots that had been rejected earlier by workers for having mismatched signatures.

The Arizona Supreme Court revived her claim challenging the application of signature-verification procedures, reversing a lower court decision that found she waited too long to raise that claim.

The state Supreme Court sent the claim back to the lower court to decide if there is another reason to dismiss it, or if Lake can show that enough votes were affected to change the outcome of the election, which she lost by over 17,000 votes.

Lake alleged at least 164,000 illegal votes were counted, according to filings by her attorneys. Three signature verification workers have said they experienced rejection rates due to mismatched signatures on 15% to 40% of the ballots they encountered.

"The math doesn't add up," said Kurt Olsen, one of Lake's attorneys.

Opposing attorneys said the workers' speculation doesn't amount to a violation of the law or misconduct by election workers, and raised questions about whether the three workers truly knew the ultimate outcome of the ballots they had flagged.

Abha Khanna, one of the attorneys representing Hobbs, said Lake's allegations are "wholly untethered to reality."

Earlier in her lawsuit, Lake had focused on problems with ballot printers at some polling places in Maricopa County. The defective printers produced ballots that were too light to be read by the on-site tabulators at polling places. Lines backed up in some areas amid the confusion. Lake alleged ballot printer problems were the result of intentional misconduct.

County officials say everyone had a chance to vote and all ballots were counted because those affected by the printers were taken to more sophisticated counters at election headquarters.

In mid-February, the Arizona Court of Appeals rejected Lake's assertions, concluding she presented no evidence that voters whose ballots were unreadable by tabulators at polling places were not able to vote.

The state Supreme Court declined on March 22 to hear nearly all of Lake's appeal, saying there was no evidence to support her claim that over 35,000 ballots were added to vote totals. Earlier this month, the court sanctioned Lake's lawyers \$2,000 for making false statements when saying more than 35,000 ballots had been improperly added to the total ballot count.

Former Trump prosecutor mostly mum before Congress on details of hush-money investigation

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — An ex-prosecutor who once oversaw Manhattan's investigation of former President Donald Trump declined to substantively answer questions at a closed-door deposition Friday of the House Judiciary Committee, according to a Republican lawmaker in the meeting. The prosecutor and his boss said he was merely abiding by grand jury rules.

Rep. Darrell Issa, a California Republican, exited the meeting after roughly one hour and said Mark Pomerantz, the former prosecutor, repeatedly invoked the Fifth Amendment that protects people from providing self-incriminating testimony.

Trump faces 34 felony counts of falsifying business records in a scheme to bury allegations of extramarital affairs that arose during his 2016 White House campaign. GOP lawmakers have decried the investigation as a "political persecution" and launched an oversight probe.

Pomerantz in a written opening statement called the committee's inquiry itself "an act of political theater." He also explained he was invoking the Fifth Amendment because the Manhattan District Attorney's office had previously warned him before he published a book on the investigation that he could face criminal liability if he revealed grand jury material or violated a provision of the New York City Charter dealing with misuse of confidential information.

Pomerantz, who left Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg's office after disagreements over the direction of the Trump investigation, was subpoenaed by the Republican-controlled House committee. The panel, chaired by GOP Rep. Jim Jordan, is probing how Bragg handled Trump's historic indictment.

"This deposition is for show," Pomerantz also said in prepared remarks. "I do not believe for a moment that I am here to assist a genuine effort to enact legislation or conduct legislative 'oversight.'"

Bragg had sued to halt Jordan's subpoena of Pomerantz, but last month agreed to Pomerantz's testimony after a delay and a condition that lawyers from the prosecutor's office be present. The committee has said it would have allowed the district attorney's lawyers even without the agreement.

Pomerantz had argued in court papers that the subpoena left him in an "impossible position" and would potentially require him to violate his ethical obligations.

Issa, the GOP lawmaker, told reporters, "This is an obstructing witness who has no intention of answering any questions."

Republican Rep. Matt Gaetz, another member of the committee, also said lawmakers were "not getting many answers."

Jordan exited the meeting room after a deposition that lasted well over five hours and told reporters he was "surprised at some of the answers," but declined to provide further details, citing committee rules.

Pomerantz's attorney, Ted Wells, told reporters that his opening statement explaining why he would not be answering questions made it "very clear as to what happened."

Pomerantz is allowed to refuse to answer certain questions that touch on legal privilege and ethical obligations, but Jordan could also rule on those assertions on a case-by-case basis. The Republican lawmaker said he would be conferring with the committee's attorneys and members about taking legal action against Pomerantz, including holding him in contempt of Congress.

A contempt of Congress charge would require a full committee vote before going to the floor of the Republican-majority House.

Pomerantz recently wrote a book about his work pursuing Trump and discussed the investigation in interviews on "60 Minutes" and other shows. But Issa said he was not answering questions even on previous statements he had made.

Issa suggested the fight over testimony will return to the legal system, saying it would be "for the court to decide when we object to his failure to answer any questions."

Bragg's office said in a statement, "Consistent with the agreement we reached with the committee last month, the District Attorney's Office is participating in today's deposition and asserting our rights to op-

pose disclosure of confidential information protected by law.”

What to know about Twitter’s new CEO Linda Yaccarino

By MAE ANDERSON AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Elon Musk is welcoming a veteran ad executive to the helm of Twitter, the social media site the billionaire Tesla CEO has been running since he bought it last fall.

Musk announced Friday that he’s hiring Linda Yaccarino to be the new CEO of San Francisco-based Twitter, which is now called X Corp. He said Yaccarino’s role will be focused mainly on running the company’s business operations, leaving him to focus on product design and new technology.

Here’s what to know about Yaccarino.

VETERAN AD EXEC

Yaccarino, 60, has worked as an advertising executive for decades. She came to NBCUniversal in 2011, just as Comcast was completing its merger with NBC, and oversaw integrating the companies’ ad sales platforms. There, her most recent title was chairman, advertising and client partnerships. She oversaw all market strategy and advertising revenue, which totaled nearly \$10 billion, for NBCUniversal’s entire portfolio of broadcast, cable and digital assets.

Before that, she held a variety of roles at Turner Broadcasting System Inc. from 1996 to 2011, including executive vice president and chief operating officer. That was after she held management positions at several media sales outlets.

“She’s a marketer’s leader,” said Mark DiMassimo, founder and creative chief of ad agency DiGo.

“She speaks CMO and she understands what marketers need,” he added, referring to the role of chief marketing officer.

PUSHING BOUNDARIES

Yaccarino has pushed the ad industry for change on several fronts, including advocating for relying less heavily on Nielsen ratings for measurement, and introducing a digital platform called One Platform that makes it easier to buy ads across a variety of different media in an effort to better compete for ads against social media companies and traditional media companies.

“It’s worth noting that they built out a big team that’s made a lot of innovative products and supported the growth that they’ve experienced,” said Brian Wieser of strategic advisory firm Madison and Wall. “They’ve been pushing the industry on a lot of fronts, you know, trying to make it better.”

“I think that first and foremost, she’ll bring to Twitter an understanding of what advertisers need to see to get back on the platform from the brand safety perspective,” said Dave Campanelli, chief investment officer of media buying firm Horizon Media. “She knows better than anyone what it’s going to take and I think for advertisers and buyers, the question really is, is she going to have free rein to do all that or is it going to be just the same old, same old (with Musk).”

BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

Yaccarino serves as chairman of the World Economic Forum’s Taskforce on the Future of Work. A 1985 graduate of Pennsylvania State University, she lives in Sea Cliff, New York, with her husband, Claude Madrazo. They have two children, Christian and Matthew.

Black College World Series hopes to spur MLB careers for HBCU players

By JOHN ZENOR AP Sports Writer

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — The spectators were mostly Black kids, ranging from elementary school to high school. The teams — all from historically Black colleges and universities — had names that won’t resonate with the average baseball fan.

Wiley College. Bluefield State. Rust College.

The Black College World Series, held this week in Montgomery, is giving dozens of HBCU players from

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NAIA and Division II schools a chance to compete for a title beyond their own leagues and perhaps attract attention from Major League Baseball teams.

Not a single one of their HBCU predecessors was on an MLB opening day roster this year, despite a rich history of big league alums that includes Hall of Famers Lou Brock (Southern University), Andre Dawson (Florida A&M) and Larry Doby (Virginia Union)

"We all have concerns about the fact that we don't have as many African-American players playing today," Hall of Fame shortstop Ozzie Smith said. "But it's all about what do you do about it? I think it's going to take the work of all of us."

