

Groton Daily Independent

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Groton Community Calendar

Wednesday, May 17

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

Senior Menu: Salisbury steak, mashed potatoes, carrots and peas, Mandarin oranges, Pineapple, whole wheat bread.

Groton CM&A: Kids' Club, Youth Group and Adult Bible Study begins at 7 pm

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; UMYF Bonfire; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Bible Study, 2:45 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: League, 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 18

Senior Menu: BBQ Chicken breast, rice pilaf, mixed vegetables, fruit, cookie, whole wheat bread.

Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460

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



“Owning our story and loving ourselves through that process is the bravest thing that we'll ever do.”
-Brené Brown

Girls Golf Meet at Sisseton, 10 a.m.
Region 1A Track Meet in Groton
Emmanuel Lutheran: Ascension Worship, 7 p.m.
Friday, May 19
Senior Menu: Chili, cornbread, coleslaw, vanilla pudding.

Saturday, May 20
Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship at Rosewood Court, 10 a.m.

Sunday, May 21
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.; Newsletter items due.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; worship with communion at Zion, 11 a.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; worship at Avantara, 3 p.m.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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The Bulletin

by Newsweek

JANUARY 24, 2023

World in Brief

killed by police officers responding to the incident.

Disgraced Theranos CEO Elizabeth Holmes must begin serving her prison sentence while she appeals her conviction for wire fraud, a San Francisco court ruled. She must also jointly pay \$452 million in restitution to her victims.

Global temperatures will likely exceed 1.5° Celsius (2.7° Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels for the first time ever over the next five years, the World Meteorological Organization said.

The European Union has introduced a set of sweeping cryptocurrency laws aimed at increasing transparency and combating money laundering in the relatively unregulated market.

Attorney General Daniel Cameron won the Republican gubernatorial primary in Kentucky, setting him up to face off against Democratic incumbent Andy Beshear in November.

Democrat Heather Boyd won a special election to replace Rep. Mike Zabel in the Pennsylvania House, beating Republican Katie Ford and preserving the Democratic one-vote majority in the chamber.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky have agreed to meet with a group of African leaders to "find a peaceful resolution" to the conflict, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said.

WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAY AHEAD

President Joe Biden is scheduled to travel to Japan to participate in a Group of Seven (G7) summit in Hiroshima. Before leaving, Biden will award 2021-2022 Medal of Valor recipients in a White House ceremony.

Arguments over whether the Food and Drug Administration's approval of the abortion drug mifepristone should be revoked will be heard by three judges with the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans. The judges are not expected to issue an immediate ruling.

Cisco is set to post an increase in revenue and earnings as it reports its third-quarter results. The company is expected to benefit from easing supply chain constraints and strong demand for some of its products. Analysts expect Target to post about a 20% decline in earnings when it reports first-quarter results due to a slowdown in comparable store sales and discretionary spending.

On the economic calendar, housing starts, and building permits for April are due at 8.30 a.m. ET.

A Council of Europe summit will likely end in Iceland. European leaders gathered with the goal of identifying a process through which Russia can be made to compensate those impacted by the war in Ukraine.

Cherelle Parker, a Philadelphia native with a long political history in Pennsylvania, has won the Democratic nomination to become mayor of the city, making her the favorite to become the first woman to hold the position.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has ordered a rescue operation after a Chinese fishing boat capsized in the Indian Ocean. All 39 members on board are reportedly missing.

Police have identified the New Mexico shooter who killed three senior citizens in a "purely random" attack on Monday as Beau Wilson, an 18-year-old native of the state. He was

GDILIVE.COM

St. John's Lutheran Pre-School Graduation
Wednesday, May 17, 2023
8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.
FREE Viewing sponsored by



Love to Travel 
Where can we take you?

605-846-0580
Becah@lovetotravel.com

Groton City Notice

**No outdoor watering
effective
Tuesday, May 16th
until further notice.
Work will be done on
the reservoir.**



GDILIVE.COM

Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

May 17, 2023 – 7:00pm

City Hall – 120 N Main Street

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

- Approval of Agenda
- Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1

(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)

- Airport Discussion – Darrell Hillestad
- Park Bathrooms – Ken Hier
- Join PFAS Cost Recovery Program
- First Reading of Ordinance No. 768 – Amending Sewer Penalty Timeframe
- Police Department Sign Proof
- Minutes
- Bills
- April Finance Report
- Economic Development
- Approval of Special Event Alcoholic Beverage License – Groton Amateur Baseball
- Approval to List 1992 Digger Truck with BigIron Auction
- Water Tower Grand Opening/Ribbon Cutting Event on July 20, 2023 at 11:30am – Sponsored By IMEG
- Budget Training – June 28, 2023 in Sioux Falls – Douglas Heinrich
- Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
- Hire Summer Employees
- Adjournment

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Groton Area Tigers Varsity Defeats Hamlin Area Varsity in a Blow-Out Victory

Groton Area Tigers Varsity cruised to an easy victory over Hamlin Area Varsity 12-2 on Tuesday. Groton Area Tigers Varsity tallied six runs in the fifth inning. The offensive firepower by Groton Area Tigers Varsity was led by Bradin Althoff, Cade Larson, Dillon Abeln, and Braxton Imrie, all knocking in runs in the inning.

Abeln got the win for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. The pitcher went four innings, allowing one run on one hit and striking out seven. Althoff threw one inning in relief out of the bullpen.

Ted Smith took the loss for Hamlin Area Varsity. Smith allowed eight hits and 12 runs over four and a third innings, striking out one.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity tallied nine hits. Imrie, Larson, and Colby Dunker all collected multiple hits for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. Dunker, Larson, and Imrie all had two hits to lead Groton Area Tigers Varsity.