HBCU athletics have taken on a higher profile recently in sports ranging from football and basketball to gymnastics and wrestling. But their role as a pro pipeline has been scrutinized.

The Black College World Series hopes to change that for baseball, and now it has support from MLB, one of several efforts by the league to boost participation among Black kids.

Only 59 of the 945 players (6.2%) on opening day rosters this season were Black players born in the U.S. That's a nearly two-thirds decline from when the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sports started compiling Racial and Gender Report Card data in 1991. Back then, it was 18%.

There were no U.S.-born Black players in last year's World Series for the first time since 1950, not long after Jackie Robinson broke the MLB color barrier.

It's a far cry from when Smith was starring for the St. Louis Cardinals starting in the early 1980s. Smith said it's a trend that concerns current players and his contemporaries alike.

The process of addressing that issue, to him, starts with getting minor league baseball opportunities for one player at a time, not expecting wholesale increases overnight. Over the long term, it's also about generating interest and chances for kids like the thousands brought out to watch the Black College World Series games.

Only 8.4% of Black children aged 6-12 played baseball regularly, according to a 2020 report from the Sports & Fitness Industry Association.

Smith, who did not attend an HBCU, thinks part of the decline is kids seeing players having more rapid success in the NBA and NFL, instead of having to climb through the minor leagues. That includes high school phenoms-to-NBA stars like LeBron James and the late Kobe Bryant.

"Baseball probably will give you more longevity than some of the other sports, but because it's not that instantaneous success in making to the big leagues, I think, is what holds them back a little bit," Smith said. "If a kid can play football or he can play basketball, they look at that as a quicker avenue to stardom."

LaMonte Wade, the only Black player on the San Francisco Giants, said events like the Black College World Series are a great first step.

"Anytime that you can promote Black players playing the game, and that's what it sounds like they're trying to do, I feel it will bring more attention," Wade said before Thursday's game at Arizona. "Representation is down, therefore not too many African-Americans are following the sport.

"Once you get into high school you kind of have to pick what sport you want to play," he added. "Most African-Americans choose basketball or football. That's mostly where our friends are playing, but if we can start them at a young age I think we can get the numbers up."

Cleveland Guardians slugger Josh Bell sees other barriers to Black participation.

"Fifty years ago, baseball was played in cul-de-sacs and streets and parks and now it's a lot more kids are inside and baseball is more about taking your kid to private lessons and who has the best bat and who is on the best team," Bell said.

"If things want to be done about it you've got to bring it back to this generation and what it's going take to advance it," he added.

Michael Coker, a former baseball player at Edward Waters College, started the Black College World Series in 2021. In May, MLB signed on to help support an event sponsored by Tyson Foods, which brought in some 10,000 youths from Montgomery and surrounding areas, according to company spokesman Derek Burleson.

"What's really important for young kids is to see people that look like them," said Jean Batrus, executive

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director of the Youth Development Foundation, a collective effort by MLB and the MLB Players Association. "And you're more willing to play a game if you see a Black, African-American coach, you see other kids playing."

Coker said none of the players have been drafted from the first two Black College World Series, though a handful of scouts have come out. The event, which concludes Saturday, includes Albany State, Savannah State, Bluefield State, Edward Waters, Miles College, Talladega College, Rust College, Wiley College and Paine College.

It's not the only event geared toward increasing exposure for players from historically Black schools. The inaugural HBCU Swingman Classic will feature 50 HBCU players in July during MLB All-Star Week at the Seattle Mariners ballpark with Hall of Famer Ken Griffey Jr. helping to assemble the roster. MLB's Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI) program has also produced several Black big leaguers, including CC Sabathia and J.P. Crawford.

Four of the top five players selected in last summer's MLB amateur draft are Black, and all were alumni of MLB's Dream Series, a showcase event predominantly targeting Black players.

Pittsburgh Pirates outfielder Andrew McCutchen said the answer is clear-cut for improving HBCUs' athletic prospects. It comes down to money. McCutchen cited current Colorado coach Deion Sanders' efforts at Jackson State in football, where he coached previously.

"There's only one answer, and we all know the answer to, and it's the elephant in the room: funding," McCutchen said. "That's what every single college, and especially HBCUs, need. To be able to give their team the exposure that they feel like their players deserve, and to get that treatment that other divisions are able to get. It's funding."

Montgomery resident Corey Cortner also said that representation, even at the BCWS level, was critical. Cortner helped help chaperone the class of his son, who plays youth baseball, to watch Wiley and Rust on Friday. To him, "it's a great event" getting college players exposure and even a chance to enjoy having kids ask for autographs.

"Overall, we need to try to increase participation in minorities in baseball and this is a great way to get that going," said the 50-year-old Cortner, who is Black. "It gives them an opportunity to see people that look like themselves playing on the big stage.

"Just seeing yourself in someone else ... is a great motivation for all kids. That goes beyond race. That shouldn't be just a Black thing."

AP freelance writer Jack Thompson in Phoenix, AP Sports Writer Tom Withers in Cleveland and AP Sports Writer Noah Trister in Detroit contributed to this report.

Marine veteran who fatally choked NYC subway rider Jordan Neely is freed pending trial

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ, BOBBY CAINA CALVAN and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A U.S. Marine veteran who placed an agitated New York City subway passenger in a chokehold, killing him and sparking outrage as bystander video went viral, surrendered Friday on a manslaughter charge filed nearly two weeks after the deadly encounter.

Daniel Penny, 24, was freed pending trial hours after turning himself in at a police station and appearing in court to answer criminal charges in the May 1 death of Jordan Neely, a former subway performer with a history of mental illness. Penny did not enter a plea.

Neely's death prompted protests, while others embraced Penny as a vigilante hero. His lawyers have said he was acting in self-defense. Lawyers for Neely's family said Neely wasn't harming anyone and didn't deserve to die. An autopsy ruled Neely's death a homicide due to compression of the neck.

"Jordan Neely should still be alive today," Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg said.

A judge authorized Penny's release on \$100,000 bond and ordered him to surrender his passport and not to leave New York without approval. Prosecutors said they are seeking a grand jury indictment. Penny

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is due back in court on July 17.

Penny didn't speak to reporters. At a brief arraignment, Penny faced straight ahead, his hands cuffed. He spoke softly, offering one-word answers to Judge Kevin McGrath as his lawyer, Steve Raiser, placed an arm around his shoulder. If convicted, he could face up to 15 years in prison.

Assistant District Attorney Joshua Steinglass said Neely had been making threats and "scaring passengers" when Penny approached him from behind and placed him in a chokehold. Penny "continued to hold Mr. Neely in the chokehold for several minutes," even after he stopped moving, Steinglass said.

A freelance journalist who recorded Neely struggling to free himself, then lapsing into unconsciousness, said he had been shouting at passengers and begging for money aboard the train but had not gotten physical with anyone. Penny pinned Neely to the floor of the subway car with the help of two other passengers and held him in a chokehold.

Neely's death has raised an uproar over many issues, including how the city treats people with mental illness, as well as crime, race and vigilantism. Police questioned Penny, who is white, in the aftermath but released him without charges. Neely was Black.

Thomas Kenniff, a lawyer for Penny, said he didn't mean to harm Neely and is dealing with the situation with the "integrity and honor that is characteristic of who he is and characteristic of his honorable service in the United States Marine Corps."

Donte Mills, a lawyer for Neely's family, disputed Penny's version of events, saying the veteran "acted with indifference. He didn't care about Jordan, he cared about himself. And we can't let that stand."

"Mr. Neely did not attack anyone," Mills said at a news conference Friday. "He did not touch anyone. He did not hit anyone. But he was choked to death."

Neely's father, Andre Zachery, wept as another family lawyer, Lennon Edwards, recounted the last moments before Penny tackled Neely to the ground and put him in a chokehold.

"What did he think would happen?" Mills asked.

Neely, remembered by some commuters for his Michael Jackson impersonations, had been dealing with homelessness and mental illness in recent years, friends said. Neely had been arrested multiple times and had recently pleaded guilty for assaulting a 67-year-old woman leaving a subway station in 2021.

Mills said Neely's outlook changed after his mother was killed by her boyfriend in 2007. Through his struggles, Mills said, Neely found joy in singing, dancing and bringing a smile to other people's faces.

"No one on that train asked Jordan: 'What's wrong, how can I help you?'" Mills said, urging New Yorkers in a similar situation: "Don't attack. Don't choke. Don't kill. Don't take someone's life. Don't take someone's loved one from them because they're in a bad place."