Hamlin Area Varsity **2 - 12** Groton Area Tigers Varsity

📍 Home 📅 Tuesday May 16, 2023

	1	2	3	4	5	R	H	E
HMLN	0	0	0	1	1	2	3	6
GRTN	0	1	3	2	6	12	9	1

BATTING

Hamlin Area Varsity	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
W Grantham (3B)	2	0	1	0	1	1
R Prouty (2B, P)	3	0	0	0	0	2
B Schooley (SS)	2	0	1	0	1	1
G Maag (LF)	2	1	1	1	1	0
T Smith (P, 1B)	3	0	0	0	0	0
J Tharaldsen (C)	1	0	0	0	1	1
J Williams (CF)	2	0	0	0	0	1
M Kimball (RF)	2	0	0	0	0	2
K Hauck (1B, 2B)	1	1	0	0	1	1
Totals	18	2	3	1	5	9

3B: B Schooley, **TB:** W Grantham, B Schooley 3, G Maag, **CS:** W Grantham, **SB:** G Maag, **LOB:** 5

Groton Area Tigers	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
B Flihs (SS, 3B)	3	1	1	0	1	0
C Simon (CF)	3	1	0	0	1	0
B Althoff (1B, P)	2	1	1	2	2	0
T Larson (3B, 1B)	4	3	1	1	0	0
L Ringgenberg (RF)	2	3	0	0	2	0
C Dunker (LF)	3	2	2	1	1	0
C Larson (C)	2	0	2	2	2	0
D Abeln (P, SS)	4	0	0	1	0	0
B Imrie (2B)	3	0	2	2	1	1
CR: C McInerney	0	1	0	0	0	0
Totals	26	12	9	9	10	1

2B: C Larson, C Dunker, **3B:** T Larson, **TB:** C Larson 3, B Flihs, T Larson 3, B Imrie 2, C Dunker 3, B Althoff, **CS:** C Dunker, **LOB:** 9

PITCHING

Hamlin Area	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
T Smith	4.1	8	12	5	10	1	0
R Prouty	0.1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	4.2	9	12	5	10	1	0

L: T Smith, **P-S:** R Prouty 6-5, T Smith 107-48, **BF:** R Prouty 2, T Smith 34

Groton Area	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
D Abeln	4.0	1	1	0	3	7	0
B Althoff	1.0	2	1	1	2	2	0
Totals	5.0	3	2	1	5	9	0

W: D Abeln, **P-S:** D Abeln 72-46, B Althoff 27-14, **BF:** D Abeln 16, B Althoff 7

Groton Area Tigers JV Falls to Hamlin Area/Castlewood-Deuel After Fourth Inning Score

Groton Area Tigers JV stayed in it until the end, but Hamlin Area/Castlewood-Deuel pulled away late in a 9-7 victory on Wednesday. The game was tied at six with Hamlin Area/Castlewood-Deuel batting in the top of the fourth when W Grantham singled on a 3-2 count, scoring one run.

Despite the loss, Groton Area Tigers JV did collect three hits in the high-scoring affair. Unfortunately, Hamlin Area/Castlewood-Deuel had seven hits on the way to victory.

Hamlin Area/Castlewood-Deuel got things started in the first inning when Ted Smith doubled on a 2-2 count, scoring two runs.

Groton Area Tigers JV knotted the game up at six in the bottom of the third inning, when J Mahe's wild pitch allowed one run to score for Groton Area Tigers JV.

Groton Area Tigers JV notched three runs in the second inning. Tristin McGannon had an RBI wild pitch in the inning to lead the run scoring.

Mahe was credited with the victory for Hamlin Area/Castlewood-Deuel. The pitcher lasted four and a third innings, allowing three hits and seven runs while striking out seven. G Maag threw two-thirds of an inning in relief out of the bullpen.

Gavin Englund took the loss for Groton Area Tigers JV. The righty went three innings, allowing six runs on six hits and striking out six.

Jarrett Erdmann, Brevin Fliehs, and Kellen Antonsen all had one hit to lead Groton Area Tigers JV.

Hamlin Area/Castlewood-Deuel totaled seven hits. Tyler Theraldson, Grantham, and Smith each racked up multiple hits for Hamlin Area/Castlewood-Deuel.

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Hamlin Area/ Castlewood-Deuel 9 - 7 Groton Area Tigers JV

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	1	2	3	4	5	R	H	E
HMLN	3	0	3	3	0	9	7	3
GRTN	1	3	2	0	1	7	3	5

BATTING

Hamlin Area/Castlewood-Deuel	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
J Mahe (P, RF)	2	0	0	0	0	2
W Grantham (2B)	3	3	2	1	0	0
B Schooley (SS)	0	3	0	0	3	0
G Maag (LF, P)	3	0	0	1	0	2
T Smith (1B)	3	1	2	3	0	0
T Theraldson (C)	3	1	2	1	0	0
J Williams (CF)	3	0	1	1	0	2
M Kimball (3B)	3	0	0	0	0	1
K Havok (RF, LF)	2	1	0	0	1	1
Totals	22	9	7	7	4	8

2B: T Theraldson, T Smith, **TB:** W Grantham 2, J Williams, T Theraldson 3, T Smith 3, **CS:** J Mahe, **HBP:** J Mahe, **SB:** B Schooley, W Grantham, J Williams, **LOB:** 3

PITCHING

Hamlin Area/Castlewood-Deuel	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
J Mahe	4.1	3	7	5	6	7	0
G Maag	0.2	0	0	0	1	2	0
Totals	5.0	3	7	5	7	9	0

P-S: G Maag 13-8, J Mahe 106-52, **WP:** J Mahe 3, **HBP:** J Mahe, **BF:** G Maag 3, J Mahe 23

Groton Area Tigers	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
B Imrie (3B)	2	0	0	0	1	0
K Antonsen (2B, S...)	3	1	1	0	0	1
B Fliehs (SS)	1	2	1	2	2	0
G Englund (P, 1B)	2	0	0	0	1	2
K Fliehs (C)	2	0	0	0	0	2
C Simon (1B, P, 3B)	1	1	0	0	1	1
J Erdmann (RF, P)	2	1	1	0	0	0
C McInerney (LF)	1	1	0	0	1	0
T McGannon (CF)	2	0	0	1	0	1
L Krause (2B)	1	1	0	0	1	1
N Groeblichhoff (...)	1	0	0	0	0	1
Totals	18	7	3	3	7	9

2B: B Fliehs, **TB:** J Erdmann, K Antonsen, B Fliehs 2, **HBP:** N Groeblichhoff, **SB:** G Englund, J Erdmann, C Simon, B Fliehs, **LOB:** 4

Groton Area Tigers	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
G Englund	3.0	6	6	2	2	6	0
C Simon	0.0	0	1	1	1	0	0
J Erdmann	2.0	1	2	1	1	2	0
Totals	5.0	7	9	4	4	8	0

P-S: G Englund 63-42, J Erdmann 32-18, C Simon 10-2, **WP:** G Englund, J Erdmann 2, C Simon, **HBP:** C Simon, **BF:** G Englund 17, J Erdmann 8, C Simon 2

Weber Landscaping Greenhouse Now Open!