Roger Abrams, a community health representative, said he saw Neely on the subway a week before his death. Neely was disheveled and told people he was hungry and in need of spare change. Abrams said he approached Neely and asked him why he no longer performs.

"I haven't been feeling well," Abrams remembered Neely saying.

The Manhattan district attorney's office waited to file charges in part because prosecutors wanted to learn more about what happened aboard the train in the moments before Penny moved to restrain Neely. The delay helped fuel protests in the city. Some people climbed down to subway tracks, disrupting service and leading to arrests.

Mayor Eric Adams said Wednesday that Neely's death shouldn't have happened.

A second-degree manslaughter conviction in New York requires a jury to find that a person engaged in reckless conduct that created an unjustifiable risk of death, consciously disregarded that risk and acted in a way that grossly deviated from how a reasonable person would act in a similar situation.

Associated Press writer Karen Matthews contributed to this report.

On Twitter, follow Jake Offenhartz at twitter.com/jangelooff, Bobby Caina Calvan at twitter.com/BobbyCalvan and Michael Sisak at twitter.com/mikesisak and send confidential tips by visiting <https://www.ap.org/tips/>

Inflation in Argentina leaves families struggling to feed themselves

By DANIEL POLITI Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — Gimena Páez could barely pay her bills.

Then inflation in Argentina started rising even faster. The value of the country's currency plunged, making most goods nearly unobtainable. Getting enough food for herself and her 11-year-old daughter became a daily struggle.

Inflation has been a problem across the world but Argentina is second in a World Bank ranking of countries with the highest food inflation. On Friday, Argentina's state-run INDEC statistics agency said that the inflation in food prices over the 12 months ending in April was 115%. That has been topped only by Lebanon, with a whopping 352%.

Life was never easy for the neighbors of Nueva Pompeya, a lower-middle-class neighborhood where Páez lives at the southern end of Argentina's capital. These days, for many in Argentina, paying bills and getting to the end of the month have taken a backseat to a more basic problem: getting enough to eat.

Argentina's annual inflation rate has already surpassed 100% a year. The price of food has increased even faster, leading many to rely on soup kitchens to get at least one hearty meal a day.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Páez managed to make ends meet as a street vendor. She was forced to sell everything amid strict quarantine measures, and now spends much of her time trying to figure out how to feed her daughter.

"Sometimes I don't eat so I can save a little bit of food for my daughter at night, or I eat rice or something else," Páez, 43, said at one of the soup kitchens in her neighborhood. "It is very distressing not being able to provide your children with what they need."

Susana Martínez, 47, who works at the soup kitchen several hours a week, is one of those questioning how much longer the current situation can last before there's upheaval.

At least four in 10 Argentines, and 54% of children under 15, are poor, according to the INDEC.

"I think that there is going to be a social explosion. This can't go on much longer," Martínez said. "The rope is very, very tight."

Consumer prices in Argentina soared 8.4% in April from the previous month, while food prices increased 10.1%, the INDEC said Friday.

In the first four months of the year, consumer prices increased 32%, and food prices soared 41.2%, according to the INDEC. Annual inflation reached 108.8% in April.

"Before the pandemic, the people who came here were the most vulnerable," said Evelyn Morales, who is in charge of the soup kitchen operated by the leftist Socialist Workers' Movement. "But now it's the people who live in this neighborhood who come to get food."

Martínez recently had surgery for carpal tunnel syndrome that she suffers after years of giving massages. The pain has been so unbearable that she went back to the doctor, who gave her a prescription for an injection.

"He gave me the prescription and said, 'Well, buy it.' And I said, 'I don't have enough money to buy it,'" Martínez said. "I could use (the money) to buy a yogurt for my daughter."

Martínez is tired of saying no whenever Valentina, her seven-year-old daughter, asks for anything.

"Going to the supermarket really depresses me, and it makes you feel powerless when you have kids," Martínez said.

She has stopped taking Valentina to a kids' amusement area because there are too many temptations that she can't afford, like cotton candy and balloons.

"I'm not going to take her because she won't have a good time," Martínez said.

President Alberto Fernández's administration has been struggling to put the brakes on the country's soaring inflation rate. In December, Economy Minister Sergio Massa said his goal was for monthly inflation to decelerate to 3% by April. That now seems like a pipe dream.

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"We have a very serious problem with inflation, very difficult to manage," Fernández said in a radio interview Friday. "We have to stop it, we have to figure out how to do it."

Argentines are no strangers to inflation in part due to the government's penchant for printing money to finance spending, which accelerated during the pandemic. Now, prices are also being pushed higher due to a punishing drought and a sharp depreciation of the local currency in financial markets last month amid stringent capital controls.

The government has tried to reduce the impact of rising prices through price controls that have largely failed, and may mask the real rate of food inflation for the poorest members of society.

In the first four months of the year, the price of food increased an average of 10.5% per month in small stores in Buenos Aires suburbs, where most people in the poorest neighborhoods do their shopping, according to research by the Institute of Social, Economic, and Citizen Policy Research.

Argentina's inflation rate, one of the world's highest, is bound to be a key issue in the presidential election in October. Fernández has already said that he will not be seeking reelection.

Associated Press journalists Almudena Calatrava and Victor R. Caivano contributed to this report.

Review: Jonas Brothers' 'The Album' is a summer hit for incurable romantics

By MARTINA REBECCA INCHINGOLO The Associated Press

"The Album" by Jonas Brothers (Republic Records)

If, like many of us, you got burned trying to get tickets to the Jonas Brothers recent tour, their latest work "The Album" is a sweet consolation to keep your mind off it.

The Jonas Brothers are all about love in their latest project. Married with kids, every lyric hides a nudge to their homes. And while their music is focused on that familiar tender feeling, the experimentation into new genres makes it more special and fresh.

From the get-go with the track "Miracle" we are introduced by a sexy groove with show stopping high-pitched verses, while keeping that carefree vibe they are known for.

Even romantic ballads gain extra spice, such as "Vacation Eyes," a track with great potential to be a first dance tune at weddings for the new generation. "I got vacation eyes, I'm gonna have them for the rest of my life." The upbeat drums and the use of a chromatic harmonica elevate the song, making it more engaging and amusing — a jollification of your classic, slow love track.

The trio of Nick, Joe and Kevin released their single "Wings," with "The White Lotus" actress and super fan Haley Lu Richardson leading in a music video that resembles a "get ready with me" tutorial from heaven.

Followed by their second early released single "Waffle House," which focuses on the brothers' competitive dynamic that every sibling knows way too well. "Headstrong father and a determined mother. Oh, that's why some nights we try to kill each other."

In the lyrics the brothers reveal that no matter what happens, everything will be figured out when we share a special ordinary moment with our loved ones. "Deep conversations at the waffle house," they sing in the chorus.

On the topic of love and family, there's an impossible to miss heartfelt acoustic melody about fatherhood and their baby girls, titled "Little Bird."

The brothers, who broke hearts all over the world as they said, 'I do,' reflect about that bittersweet moment in the future when they will not be their girls' No. 1 guy anymore. "Cause I know if I'm doing my job correct/ Nights like these will happen less/ So please just keep me in your heart/ When you fly into somebody else's arms."

Jonas Brothers' "The Album" is a celebration of love in all its forms, perfect for people that see life through adoring rose-tinted glasses.

For more AP Music Reviews, go to: <https://apnews.com/hub/music-reviews>

Virginia joins list of GOP states leaving bipartisan effort to combat voter fraud amid conspiracies

By CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY and DENISE LAVOIE Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Election officials in Virginia have announced plans to withdraw the state from a bipartisan effort designed to ensure accurate voter lists and combat fraud — but that also has been caught up in conspiracy theories spread since the 2020 presidential election.

When Virginia formally withdraws later this year, it will become the eighth Republican-led state to leave the Electronic Registration Information Center, known as ERIC, since the group was targeted in a series of online stories last year that questioned its funding and purpose. Former President Donald Trump has been among those calling on Republican state officials to leave.

Virginia Elections Commissioner Susan Beals, in a letter sent Thursday to ERIC, listed several reasons for the decision to end the state's membership. That included the recent state departures, incomplete participation by Virginia's bordering states and "increasing concerns regarding stewardship, maintenance, privacy, and confidentiality" of voter information.

Virginia was one of the founding members when ERIC was formed in 2012, an effort promoted by then-Republican Gov. Bob McDonnell.