620 West Third Ave., Groton



M-F
10-6
Saturday
10-4
Sunday
12-4

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We had a short week out in DC this past week, but we packed as much as we could into a few days! There were fewer South Dakotans visiting DC this past week – you all must not want to visit anymore now that the weather has gotten nice back home! Can't say I blame you, especially as we reach the hot and humid summer here in DC. That



said, we'd love to have you out here any time. We'll even give you a tour of the Capitol. Despite your absence, we were still working for you with other meetings, classified briefings and reintroducing a piece of legislation that has a big impact on Native American veterans. Here's my Weekly Round[s] Up:

South Dakota groups I visited with: Grace Powell, South Dakota's finalist for the national Poetry Out Loud competition. Grace is a junior at Dakota Valley High School in North Sioux City, South Dakota.

Meetings this past week: NATO Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geomană; Kelly White, CEO of Lifesource; Representatives from the General Aviation Manufacturers Association and coffee with Bret Baier from Fox News. I had the opportunity to visit with Dr. Scott Gottlieb, former Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner, about artificial intelligence (AI) and the role it could have in curing diseases like cancer.

We also had our Senate Prayer Breakfast, where Senator Mike Lee from Utah was our speaker this week.

I also spoke at an event hosted by the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center and the American Bar Association, where we discussed the harms of overclassifying intelligence documents. Overclassification negatively impacts our military and weakens our ability to provide congressional oversight and accountability. Fear of being blamed for releasing sensitive security information has led officials to be overly cautious and classify information to an unnecessarily high level. Additionally, there are an excessive number of guidebooks, which aid officials in determining the proper level of classification. Currently, there are over 2,000 of these guidebooks and nearly 1,500 officials who are authorized to classify documents. This has led to vague and conflicting guidelines. It's necessary that we begin to automate the classification and declassification process; however, it will not be effective if we do not first reform the classification guidelines to be consistent, clear and concise.

Topics discussed: As predicted, we talked a lot about the debt ceiling this past week. Not much has changed since my report last week. We are still expecting that President Biden and congressional leadership will come to an agreement before a default occurs.

Our southern border was also a topic of discussion this week with the end of Title 42, a section of the U.S. Code dealing with public health that originally dates back to 1944. A portion of Title 42 was utilized as part of the public health crisis designation in March of 2020 at the beginning of the pandemic to allow law enforcement to turn away those attempting to enter our country illegally to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Before this, migrants who were waiting on asylum hearings were allowed to remain in the US, creating unsafe conditions and putting a strain on resources in our border cities. This creates a huge security risk for not only our border states, but the entire country. I discussed Title 42 in full on SDPB with Lori Walsh. You can listen to that clip [here](#).

Votes taken: Four – two of these votes were on nominations, and two were congressional resolutions of disapproval seeking to overturn policies put in place by the Biden administration.

Hearings: One – I spent all of Wednesday afternoon in a hearing with the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

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Classified briefings: Two – our biweekly cyber education session and a Senate Armed Services Committee Strategic Forces Subcommittee briefing.

Letter to Secretary Blinken: My colleague Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) and I sent a letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken urging the Department of State to hold China accountable for its role in the illegal trafficking of synthetic opioid drugs. China is the primary source of the precursor chemicals, which are then processed and manufactured into synthetic opioids by Mexican drug cartels to bring into the United States. Since Biden took office, 35,375 pounds of fentanyl have been seized or smuggled across the southern border. You can read more about that letter [here](#).

Legislation introduced: I reintroduced legislation to create a congressional charter for the National American Indian Veterans (NAIV) organization this past week. Congress grants charters to recognize patriotic and national organizations that operate solely for charitable, literary, educational, scientific or civil improvement purposes. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, there are more than 140,000 Native American veterans in the United States. While congressional charters have been granted to Italian-American, Polish-American and Catholic-American veterans groups, as of today, no Native American veterans' organization has received one. You can read more about this legislation [here](#).

As you may recall, this legislation unanimously passed the Senate last November; however, the House did not take it up for a vote before the end of the 117th Congress in January. I'm looking forward to getting this passed in the Senate and hopefully into law before the end of the 118th Congress in 2024.

My staff in South Dakota visited: Lead and Rapid City

Steps taken this week: 61,400 steps or 28.35 miles

Groton Area in top 24 in 12 Events

The girls 400m Relay team clawed their way back into the top 24 with a 24th placing. The regional track meet will be held tomorrow in Groton. This will be the last time to improve on times and distances to stay in the top 24. The overall top 24 in each event will qualify for the state track meet.

Girls 4x100m Relay: Groton Area climbed back into the top 24, placing 24th, with a time of 53.58.

Girls 4x200 Relay: Groton Area stays at 17th with an improved time of 1:51.71.

Girls 4x400 Relay: Groton Area rose three places to 19th with an improved time of 4:19.94.

Girls 4x800m Relay: Groton Area rose four spots to 13th with an improved time of 10:27.89. Their old time was 10:41.24.

Girls Sprint Medley: Groton Area fell one spot to 22nd with an unchanged time of 4:36.12.

Shot Put: Emma Kutter remains at 23rd with a same distance of 34-4.

Triple Jump: Aspen Johnson remains at 14th with an improved distance of 32-10.75.