"In short, ERIC's mandate has expanded beyond that of its initial intent — to improve the accuracy of voter rolls," Beals wrote. "We will pursue other information arrangements with our neighboring states and look to other opportunities to partner with states in an apolitical fashion."

Virginia joins Alabama, Florida, Iowa, Louisiana, Missouri, Ohio and West Virginia who have either withdrawn or notified ERIC that they plan to do so. Texas election officials have said they are working on an alternative data-sharing effort but have not provided a notice of withdrawal.

ERIC uses data-sharing among member states to identify voters who might have moved out of state or died and should be considered for removal from a state's voter rolls. It also flags instances of potential double-voting -- ballots cast in more than one state by the same voter -- that are then used to investigate potential voter fraud.

Beals, a former local election official, was appointed as state elections commissioner last year by Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin. She previously served as an aide to Republican state Sen. Amanda Chase, who since the 2020 election has become a prominent promoter of Trump's false claims of widespread fraud.

There is no evidence of fraud or manipulation of voting machines in the 2020 election. Reviews in multiple states, including ones controlled by Republicans, have upheld the results and affirmed Joe Biden's win. Dozens of judges, including several nominated by Trump, also rejected his claims.

In a statement, Chase praised the decision and claimed, without evidence, that ERIC was "used for insidious and nefarious purposes to include an abuse of power in controlling our elections."

Democratic state Sen. Adam Ebbin said he was disappointed in the decision to withdraw from the system.

"The net result is we won't have a tool to make sure our voter rolls are as accurate as they could be," said Ebbin, a member of the Senate Privileges and Elections Committee. "It's less accurate without as many state partners to verify information."

One conspiracy targeting the system claims that billionaire philanthropist George Soros funded it. While the data-sharing system did receive initial funding from the nonpartisan Pew Charitable Trusts, that money was separate from funding provided to Pew by a Soros-affiliated organization that went to an unrelated effort, according to ERIC's executive director, Shane Hamlin. The system has since been funded through annual dues by member states.

Hamlin said in an emailed statement that the group "will continue our work on behalf of our remaining member states in improving the accuracy of America's voter rolls and increasing access to voter registration for all eligible citizens."

With no national voter registration clearinghouse, ERIC is the only data-sharing program among the states. It was started in 2012 by seven states and was bipartisan from the beginning, with four of the

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founding states led at the time by Republicans.

The system has been credited in Maryland with identifying some 66,000 potentially deceased voters and 778,000 people who may have moved out of state since 2013. In Georgia, officials said nearly 100,000 voters no longer eligible to vote in the state had been removed based on data provided by ERIC.

Cassidy reported from Atlanta.

Hodding Carter III, State Department spokesman during Iran hostage crisis, dies at 88

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. (AP) — Hodding Carter III, a Mississippi journalist and civil rights activist who as U.S. State Department spokesman informed Americans about the Iran hostage crisis and later won awards for his televised documentaries, has died. He was 88.

His daughter, Catherine Carter Sullivan, confirmed that he died Thursday in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, where he taught leadership and public policy.

Carter "never missed an opportunity to speak truth to power in North Carolina, in the south and around the globe," wrote his department chair, Daniel P. Gitterman.

Before moving to Washington in 1977, Carter was editor and publisher of his family's newspaper, the Delta Democrat-Times, in Greenville, Mississippi.

Carter had been co-chair of the Loyalist Democrats, a racially diverse group that won a credentials fight at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, unseating the all-white delegation by Mississippi's governor, John Bell Williams.

Carter's campaign work in 1976 for Jimmy Carter, no relation, helped secure him a job as assistant secretary of state for public affairs. It was in this role that he was seen on television news during the 444 days that Iran held 52 Americans hostage.

When Ronald Reagan was elected to the White House in 1980, Carter returned to journalism as president of MainStreet, a television production company specializing in public affairs programs that earned him four national Emmy Awards and the Edward R. Murrow Award for documentaries.

Carter appeared as a panelist, moderator or news anchor at ABC, BBC, NBC, CNN and PBS. He also wrote op-ed columns for the Wall Street Journal and other newspapers. He served twice on the steering committee of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press.

Carter later was named the John S. Knight Professor of Public Affairs Journalism at the University of Maryland. In 1998 he became president of the John S. Knight and James L. Knight Foundation, based in Miami, Florida.

After leaving the foundation, he began teaching leadership and public policy at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2006. He wrote two books, "The Reagan Years" and "The South Strikes Back."

Carter, an ex-Marine who exercised regularly, underwent surgery in 2012 to have a pacemaker installed to help control an irregular heart rhythm.

Progressive politics ran in his family. William Hodding Carter III was born April 7, 1935, in New Orleans, to William Hodding Carter Jr. and Betty Werlein Carter. They moved to Greenville, Mississippi, recruited by a group of community leaders to start a weekly newspaper that evolved into the Delta Democrat-Times.

His father's editorials about social and economic intolerance earned him a national reputation and undying enmity and threats from white supremacists. He also won the Pulitzer Prize, in 1946, for a series of editorials critical of U.S. treatment of Japanese-Americans during World War II.

His mother, from a prominent New Orleans family, was a feature writer and editor who recalled sitting at home with a shotgun across her lap after receiving threats from the Ku Klux Klan.

Carter was the oldest of three sons. His brother Philip Duterte Carter, reported for Newsweek and served as publisher of the Delta Democrat-Times and Vieux Carré Courier as well as financier of Gambit, a New Orleans weekly. Another brother, Thomas Hennen Carter, died at 19.

Hodding Carter III attended Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire before graduating from Greenville

High School in 1953. He graduated from Princeton University in 1953 and married Margaret Ainsworth Wolfe. They had four children before divorcing in 1978.

Carter later married Patricia M. Derian, a veteran of the Civil Rights Movement who sought to transform U.S. foreign policy as President Carter's assistant secretary of state for human rights and humanitarian affairs.

After she died in 2016, Carter married again, in November 2019, to journalist and author Patricia Ann O'Brien after the two connected during a reunion at the Nieman Foundation for Journalism.

Kentucky is latest battleground for secretaries of state facing election falsehoods during primaries

By DYLAN LOVAN and CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Kentucky's secretary of state has won bipartisan praise during his first term in office for expanding voter access during the COVID-19 pandemic and overseeing elections that have been free of widespread problems.

That record still hasn't paved a clear path to reelection for Republican Michael Adams. He now must persuade primary voters who have been bombarded for years with false claims about rigged elections.

He faces one challenger in Tuesday's GOP primary who has promoted debunked election claims and another who favors pulling Kentucky out of a multistate effort designed to detect voter fraud, an effort being pushed by conspiracy theorists in conservative states.

The battle for Kentucky's top elections post follows similar campaigns during last year's midterm elections, when candidates who denied the results of the 2020 election won GOP primaries in numerous states. A handful of them went on to win the office in deeply Republican states, but each of those candidates lost in the closely contested swing states that typically decide presidential elections.

Adams, a lawyer, soundly defeated Steve Knipper in the primary four years ago. Knipper, who has questioned the result of the 2020 presidential election, is back for another run along with another Republican, Allen Maricle, a former state representative and television station executive. The winner will face Democrat Buddy Wheatley, a former state representative who recently lost reelection. He is unopposed in his primary.

Adams earned praise from both parties for increasing voting opportunities and allowing mail-in ballots in the 2020 elections during the pandemic. He has raised significantly more campaign cash than his two opponents. But he said the political landscape has shifted dramatically for secretary of state races around the country, namely because of a wave of conspiracy theories and false allegations after the 2020 presidential race.

"This job has gotten a lot more high-profile than it used to be," Adams said. "And I think the big question in this election is, which direction are we going to go in?"

Adams, 47, has had harsh words for election skeptics, calling them "cranks and kooks" who shouldn't be in charge of Kentucky's election process.

State and local election officials continue to grapple with the fallout from former President Donald Trump's false claims that the 2020 election was stolen from him. The lies he continues to tell, including during a televised town hall, earlier this week, not only undermine confidence in elections, particularly among Republicans, but have led to harassment and death threats against election officials and their staff.

Reviews in multiple states, including ones controlled by Republicans, have shown there was no widespread fraud or manipulation of voting machines. Dozens of judges, including several nominated by Trump, also rejected his claims.

Knipper, 52, won the GOP nomination for secretary of state in 2015 before losing to Democratic incumbent Alison Grimes in the general election. The former city council member from a small town across the Ohio River from Cincinnati was a staffer under former Lt. Gov. Jenean Hampton, but was fired by former Republican Gov. Matt Bevin.

Knipper and a former colleague of his in the lieutenant governor's office who also was swept out by Bevin, Adrienne Southworth, have been touring the state together alleging — without evidence — election

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fraud in the 2019 governor's race won by Democrat Andy Beshear and in the 2020 presidential election. Knipper said he has raised more money and enjoyed more support from the public than during his previous two races, and is running television ads for the first time.

"I've had enthusiasm, but I have never had this much enthusiasm behind me," he said.

Maricle has campaigned on his experience in the Kentucky Legislature, saying he is the only candidate who has a voting record on election legislation. That includes support for a bill in the 1990s that allowed voters who were in line at the time of poll closings to remain in line and finish voting.

Maricle, 60, is critical of Knipper's election skepticism, saying Knipper has provided no evidence.

"He's said these elections have been stolen through the machines — prove it," Maricle said.

But Maricle also has campaigned on moving the state out of a multistate system intended to combat voter fraud. He said he is taking a cue from other Republican secretaries of state critical of it and said it is not doing a good enough job helping states clear their voter rolls.

"It's flawed," he said. "You have nine Republican states in the last 90 days do away with that system."

Knipper has also sought to capitalize on the issue, which has divided Republican state election officials. In a March release, he urged supporters to call on Adams to withdraw Kentucky from the bipartisan effort, which has found itself in the crosshairs of conspiracy theories fueled by Trump's false claims.

In the release, Knipper repeated claims that the Electronic Registration Information Center, a voluntary system known as ERIC, was funded by George Soros, the billionaire investor and philanthropist who has long been the subject of conspiracy theories. While ERIC received initial funding from the nonpartisan Pew Charitable Trusts, that money was separate from the money provided to Pew by a Soros-affiliated organization that went to an unrelated effort, according to ERIC's executive director, Shane Hamlin.

Knipper's stance on the ERIC system won him the vote of Dae Combs, a 63-year-old Louisville resident who visited an early voting location on Thursday.

"I'm just concerned that it would be easily manipulated," Combs said. "I'm not saying that's what happened, but I just think there needs to be more investigation into it."

Combs said she doesn't question the results of the 2020 election despite her support of Knipper.

Biden "is our president and we kind of go with the system. This is our system, it's the best system in the world, but I do think there is room to look at things and not just take things at face value."

Louisiana has left a group of states using the ERIC system after a series of online posts early last year questioning its funding and purpose. Alabama, Florida, Iowa, Missouri, Ohio, Virginia and West Virginia subsequently provided notice that they, too, would leave. Texas has said it's working on an alternative effort and is unlikely to stay. Kentucky is among six Republican-led states that have so far remained.

Judy Davenport, who was voting in Louisville on her 62nd birthday, said her vote for Adams was influenced by Knipper's election skepticism.

"I'm not an election denier," she said.

Cassidy reported from Atlanta.

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.

Jonas Brothers release new album, plan to prioritize mental health on upcoming tour

By SIAN WATSON Associated Press

After two decades in the spotlight, the Jonas Brothers are still chasing butterflies.

Joe, Kevin and Nick Jonas are releasing their sixth studio record "The Album" on Friday, before embarking on an U.S. tour in August. Nick says the band of brothers are putting themselves in new positions so

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they can feel "butterflies and excitement" before stepping onstage.

One of those butterfly moments will come when the trio kicks off their tour at Yankee Stadium on Aug. 12. "It's our favorite baseball team's stadium for our entire lives," Nick says. "We got to go and kind of go to a game and meet some of the players about a month ago. And we were just looking around, thinking the 10-year-old version of us that was sitting up in the highest nosebleed section seat would not believe that we're going to play this place twice."

All three band members now have young families and Joe says this means the brothers are "quicker to return home" after touring. But that doesn't mean that they are any less excited about hitting the road.

"We're treating this like the best tour we've ever done. And I think, we intend to make it that experience for fans as well," Joe says.

They're also looking forward to hanging out as brothers too, with Nick saying that touring "doesn't feel like work."

The tour will criss-cross the U.S. from mid-August until October, with the trio being ultra careful to avoid burnout. The band's physical and mental health is a priority, says Joe, who believes they can look after themselves and have "a blast while doing it."

"We've been burnt out before and then you're like, 'I still got 20 more shows on this tour,'" he says. "So we all have our own perspective ways of going about that, and we just make sure that that's prioritized and also that we think the three of us are communicating as best as we can."

The brothers have set aside a period for family after the release and promo duties for "The Album," before gearing up to tour in August.

Ukraine says it has retaken territory near embattled eastern city of Bakhmut

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian military commanders said Friday that their troops had recaptured more territory from Russian forces at the scene of the war's longest and bloodiest battle, for the eastern city of Bakhmut, but it wasn't clear if this marked the start of Kyiv's long-expected counteroffensive.

Russia's Defense Ministry, meanwhile, said Ukrainian forces had stepped up attacks north of the region while denying speculation by Russian military bloggers that the Kyiv forces had achieved "defense breakthroughs."

The 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) of territory that Ukrainian forces south of Bakhmut retook this week represented a significant gain and will protect an important supply chain, according to commanders of Ukraine's 3rd Separate Assault Brigade, a special forces unit that led the attack.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he met with the top military commanders Friday, noting that Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi reported his forces "stopped the enemy and even pushed him back in some directions."

In his nightly address to the Ukrainian people, Zelenskyy praised his troops and noted the low morale of the Russian forces.

"The occupiers are already mentally prepared for defeat. They have already lost this war in their minds," he said. "We must push them every day so that their sense of defeat turns into their retreat, their mistakes, their losses."

In a statement on Telegram on Friday, Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Maliar confirmed that Ukrainian forces gained ground around Bakhmut, reiterating statements from military commanders earlier this week.

In Washington, White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said the U.S. has assessed that Bakhmut remains contested territory.

"Ukrainians have not given up their defense of Bakhmut and the Russians haven't given up their attempts to take Bakhmut," Kirby said. "Every single day, the lines change back and forth. I mean, sometimes block by block."

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The U.S. maintains that Bakhmut has limited strategic value but that Russia has absorbed an enormous loss of troops and weaponry in the battle for the former salt-mining town that has been grinding on for eight months.

Yevgeny Prigozhin, the millionaire owner of Russia's private military contractor Wagner who is a frequent critic of the Russian military, slammed it again for losing ground around Bakhmut and exposing his forces battling for the city.

In a video statement Friday, Prigozhin mocked the Russian Defense Ministry's report claiming that its forces regrouped to take more favorable positions, saying they effectively fled and "our flanks are crumbling."

He warned that the Ukrainian forces have reclaimed key heights around the city and effectively unblocked the key supply link to Bakhmut. Prigozhin again accused the military leadership of refusing to provide sufficient ammunition to Wagner.

"You must immediately stop lying," Prigozhin said, addressing Russia's military leaders. "If you fled, you must prepare new defensive lines."

Prigozhin — who seems to use harsh criticism to pressure the Kremlin for more support and improve his stature — alleged the Defense Ministry's failure to protect Wagner's flanks amounted to high treason and could result in a "great tragedy" for Russia.

Apparently denying Prigozhin's claim of abandonment, Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said Russian airborne units are still supporting ground forces to "stop the attempts of the Ukrainian armed forces to counterattack on the flanks."

The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank, explained the spat as being "reflective of increased panic in the Russian information space over speculations about planned Ukrainian counteroffensives." This indicates increased concern among leaders of Wagner and the Russian Defense Ministry as well as "reflecting Kremlin guidance to avoid downplaying Ukrainian successes," it said.

Ukrainian military officials have dismissed speculation that the fighting and forward movement in Bakhmut signaled that its anticipated counteroffensive was underway. Zelenskyy said in remarks broadcast Thursday that Kyiv was delaying the campaign because it lacks enough Western weapons. Some saw the comments as designed to keep Russia guessing about Ukraine's next move.

Addressing the nation Friday evening, Zelenskyy said more arms were coming "to defeat the aggressor and restore peace."

The territorial gains occurred near the Siversky-Donets canal, between the villages of Ivanivske and Kurdiuvivka, according to a commander of the 1st Assault Battalion of the 3rd Separate Assault Brigade. He spoke on condition he be referred to only by his call sign of "Rollo," in line with Ukrainian military protocol.

"This was the enemy's bridgehead, which they intended to use in their future attacks along the canal, in the direction of Kostiantynivka," he said. "We had to neutralize the enemy and push them to the other side of the canal."