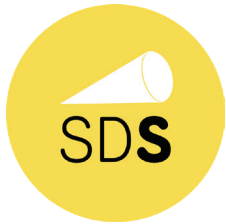
Boys 4x100m Relay: Groton Area stays at 16th with an unchanged time of 45.47.

Boys 4x200m Relay: Groton Area stays at 15th a same time of 1:34.84.

Boys 4x400m Relay: Groton Area rose to sixth place with an improved time of 3:33.55. Their old time was 3:37.04.

Boys 4x800m Relay: Groton Area dropped two spots to 24th with an improved time of 8:57.68. Their old time was 8:59.34

Boys Sprint Medley Relay: Groton Area dropped one spot to 21st with an unchanged time of 3:50.90.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

South Dakota researcher aims to create gold material that heals itself from damage

Self-healing material — like in 'Terminator 2' — is under development at Rapid City university

BY: NICOLE SCHLABACH - MAY 16, 2023 5:33 PM

Imagine a piece of shrapnel denting a service member's combat helmet. What if the dent in the helmet could heal itself?

Shan Zhou's research might make that a reality. He's an assistant professor in the Department of Nanoscience and Biomedical Engineering at South Dakota Mines in Rapid City.

Zhou hopes to create a gold material that heals itself from dents and possibly from bends in its structure. He thinks he's found a way to create the material by working at the nanoscale — a scale where one nanometer is equal to the thickness of a strand of hair divided 1,000 times.

His group is testing a nanostructure, a structure built from particles, to verify that it heals itself at the nanoscale. If these tests are successful, he would scale this structure into a material that heals itself on a larger, more useful scale. So far, the results look promising, and the self-healing material could be realized "in the near future," he said.

Zhou is working in the Materials-Interfaces Imaging and Design Laboratory with one graduate student, and two more students will join his project this fall.

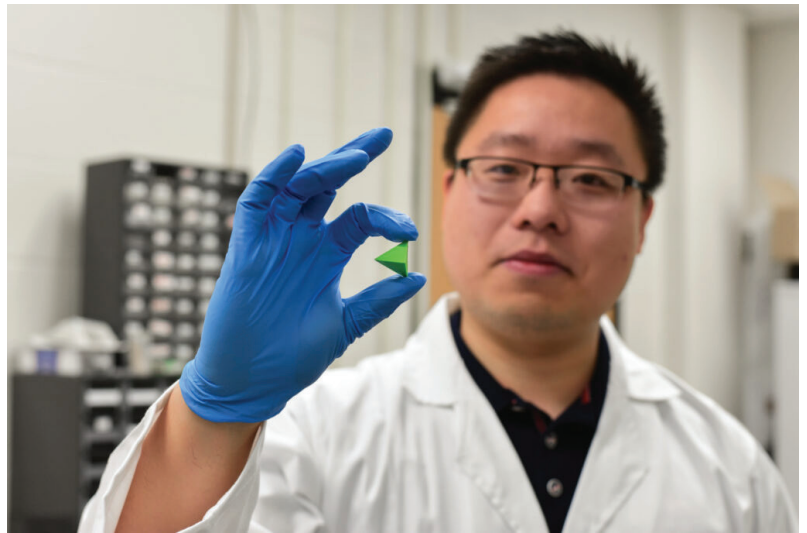
How the material might work

The group aims to build the material using gold nanoparticles — particles so small that billions of them would fit in one square inch of the material.

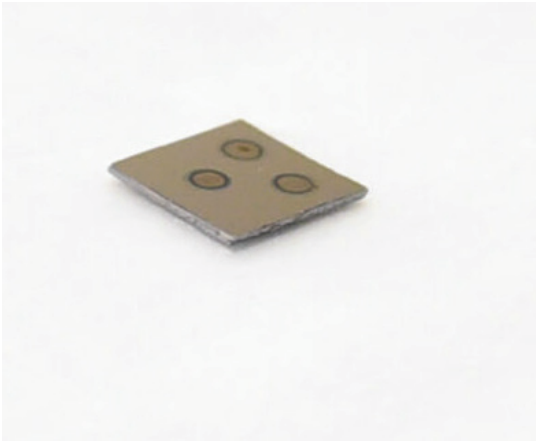
These particles, shaped like triangular pyramids, are like "building blocks," Zhou said. "Instead of building or designing houses, what we do is work on things at a nanoscale."

The group organizes these "building blocks" into a pinwheel structure. This structure, Zhou said, may hold the key to creating the self-healing material because it will naturally and "easily go back to its original structure without energy consumption" after a structural change. This process, called reconfiguration, happens instantly.

The reconfigurable structure had been discovered before Zhou's research at South Dakota Mines began. It was first designed and built by Zhou, along with other scientists from the University of Michigan and



Assistant Professor Shan Zhou holds a model of a triangular pyramid, the shape of the nanoparticles in his research samples, at South Dakota Mines on Feb. 8, 2023. (Nicole Schlabach/For South Dakota Searchlight)



Assistant Professor Shan Zhou's research samples, which are inside the three circles on the square, sit in a lab room at South Dakota Mines on Feb. 8, 2023. (Nicole Schlabach/

For South Dakota Searchlight)

Argonne National Laboratory, while Zhou was a postdoctoral scholar at the University of Illinois.

Reconfigurability was one of several characteristics that made the creation of this pinwheel structure desirable to the researchers. The research was funded by a Multidisciplinary University Research Initiative grant through the Office of Naval Research and published in the journal *Nature* last year.

Even though the structure reconfigures itself, Zhou wouldn't claim it can heal itself — self-healing needs to happen in response to real-world types of damage. The group is working to verify that the structure can heal itself by applying nano-sized forces that mimic real-world damage.

To do this, they use a technique called atomic force microscopy that Zhou compares to "hands" at the nanoscale. A tiny cantilever applies a force to the structure while recording the forms and features of the surface, which helps the group understand how the structure responds to the damage.

So far, the structure reconfigures itself after nano-sized dents. But more tests are needed to thoroughly demonstrate these results. If the group can verify self-healing results, they hope to scale up to a material on at least a square centimeter scale.