Another commander and a military spokesman corroborated his account.

Kostiantynivka is part of an important logistics chain that leads to the city of Kramatorsk.

Rollo said the gains followed other successes, including one that secured an access road near Khromove, north of Bakhmut, and another that allowed Ukrainian forces to reclaim lost positions in the Industrial College inside Bakhmut city.

The assault south of Bakhmut was followed by a reported increase in Ukrainian offensive actions near the city of Soledar on Thursday, Russia's Defense Ministry said. Russia repelled 26 Ukrainian attacks carried out by over 1,000 soldiers, the ministry said, adding that up to 40 tanks were involved.

The slow and grinding fight for Bakhmut has been costly for both sides, with Ukraine seeking to deny Russia any territorial gains despite its marginal strategic significance. Ukrainian forces are stationed in the city, while Russian troops are attacking from the north, east and south.

In other fighting, at least two people were killed and 22 injured elsewhere in the country since Thursday, according to figures from the Ukrainian President's Office.

Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said a Russian strike hit Kramatorsk, where some Ukrainian military units

are based, destroying a school and residential building. Russian shelling hit 11 cities and villages in the region, killing 12 civilians, he said.

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

See what baby names were the most popular last year

By The Associated Press undefined

WASHINGTON (AP) — Dutton and Wrenlee are on the rise but they're no match for champs Liam and Olivia as the top baby names in the U.S. last year.

The Social Security Administration released the annual list Friday. The agency tracks baby names in each state based on applications for Social Security cards, with names dating to 1880.

It's Liam's sixth straight year as No. 1. Olivia has reigned since the name unseated Emma four years ago. Emma is No. 2.

Coming in third for girls' names is Charlotte, followed by Amelia, Sophia, Isabella, Ava, Mia, Evelyn and Luna. For boys' names, Liam is followed by Noah, Oliver, James, Elijah, William, Henry, Lucas, Benjamin and Theodore.

Luna is the only newcomer in the Top 10, booting Harper.

The agency has been compiling the list since 1997, often revealing the impact pop culture has on baby naming trends. The smash hit "Yellowstone" has clearly influenced new parents. The neo-Western starring Kevin Costner debuted in 2018, with characters surfacing among baby names ever since.

Dutton moved up the Social Security list to 835, a change of 986 spots from 2021. It's the last name of the fictional family featured on the series, and it counts Costner's John Dutton in its ranks. Dutton is the fastest rising name in the Social Security rankings.

Another Dutton name follows actual Dutton as a star with a bullet among baby names. Kayce, as in Kayce John Dutton on the show, moved to the 587th most popular name, up from 1,077 the year before. Luke Grimes plays Kayce.

Rip, also from "Yellowstone," has grabbed some naming attention, but it didn't crack Social Security's top 1,000. Cole Hauser's Rip Wheeler is Dutton adjacent as the son-in-law of John.

Other names rising fast for boys: Chosen, Khaza, Eithan. For girls, Wrenlee is followed by Neriah, Arlet, Georgina and Amiri.

The Social Security Administration's latest data shows 3.64 million babies in the U.S. were issued Social Security cards last year, up slightly from 2021.

Online: <https://www.ssa.gov/oact/babynames/>

McDonald's found liable for hot Chicken McNugget that burned girl

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — McDonald's and a franchise holder are at fault after a hot Chicken McNugget from a Happy Meal fell on a little girl's leg and caused second-degree burns, a jury in South Florida found in a case reminiscent of the famous hot coffee lawsuit of the 1990s.

A second jury will determine how much McDonald's USA and its franchise owner, Upchurch Foods, will pay the child and her mother, the South Florida SunSentinel reported.

Thursday's decision was split, with jurors finding the franchise holder liable for negligence and failure to warn customers about the risk of hot food, and McDonald's USA liable for failing to provide instructions for safe handling of the food. McDonald's USA was not found to be negligent, and the jury dismissed the argument that the product was defective.

"Our sympathies go out to this family for what occurred in this unfortunate incident, as we hold customer safety as one of our highest priorities," McDonald's owner-operator Brent Upchurch said in a statement. "We are deeply disappointed with today's verdict because the facts show that our restaurant in Tamarac,

Florida did indeed follow those protocols when cooking and serving this Happy Meal.”

Jurors heard two days of testimony and arguments about the 2019 episode that left the 4-year-old girl with a burned upper thigh.

Philana Holmes testified that she bought Happy Meals for her son and then-4-year-old daughter at a drive-thru window at a McDonald's in Tamarac, near Fort Lauderdale, the SunSentinel reported. She handed the food to her children, who were in the back seat.

After she drove away, her daughter started screaming. The mother testified she didn't know what was wrong until she pulled over to help the girl, Olivia Caraballo, who is now 7, the newspaper reported. She saw the burn on the girl's leg and took photos on her iPhone, which included audio clips of the child's screams.

The sound of the girl's screams were played in court. The child, who is autistic, did not testify, the newspaper reported.

Lawyers for McDonald's noted that the food had to be hot to avoid salmonella poisoning, and that the nuggets were not meant to be pressed between a seat belt and human flesh for more than two minutes.

The girl's parents sued, saying that McDonald's and the franchise owner failed to adequately train employees, failed to warn customers about the "dangerous" temperature of the food, and for cooking the food to a much higher temperature than necessary.

While both sides agreed the nugget caused the burns, the family's lawyers argued the temperature was above 200 degrees (93 Celsius), while the defense said it was no more than 160 degrees (71 Celsius).

The case is likely to stoke memories of the McDonald's coffee lawsuit of the 1990s, which became an urban legend of sorts about seemingly frivolous lawsuits, even though a jury and judge had found it anything but.

A New Mexico jury awarded Stella Liebeck, 81, \$2.7 million in punitive damages after she was scalded in 1992 by hot coffee from McDonald's that spilled onto her lap, burning her legs, groin and buttocks, as she tried to steady the cup with her legs while prying the lid off to add cream outside a drive-thru.

She suffered third-degree burns and spent more than a week in the hospital.

She had initially asked McDonald's for \$20,000 to cover hospital expenses, but the company went to trial. A judge later reduced the \$2.7 million award to \$480,000, which he said was appropriate for the "willful, wanton, reckless" and "callous" behavior by McDonald's.

Trump's sexual assault verdict marks a rare moment of accountability. And women are noticing

By MARYCLAIRE DALE Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Cassandra Nuñez and her grandmother cast their first ballots in a U.S. presidential election in 2016. She was a first-year college student; her grandmother, a newly minted citizen. They both hoped to elect the first woman president over a man who bragged about grabbing and kissing women at will.

But Donald Trump became president, and it would be nearly seven years before a Trump accuser could press her claims at trial. This week, jurors in a New York civil case said they believed that Trump sexually assaulted writer E. Jean Carroll in a dressing room in the 1990s — making him the first U.S. president found liable by a jury in a sexual battery case. The panel awarded her \$5 million in damages.

"It's a victorious moment, but why did the people of the United States let this happen?" said Nuñez, now 25, of Los Angeles, noting the number of sexual misconduct accusations against Trump during the campaign and since his election. "It's kind of late."

The verdict — a rare moment of accountability for a former president and powerful men like him — comes as women across the U.S. ponder the cultural landscape amid sweeping threats to their hard-won progress, including Hillary Clinton's loss to Trump in 2016, the Supreme Court's repeal of abortion rights last year and the uneven success of the #MeToo movement.

Juliet Williams, a professor of gender studies at UCLA, called it an ambiguous time for women.

"It's very hard to feel at this moment that the accounting, the reckoning that we need has yet happened,"

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she said. "I feel this is a small step in the right direction."

Some may find "yet another day contemplating the behavior of Donald Trump just feels like a colossal waste of attention," Williams said. But she believes it's important to address "the everyday abuses of power that have real consequences for victims."

With a string of investigations swirling around Trump, the sex-abuse case — a civil verdict, with no criminal prosecution possible — hit only so hard across a news-weary America. Nuñez followed the trial and discussed it with a few colleagues at her public relations job. For others, the news barely hit their radar, if they were aware of the decision at all, even as Trump campaigns for the presidency again.

"Trump's long list of scandals makes any single moment seem less surprising," said Kelly Dittmar, a scholar with the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University. "What might certainly derail other candidates or elected officials meets an eye roll among many Trump detractors — and only further mobilizes Trump supporters around the idea that this is a 'witch hunt' against him."