The self-healing material would serve as a protective layer over other surfaces. Ideally, Zhou said, it would absorb shock to minimize damage to the underlying item. In the group's tests, the nanostructure has been applied to glass, silicon and a silicon-based polymer known as PDMS.

Zhou's material would be the first of its kind. Other self-healing materials made of metal have been developed, like a self-healing medical sensor partially made of liquid metal, that responds to body temperature. But these other materials do not use the movements of nanoparticles to heal themselves. Nanoparticle materials are useful because they allow engineers to precisely fine-tune properties like the material's durability.

While it's too early to confirm applications, Zhou said the material might protect combat helmets and airplanes.

"If your helmet is broken, if it can come back to the original structure without energy input, that's essentially the transformation," he said. The ultimate goal, he noted, "is to do something like the sci-fi movies." One popular example is the movie "Terminator 2" in which the character T-1000's liquid-metal body heals itself from bullets and other damage.

Potential defense applications

Self-healing material could be "revolutionary" for defense applications, said retired Army Brig. Gen. Marshall Michels, assistant deputy secretary of the State of South Dakota Department of the Military, South Dakota National Guard, who was not speaking on behalf of either entity.

Michels wasn't familiar with Zhou's research but said self-healing material might be useful for body armor and transportation equipment, including aircraft and ground vehicles.

"It would hopefully protect our service members and provide another layer of protection so they wouldn't become a casualty or injured, and they're able to continue on with their mission," he said.

The ideal material would be lightweight and adaptable to different climates. Hopefully, he said, it would shield service members from sand, wind, snow and sun. "It's got to be pretty rugged," he said.

It would need to protect service members from bullet rounds and shrapnel, including fragments from artillery and improvised explosive devices.

He's also curious how self-healing material might prove useful for non-defense applications like protect-

ing objects from hailstorms.

"Imagine that on your vehicle," he said. "How many times have you been hailed on in South Dakota?"

Production for industry use

"The sky is the limit" for the potential applications of self-healing materials, said Marek Urban, J.E. Sirrine Foundation Endowed Chair and professor of materials science and engineering at Clemson University. Urban has researched self-healing polymers, the most common type of self-healing material, for over 15 years.

"If you find a niche application that you cannot achieve otherwise, it's a winner," he said, while noting that he wasn't familiar enough with Zhou's research to comment on it.

Urban's research group focuses on developing self-healing commodity materials, he said, with cost savings and profit acting as the main motivators for industry partners.

A material might be of interest "if you can save money on production and make extra money, let's say by offering self-healable paint," where people are willing to pay more, he said.

Self-healable commodity materials need to be precisely designed, he said, "but it's a challenge to make large enough quantities" of those materials for production.

He declined to discuss those challenges but said, "The bottom line is, 'How do you get large quantities, but very precisely designed materials?' I think this is where the whole field is going right now."

Triangular pyramid nanoparticles are challenging to create, Zhou said, because it's difficult to control the structure and the purity of the particles. But, he's developed a way to create pure-gold triangular pyramids in uniform sizes, which may work well for large-scale production.

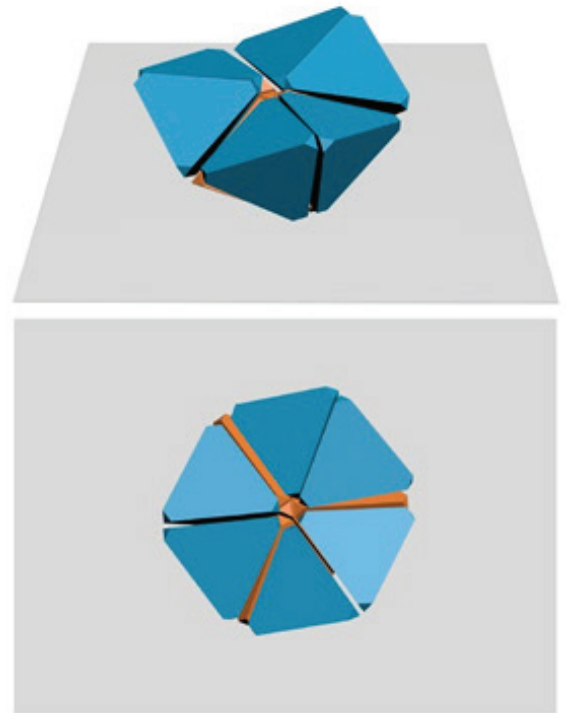
After the particles are created, he anticipates a simple fabrication process. "We take a liquid droplet, put it on a substrate, let it dry — that's it," Zhou said. During fabrication, custom thickness levels would be achieved by layering the material on the protected object.

Gold nanoparticles were chosen for the material because gold is mechanically stable, durable, and its surface chemistry facilitates the creation of a nanostructure that can reconfigure itself, he said.

Since the material is made of gold, it would last longer than most other self-healing materials, which are made of polymers, he said. The cost would depend on the scale and density, but if it's a thin layer on a centimeter scale, "it's going to be a pretty reasonable price."

For now, the group is focused on verifying that the nanostructure can heal itself. If the tests are successful and the group can scale the structure into a larger material, Zhou might seek industry partnerships. Or, he said, his research might lead to a startup company in South Dakota.

Nicole is a freelance science, health and outdoor writer based in Rapid City. She served as the managing editor of an independent student newspaper in Athens, Georgia, while in school. In recent years, she's worked in editing, growth operations and heritage interpretation — all while maintaining a soft spot for journalism.



Shan Zhou's material would be built from triangular-pyramid nanoparticles arranged in a pin-wheel shape. (Source: "Chiral assemblies of pin-wheel superlattices on substrates," from the journal Nature)

COMMENTARY

Guns have changed everything, especially childhood

LAURA PRITCHETT

I learned to shoot on the family ranch, as ranch kids are wont to do. My gun education was furthered at a Catholic summer camp, and I still have my paper target proving my marksmanship. Hunter safety classes, and calm, clear-eyed common sense. This was the rural approach to guns I grew up with.