Carroll this week savored the outcome of the lawsuit she filed the day New York, like some other states, opened a one-year window for adults to file suit over old sexual assault claims. Advocates say it can take years for victims like the 79-year-old advice columnist to move past their sense of shame and go public. But it's often too late, as it was for her, to pursue criminal charges.

Trump dismissed the accusation as a way to boost sales of Carroll's 2019 book, "What Do We Need Men For?"

But Carroll, in the wake of the verdict, said the case was never about money. She said she only hoped to clear her name, one the jury — in awarding nearly \$3 million for defamation — agreed Trump had sullied.

Trump, in hours of deposition questioning, denied he knew Carroll despite photographic evidence, and he denigrated her as "not my type." He also mused that celebrities had gotten away with sexually abusing women for centuries, "unfortunately, or fortunately."

Trump doubled down on his insulting, often misogynistic rhetoric about women in a CNN Republican town hall Wednesday evening, mockingly calling Carroll a "wack job" in a comment that drew glee from the New Hampshire audience.

The day after his inauguration in January 2017, millions of people around the world took part in a Women's March to protest his rise to power. Many sported bright pink hats that were the brainchild of the Pussyhat Project — a cat-eared design meant as a wry clapback to Trump's infamous comments on women's genitals.

"The Women's March demonstrated that we are watching," Williams said. "But in terms of the scope of sexualized violence, a \$5 million fine to somebody who commands immense resources and will certainly not show that this does any material harm to him, there's a grotesque imbalance with this outcome."

Los Angeles screenwriter Krista Suh, who helped launch the Pussyhat Project, is not sure Tuesday's verdict strikes a death knell for Trump's political career.

"He's very good at skirting the truth, and I'm just not sure this verdict pins him down, but it definitely helps," the 35-year-old said.

The crowd at the Women's March in Washington included an anonymous observer from Toronto: Andrea Constand, whose sexual abuse claims against actor Bill Cosby would soon go to trial.

In the years that followed, she would see Cosby convicted, sent to prison and then released when his conviction was overturned on appeal. Amid that setback, and the inability of victims like Carroll to pursue criminal cases, she believes the civil court process can alone be effective. Constand had received \$3.4 million from Cosby in a civil settlement in 2006, long before the criminal case was reopened, and she used the money to rebuild her life and career.

"If that's what it takes to get justice and you have no other option, then it is about the money, because the money helps you heal and move forward and accomplish things that you haven't been able to accomplish because you've been gripped by your trauma," she said.

Despite the jury's view that Trump is a sexual offender, millions of women would likely still vote for him given the chance in 2024, to maintain the country's social, economic or racial order, Williams said. More than half of white women voted for Trump in 2020.

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"There are people that like Trump's brand of masculinity. They like the bravado, they like the confidence, they like a certain type of patriotism, they like the performance of a certain kind of virility," Williams said. "So when these episodes of sexual misconduct come out, I think people are willing to give it a pass."

For Nuñez, Trump's victory over Hillary Clinton in 2016 was "a double whammy" given his behavior. His presidency, and later the #MeToo movement, spanned her time in college at Loyola Marymount University. She sees progress in small victories, like when her workplace required sexual misconduct training.

"These beginnings give me hope that one day when I have my own children," she said, "leaders will be held accountable for all their actions, and all types of violence against women will not be tolerated."

Follow Legal Affairs Writer Maryclaire Dale on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/Maryclairedale>

Elon Musk says he's found someone to lead Twitter as new CEO

By BARBARA ORTUTAY and MATT O'BRIEN AP Technology Writers

Elon Musk said Thursday he has found a new CEO for Twitter, or X Corp. as it's now called — and it's a woman. He did not name her but said she will be starting in about six weeks.

Musk, who bought Twitter last fall and has been running it since, has long insisted he is not the company's permanent CEO. The Tesla billionaire said in a tweet Thursday that his role will transition to being Twitter's executive chairman and chief technology officer.

In mid-November, just a few weeks after buying the social media platform for \$44 billion, he told a Delaware court that he does not want to be the CEO of any company.

While testifying, Musk said "I expect to reduce my time at Twitter and find somebody else to run Twitter over time."

More than a month later, he tweeted in December: "I will resign as CEO as soon as I find someone foolish enough to take the job." The pledge came after millions of Twitter users asked him to step down in a Twitter poll the billionaire himself created and promised to abide by.

In February, he told a conference he anticipated finding a CEO for San Francisco-based Twitter "probably toward the end of this year."

Analysts who follow Twitter's business welcomed the news even without knowing who the replacement will be. Twitter's advertising business has taken a hit under Musk's mercurial rule, though the billionaire told BBC last month that the company is now "roughly" breaking even.

"A new CEO is the only way forward for Twitter," said Insider Intelligence analyst Jasmine Enberg. "The single biggest problem with Twitter's ad business was Elon Musk. As he steps back, Twitter can begin to unravel Musk's personal brand from the company's corporate image and attempt to regain trust among advertisers. The success of those efforts will depend on who takes over, but it's difficult to imagine that the new CEO could be more controversial or damaging to Twitter's ad business than Musk has been."

Shares of Tesla rose about 2% Thursday after Musk made the announcement. Shareholders of the electric car company have been concerned about how much of his attention is being spent on Twitter.

Last November, he was questioned in court about how he splits his time among Tesla and his other companies, including SpaceX and Twitter. Musk had to testify in the trial in Delaware's Court of Chancery over a shareholder's challenge to his potentially \$55 billion compensation plan as CEO of the electric car company.

Musk said he never intended to be CEO of Tesla, and that he didn't want to be chief executive of any other companies either, preferring to see himself as an engineer. Musk also said at the time that he expected an organizational restructuring of Twitter to be completed in the next week or so. It's been nearly six months since he said that.

Musk's tenure at Twitter's helm has been chaotic, and he's made various promises and proclamations he's backtracked or never followed up on. He began his first day firing the company's top executives, followed by roughly 80% of its staff. He's upended the platform's verification system and has scaled back content moderation and safeguards against the spread of misinformation.

Bantering with Twitter followers late last year, Musk expressed pessimism about the prospects for a new CEO, saying that person “must like pain a lot” to run a company that “has been in the fast lane to bankruptcy.”

“No one wants the job who can actually keep Twitter alive. There is no successor,” Musk tweeted at the time.

Wave of anti-transgender bills in Republican-led states divides US faith leaders

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

As Republican-governed states across the nation advance myriad bills targeting transgender young people, America’s faith leaders are starkly divided in their assessment. Some view the legislation as reflecting God’s will; others voice outrage that Christianity is being invoked to justify laws they view as cruel and hateful.

In one camp are many legislators who have cited their conservative religious beliefs while promoting these bills, as well as leaders of America’s two largest denominations — the Catholic Church and the Southern Baptist Convention.

U.S. Catholic bishops have rejected the concept of gender transition; they issued guidelines in March to stop Catholic hospitals from assisting in such transitions. The SBC has been on record since 2014 asserting that gender transition is “contrary to God’s design.”

In an online article, the Rev. Albert Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, depicted gender transition as “a blatant attempt to undermine the very order of creation.”

“The Bible reveals that any attempt to subvert creation ends in disaster, not in human liberation,” he wrote.

Faith leaders who support transgender rights bristle at the use of religious rhetoric to marginalize trans people.

“As a Christian leader, it’s horrifying to me that Christianity and the Bible are being used by the religious right to bludgeon people through these many bills,” said Serene Jones, the president of Union Theological Seminary in New York City.

“To use religious language like that is an abomination,” she said. “They are threatening the lives and well-being of so many people around the U.S. and the world.”

Jones said it was wrong to cite the Bible in rejecting transgender identity.

“It wasn’t something that the Bible even thought about,” she said. “The larger message there is a message of love and inclusion.”

By the latest count, at least 20 states have imposed bans or limits on transgender athletes’ sports participation at the K-12 or collegiate level. And at least 18 states have adopted laws or policies — including some blocked by courts — barring gender-affirming medical care, such as puberty blockers, hormone therapy and surgery for minors.

In Oklahoma, state Sen. David Bullard cited a biblical passage in introducing what he calls the Millstone Act — a bill that would make it a felony for doctors to provide gender transition procedures to anyone under the age of 26. Bullard, who has served as a deacon at his Baptist church, said the act’s name alludes to a passage in the Book of Matthew suggesting that anyone causing a child to sin should be drowned in the sea with a millstone hung around their neck.

In the Texas legislature, one of the leading backers of anti-trans legislation is an ordained minister — Rep. Steve Toth. One bill he introduced also proposes making it a felony to provide gender-affirming care for minors.

Bills in other states have sought to restrict transgender people’s use of public restrooms and limit their ability to be called by the pronouns that reflect their gender identity.

In recent months, several of the Southern Baptists’ state affiliates have adopted resolutions embracing the overall thrust of the anti-trans bills.

A resolution approved by the Tennessee Baptist Convention depicted gender dysphoria as a “sexual perversion.”

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The South Carolina Baptist Convention urged its followers “to resist speaking falsely and giving credence to the philosophies of the LGBTQ+ movement by adopting preferred pronouns that do not refer to a person’s created sex and biological makeup.” And the Southern Baptists of Texas cited a verse from Genesis in rejecting “any type of false doctrine or deceptive application related to gender identity and sexuality.”

In various communities across the U.S. — including Knoxville, Tennessee, and Madison, Wisconsin — interfaith groups of moderate and liberal religious leaders have held events to show support for transgender people and denounce the wave of anti-trans legislation.

In Pasadena, California, one such event took place on March 31, bringing together Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders for a news conference at All Saints Church, home to an Episcopal congregation that embraces LGBTQ inclusion.

Even though California’s Democratic-controlled legislature would not approve any anti-trans measures, an organizer of the event said it was important to speak out in support of trans people in states enacting such bills.

“If our voices can be heard by some trans kid in Kentucky, realizing there are faith leaders who’ve got their back, they might hang on a little bit longer,” said the Rev. Pat Langlois, senior pastor of Metropolitan Community Church United Church of Christ in the Valley.

“These bills are the most vitriolic and cruel legislation I’ve seen,” she said. “I have a non-binary teenager, so I take this really personally, not just as a person of faith and as a lesbian, but as a mom.”

Langlois, whose LGBTQ activism spans several decades, described the current situation as “probably the scariest time” because of the array of hostile bills.

Her worries were compounded on May 4, when the rector of All Saints, Mike Kinman, told his congregation that the church had received two threats — that a bomb would be detonated during Sunday worship, and that someone would come to a service with a gun to kill the pastor.

In response, Kinman said the church would be deploying security guards, requesting that police conduct a sweep of church property before the services and closing the church balcony to the public.

The leader of one of the largest mainline Protestant denominations, the Rev. Elizabeth Eaton of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, has condemned the anti-trans bills as an attack on trans people’s humanity.

“While members of our church hold various convictions regarding gender, the teaching of our church supports legislation and policies to protect every person’s human dignity and civil rights,” Eaton said in a recent statement. “Our church teaches that we affirm transgender and nonbinary siblings as God’s children.”

As for U.S. Catholics, there are diverse views among church personnel.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has told Catholic hospitals they must not perform “interventions, whether surgical or chemical, that aim to transform the sexual characteristics of a human body into those of the opposite sex.”

Christine Zuba, a transgender woman who lives in New Jersey, was disappointed that transgender people weren’t even mentioned in the USCCB’s 14-page document, except in a footnote.

“All we ask is listen to us,” she said. “Open your hearts and try to understand.”

Yet some parish priests — including Zuba’s pastor — have welcomed transgender people into their congregations, and honored their decisions to transition. In March, several thousand Catholic nuns, representing orders across the U.S., signed a statement urging people to oppose anti-transgender legislation in their states.

“As members of the body of Christ, we cannot be whole without the full inclusion of transgender, non-binary, and gender-expansive individuals,” the statement said.

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Today in History: May 13, Pope John Paul II shot and wounded

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, May 13, the 133rd day of 2023. There are 232 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 13, 1981, Pope John Paul II was shot and seriously wounded in St. Peter's Square by Turkish assailant Mehmet Ali Agca (MEH'-met AH'-lee AH'-juh).

On this date:

In 1607, English colonists arrived by ship at the site of what became the Jamestown settlement in Virginia (the colonists went ashore the next day).

In 1914, heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis was born in Lafayette, Alabama.

In 1917, three shepherd children reported seeing a vision of the Virgin Mary near Fatima, Portugal; it was the first of six such apparitions that the children claimed to have witnessed.

In 1940, in his first speech as British prime minister, Winston Churchill told Parliament, "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat."

In 1972, 118 people died after fire broke out at the Sennichi Department Store in Osaka, Japan.

In 1973, in tennis' first so-called "Battle of the Sexes," Bobby Riggs defeated Margaret Court 6-2, 6-1 in Ramona, California. (Billie Jean King soundly defeated Riggs at the Houston Astrodome in September.)

In 1985, a confrontation between Philadelphia authorities and the radical group MOVE ended as police dropped a bomb onto the group's row house, igniting a fire that killed 11 people and destroyed 61 homes.

In 1994, President Bill Clinton nominated federal appeals Judge Stephen G. Breyer to the U.S. Supreme Court to replace retiring Justice Harry A. Blackmun; Breyer went on to win Senate confirmation.

In 2002, President George W. Bush announced that he and Russian President Vladimir Putin (POO'-tih) would sign a treaty to shrink their countries' nuclear arsenals by two-thirds.

In 2016, the Obama administration issued a directive requiring public schools to permit transgender students to use bathrooms and locker rooms consistent with their chosen gender identity.

In 2019, Doris Day, the sunny blond film star and singer who appeared in comedic roles opposite Rock Hudson and Cary Grant in the 1950s and 1960s, died at her California home at the age of 97.

In 2020, the Wisconsin Supreme Court struck down Gov. Tony Evers' coronavirus stay-at-home order, ruling that his administration had overstepped its authority by extending the order for another month.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama tried to swat down a pair of brewing controversies, denouncing as "outrageous" the targeting of conservative political groups by the IRS but angrily denying any administration cover-up after the deadly attacks in Benghazi, Libya, in September 2012. Philadelphia abortion doctor Kermit Gosnell was convicted of first-degree murder in the deaths of three babies who were delivered alive and then killed with scissors at his clinic (Gosnell is serving a life sentence). The Associated Press sent a letter of protest to Attorney General Eric Holder after the Justice Department told the news agency it had secretly obtained two months of telephone records of AP reporters and editors. Psychologist Joyce Brothers, 85, died in Fort Lee, New Jersey.

Five years ago: President Donald Trump said he would help the Chinese telecommunications company ZTE get "back into business"; the Commerce Department had earlier moved to block the company from importing American components. Officials in Hawaii called for more evacuations near the Kilauea volcano amid signs of an imminent eruption at the volcano's summit. (The eruption came four days later.) The body of 69-year-old "Superman" actress Margot Kidder was found by a friend near her Montana home in what was later ruled a suicide from a drug and alcohol overdose.

One year ago: Russia suffered heavy losses when Ukrainian forces destroyed the pontoon bridge enemy troops were using to try to cross a river in the east, Ukrainian and British officials said in another sign of Moscow's struggle to salvage a war gone awry. Israeli police moved in on a crowd of mourners at the funeral of Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, beating demonstrators with batons and causing pallbearers to briefly drop the casket. The crackdown came during a rare show of Palestinian nationalism in

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east Jerusalem. Former White House national security adviser Robert C. McFarlane, a top aide to President Ronald Reagan who pleaded guilty to charges for his role in the illegal arms-for-hostages deal known as the Iran-Contra affair, died at age 84.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Buck Taylor is 85. Actor Harvey Keitel is 84. Author Charles Baxter is 76. Actor Zoe Wanamaker is 75. Actor Franklyn Ajaye is 74. Singer Stevie Wonder is 73. Former Ohio Gov. John Kasich is 71. Actor Leslie Winston is 67. Producer-writer Alan Ball is 66. Basketball Hall of Famer Dennis Rodman is 62. "Late Show" host Stephen Colbert is 59. Rock musician John Richardson is 59. Actor Tom Verica is 59. Singer Darius Rucker (Hootie and the Blowfish) is 57. Actor Susan Floyd is 55. Actor Brian Geraghty is 48. Actor Samantha Morton is 46. Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., is 46. Former NBA player Mike Bibby is 45. Rock musician Mickey Madden (Maroon 5) is 44. Actor Iwan Rheon is 38. Actor-writer-director Lena Dunham is 37. Actor Robert Pattinson is 37. Actor Candice Accola King is 36. Actor Hunter Parrish is 36. Folk-rock musician Wylie Gelber (Dawes) is 35. NHL defenseman P.K. Subban is 35. Actor Debby Ryan is 30.