Then it's a story we all know: Guns became politicized. Polarized. Lobby-ized. Humans are good at inventing things, so guns got more militarized as they turned into weapons of mass destruction. Our laws, sadly, didn't keep up, because humans can also move quite slowly.

Then, I had children, and suddenly, active-shooter drills were part of their curriculum. And then, on Valentine's Day 2018, parents across Fort Collins, Colorado, received emails informing us that our children had been in a lockdown drill at roughly the same time that 17 children were being killed in Florida.

My brain fritzed out with confusion: Here a drill, but in Florida, children were being mowed down. Relief, and yet also great grief. Other mothers were getting different news.

My kids came home, stunned, and recounted their drill instructions, which included advice such as: "If you must fight to save your life, fight with all your might, using anything within reach as a weapon."

Yes, kids, please fight with all your might against a grownup with a semi-automatic.

What a sad curriculum. What a sad country. Many of us know this. Many of us keep saying the same thing over and over, and a few loud voices keep pushing back. Why even discuss interpretations of the murkily written Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, written at a time when muskets were the weapon of the day? Some conversations aren't worth having.

What I am interested in is brainstorming real solutions — with like-minded people who also feel a real crack in their hearts every day that innocent people are mowed down, which, it seems, is nearly every day. A day without a shooting now seems the exception.

It strikes me that besides gun zealotry or idolatry, the other tragedy here is our seeming unwillingness to act. Really act. Act like grownups. My daughter and friends helped organize a walkout to protest gun violence, which spread to other schools. Kids poured out of the high schools and toward the town center, and parents rode their bikes or walked alongside — especially near the coal-rolling trucks filled with counter-protesters that heckled them from the roads.

This was the first act of civil disobedience for most, borne out of a mix of desperation and courage.

Even as the kids gathered to pass the mic and speak, my heart sunk even lower. Why? I knew what you know: Nothing would really change. Not until the adults of this country protested seriously, left work, took to the streets. The students protested, marched, wrote letters, made calls, and I watched, knowing. Adults wouldn't go the distance. There's not enough will.

It's ironic: I grew up with guns, but my salient memory of childhood was peaceful summer walks through a green field, carrying a .22 to go practice shooting. Tragically, that is not true for youngsters today. They might not shoot as much, but they're the ones forced by our irresponsibility and inaction to have it forefront in their minds and hearts.

So, solutions. I celebrate Moms Demand Action, a group founded by a mother of five right after the Sandy Hook tragedy, based on her belief that all Americans should do more to reduce gun violence. No group has "risen so far, so fast, influencing laws, rattling major corporations, and provoking vicious responses from hardcore gun rights activists," according to Mother Jones.

Although I'm all for background checks and safety locks, these seem like tiny bandages on a gaping wound. The big thing we can do is ban assault weapons immediately, and, even more importantly, elect gun-sensible politicians who don't take NRA money.

Laura Pritchett is a contributor to Writers on the Range, writersontherange.org, an independent nonprofit dedicated to spurring lively conversation about the West. She is the author of several novels and nonfiction books and directs a program in nature writing at Western Colorado University.

Rural electric co-ops to get \$10.7B in USDA funds for clean energy grants, loans

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - MAY 16, 2023 9:04 AM

The U.S. Department of Agriculture will begin to administer two loan and grant programs worth nearly \$11 billion to boost clean energy systems in rural areas, administration officials said Tuesday.

Congress approved the federal spending — \$9.7 billion for a grant and loan program the department is calling the New Empowering Rural America program, or New ERA, and \$1 billion for a Powering Affordable Clean Energy program that will provide partly forgivable loans — in the energy, health and taxes law Democrats passed last summer.

The funding “continues an ongoing effort to ensure that rural America is a full participant in this clean energy economy,” Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack told reporters on a teleconference in advance of the announcement.

Rural areas can have more difficulty than more urban ones in attracting private sector investment, White House National Climate Advisor Ali Zaidi said. The programs are intended to allow those rural areas to take advantage of an industry-wide trend to invest in clean energy production.

“There’s a favorable wind blowing here,” he said. “This allows rural communities to put up a sail.”

The programs are meant to put rural electric cooperatives on equal footing with larger privately owned companies that have already put major funding into clean energy deployment, Vilsack said.

The programs represent the largest single funding effort for rural electrification since President Franklin Roosevelt signed the Rural Electrification Act in 1936, a USDA press release said.

The money is meant not only to address the climate impacts of fossil fuel energy and reduce home energy costs, but to act as an economic engine for rural areas, Zaidi said.

Zaidi cited a Stateline analysis that showed seven of the top 10 largest gross domestic product growth increases between 2019 and 2021 had significant wind farm production.

“This is a proven driver of economic growth on the ground,” Zaidi said. “We want more folks to be able to tap into that opportunity. We’re seeing this not only translates into lower energy costs, but, to places that had been shut down, turning back on as sources of economic opportunity.”

Rural electric cooperatives are eligible for the New ERA program. Up to 25% of the funding in that program can be in the form of direct grants. Utilities can use the money to build renewable energy systems, zero-emission systems and carbon capture facilities, according to the department release.

The climate law allows “the stacking of benefits,” Vilsack said. That means utilities that receive loans and grants through the program can also use the clean energy tax credits that were approved in the law, he said.

The USDA will begin to accept initial applications for funding on July 31. Applicants are expected to write more detailed proposals for funding after the USDA accepts their initial applications.

The PACE program provides loans to renewable energy developers and electric service providers “to help finance large-scale solar, wind, geothermal, biomass, hydropower projects and energy storage in support of renewable energy systems,” the release said.

The program is targeted to “vulnerable, disadvantaged, Tribal and energy communities,” the release said. It’s in line with a Biden administration goal to give at least 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal spending to disadvantaged communities.

The USDA can forgive up to 40% of most of the loans in the program. Up to 60% of loans to applicants in some U.S. territories and tribal communities can be forgiven.

Initial applications for that program will open June 30.

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

U.S. House GOP questions education secretary on transgender athletes, student loans

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - MAY 16, 2023 7:16 PM

WASHINGTON — U.S. House Republicans on Tuesday grilled the secretary of education about student debt cancellation and protections for transgender student athletes during a lengthy hearing on the president's proposed budget request for the Department of Education.

While the subject of the five-hour House Education and the Workforce Committee hearing was the fiscal 2024 budget proposed by Secretary Miguel Cardona, Republicans zeroed in on cultural issues that also have preoccupied state lawmakers, including trans athletes and instruction in diversity in K-12 public schools.

They also criticized the Department of Education for extending the pause on student loan repayments due to the coronavirus pandemic, a policy initially put in place by President Donald Trump.

"We want answers," Committee Chair Virginia Foxx, a North Carolina Republican, said in her opening statement. "We want answers for parents left in the dark, children put a generation behind, women athletes being discriminated against, and the American taxpayer left with the bill. That should be the starting point for any budget discussion."

Democrats focused on the recently passed House GOP bill that temporarily raises the nation's borrowing limit but also cuts spending and imposes additional work rules on safety net programs. Democrats said it would harm the Department of Education's budget and ability to serve students.

Cardona laid out President Joe Biden's budget request that Cardona said focuses on providing resources for students who are low income, have disabilities, are unhoused or come from communities of color. Congress appropriates funding, but the request serves as a blueprint for administration priorities.

The administration would increase funding for Pell Grants, provide tuition-free community college, increase preschool grants, address the shortage of mental health professionals on school grounds and attempt to improve teacher retention, among other initiatives.

"The proposal shores up funding to help underserved schools close achievement gaps and sustain programs that are helping students recover from the pandemic," ranking member Bobby Scott, a Virginia Democrat, said in his opening statement. "These investments will be transformational for our education system."

The budget request would represent a \$10.8 billion increase in discretionary funding from the previous year's levels.

"As an educator and a father, I know that nothing unites America's families more than the hopes we share for our children, and that is why the Biden-Harris administration is pushing for bold investments to ensure all students have equitable access to schools, colleges, and educators that welcome and support them, inspire their love of learning, and prepare them to succeed in whichever career they choose," Cardona said in his opening statement.

Transgender athletes

Several Republicans slammed Cardona for proposed Title IX revisions that bar states from issuing blanket bans on transgender students from competing in sports that align with their gender identity. Title IX prohibits discrimination based on sex in education programs.

The House passed a bill that would ban transgender girls from competing in women's sports that receive Title IX funding, so essentially all public schools. It has no chance in the Senate, and the White House has stated it would veto such legislation.

Indiana Republican Rep. Jim Banks said his state banned transgender girls from competing in sports that align with their gender. Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb vetoed the legislation, but the Republican state legislature overrode the governor's veto.

The proposed federal rule would pull federal funding from a school that has a Title IX violation, which Banks equated to the Department of Education taking away school meals from children.

"You support taking away a school lunch from a needy kid, a kid who (that) might be the only warm

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meal they get every single day, because that school won't allow a boy to compete on a girl's sports team?" Banks asked.

Rep. Pramila Jayapal, a Washington state Democrat, said she found it surprising that Banks was concerned about school lunches for children when he was one of 42 Republicans who voted against expanding access to school meals for students.

Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, Democrat of Oregon, called out Republicans for "picking on trans students."

But Rep. Erin Houchin, an Indiana Republican, said because the Department of Education has "failed to protect women," House Republicans had to pass their bill.

She characterized letting transgender students change clothes in locker rooms that align with their gender identity as sexual harassment. Houchin repeatedly asked Cardona if he considered that sexual harassment.

"I believe the harassment and discrimination against transgender students is something that is rampant in this country and as a department we're proposing regulations to make sure that all students are seen and valued ... and given the same opportunity under Title IX," Cardona said.

He added that all athletes should be protected from sexual harassment.

"There are students right now that are hurting because elected officials have chosen to use their platform to further ostracize them," Cardona said.

Student loans

Several GOP lawmakers, such as Rep. Lloyd Smucker of Pennsylvania, called the administration's student loan cancellation policy a "bailout" and said it was not fair to constituents who either never took out student loans or paid their loans off.

"I find it simply unacceptable that you would ask my constituents who do not have a college degree, and millions more across the country, to shoulder that burden for individuals who knew what they were getting into, who signed their own name to a federal college loan," Smucker said.

Cardona said that about 90% of federal student loan borrowers who qualify for the one-time relief make under \$75,000, and that the policy would help middle class Americans.

He equated the policy to the temporary pandemic-era Paycheck Protection Program, which also did not benefit every American.

"What it's intended to do is prevent defaults from happening," said Cardona.

The policy, announced last year, would cancel up to \$10,000 in federal student debt for borrowers earning up to \$125,000 annually, or up to \$250,000 for married couples, with the boost to \$20,000 in forgiveness for Pell Grant recipients.

It only applies to current borrowers, not future ones. Those who have private student loans are not eligible.

The Supreme Court will decide in the coming months whether the Biden administration can carry out the program.

The House committee last week marked up a resolution that aims to overturn the executive order.

Foxx pressed Cardona about when the Department of Education would begin requiring student loan repayments and if he could commit to not extending the pause on student loan repayment.

The Department of Education plans to lift the pause on repayments on June 30, and those borrowers will be required to begin repayments either after the Supreme Court's decision or 60 days after the June deadline.

Cardona said the Department of Education is not extending the pause after the deadline.

Republican Rep. Rick Allen of Georgia asked Cardona if canceling student loan debt would financially help "folks who never went to college."

"I believe if we help folks get back into repayment without falling into default, it would help not only them, but their local economy," Cardona said.

School choice

Rep. Aaron Bean, a Florida Republican, asked Cardona about funding that can be used by parents to send their children to private schools — an umbrella term known as school choice.

"The biggest thing that we can do to raise the bar and empower parents and kids is give school choice,

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give choice to parents to determine what's best for their kids," Bean said.

Cardona said there has been no reduction in federal funding for charter schools, public schools that are alternatives funded by taxpayer dollars, and stressed that the funding that in some states goes to private school vouchers takes away funding from public schools.

"If you start taking dollars away from the local public school, those schools are going to be worse," Cardona said.

Bean said that he's concerned about the national debt, and asked Cardona if there are any programs that could be cut.

"Investing in education to me is investing in our country's economic prosperity," Cardona said.

Book bans

Rep. Ilhan Omar, a Minnesota Democrat, said she feels "like our education system is under assault," and pointed to the far-right group Moms of Liberty that has spurred thousands of book bans from public libraries and public schools that feature books about LGBTQ+ people or people of color.

An Arizona Democrat, Rep. Raúl Grijalva, made similar remarks.

"When you have over 2,500 books banned across libraries in this country, or attempts to ban those (books), that's a frightening thought," he said.

Omar said that movement makes "it harder for a lot of our kids to feel as if they are part of a community."

She asked Cardona what the Department of Education is doing to protect kids and teachers from those attacks.

Cardona said that the Department of Education has worked to make it clear that all students should be respected and has provided numerous fact sheets to schools and educators.

Republican Rep. Glenn Grothman of Wisconsin said he was concerned about the diversity of ideology in higher education, arguing that there are not enough conservative professors.

He asked Cardona if having "little diversity in ideology in major universities" bothered him.

"I am concerned at some of the attacks on (diversity, equity and inclusion programs) if that is what you are referencing," Cardona said.

Florida Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis on Monday signed a bill to prohibit Florida public universities from using federal funding for DEI initiatives.

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

Some movement reported in debt limit talks as Biden cuts short overseas trip

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT AND ASHLEY MURRAY - MAY 16, 2023 5:21 PM

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden and congressional leaders struggled to find common ground on the debt ceiling during a Tuesday meeting, though lawmakers said afterward there was some progress toward a deal.

Biden and U.S. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy will become the two primary negotiators on a bipartisan debt limit bill that could include other items, such as caps on future government spending.

And Biden will return early from meetings with world leaders overseas, arriving in Washington, D.C. on Sunday “in order to be back for meetings with Congressional leaders to ensure that Congress takes action by the deadline to avert default,” according to a statement from press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre.

McCarthy said after the meeting Biden and the four lawmakers “set the stage to carry on further conversations,” telling reporters that a deal is “possible” by the end of this week.

McCarthy said Biden has designated administration officials to meet with the California Republican’s team, in a move he described as “productive.”

McCarthy said he’ll have Louisiana Rep. Garret Graves and members of his staff negotiating on behalf of Republicans, while the White House has designated budget director Shalanda Young and Steve Ricchetti, counselor to the president, as their negotiators.

“The structure of how we negotiate has improved, so it now gives you a better opportunity, even though we only have a few days to get it done,” McCarthy said.

“If this was where we were in February, when I first came (to the White House), I’d be very optimistic that this would get solved right away. The structure has changed, so we’re in a better process,” McCarthy later continued.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, speaking in front of the U.S. Capitol, said Tuesday’s meeting was far more cordial and constructive than the previous meeting earlier this month.

Schumer said discussions about changes to the energy permitting process did come up as did work requirements for some safety net programs, though he didn’t get into specifics on either. Some progressive Democrats already have raised strong objections to any changes in work requirements.

“I’m not going to get into the details of those issues, but there are quite a bit of differences,” the New York Democrat said.

“We also understood the need to move with alacrity — that we only have a few days left, 11 days to be precise,” Schumer added, alluding to June 1 being the first day the government could default under a projection by the Treasury secretary. “And given the House and Senate procedures, we have to move very, very quickly.”

Republican leaders have been pressing for Democrats to agree to several conservative priorities, including spending cuts and enhanced work requirements on some federal aid programs, in exchange for the GOP addressing the debt limit.

Democrats have maintained they’re open to negotiations on federal spending during the annual budget and appropriations process, though they’ve said that should take place separately from the debt limit.

‘Economic and financial catastrophe’

The United States reached its debt limit in January, though serious negotiations on the country’s borrowing limit didn’t begin until earlier this month.

In the interim, the federal government has used accounting maneuvers called extraordinary measures to ensure the Treasury Department can continue paying all of the country’s bills in full and on time.

Those measures are limited and could be exhausted as soon as June 1 without a bipartisan agreement.

If that happens, the federal government would be limited to spending the amount of revenue that flows in during a given day or week, forcing a significant reduction in spending on everything from Social Se-

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curity to military paychecks to funding to state governments to infrastructure projects.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen warned lawmakers in a Monday letter that the U.S. could default "by early June, and potentially as early as June 1."

Yellen told the Independent Community Bankers of America at their 2023 Capital Summit on Tuesday morning that Congress must move quickly to avoid a default on the debt.

"Our current best estimate underscores the urgency of this moment. It is essential that Congress act as soon as possible," Yellen said. "In my assessment, and that of economists across the board, a U.S. default would generate an economic and financial catastrophe."

Yellen said she plans to update Congress again next week on when the U.S. would likely hit its x-date, at which point Treasury will no longer be able to pay all the nation's bills.

If Congress doesn't approve a bipartisan debt limit bill before then, Yellen said, the "economy would suddenly find itself in an unprecedented economic and financial storm."

Biden cancels stops in Australia, Papua New Guinea

Biden is set to leave Wednesday morning to travel to Japan to attend a meeting of the G7, a group of world economies, though the White House on Tuesday canceled stops in Australia and Papua New Guinea that were scheduled to take place after the G7 wrapped up.

Jean-Pierre said in a statement that Biden "has made clear that members of Congress from both parties and chambers must come together to prevent default, as they have 78 times before."

"The President and his team will continue to work with Congressional leadership to deliver a budget agreement that can reach the President's desk," she added.

The U.S. Senate is scheduled to be on recess next week for its Memorial Day break, before returning to Capitol Hill on May 30. The U.S. House is set to be out on its Memorial Day recess that week.

Following the debt limit meeting Tuesday, McCarthy declined to detail discussions on changing work requirements for some government safety net programs, including food assistance and health care programs, as a condition for raising the debt ceiling. But McCarthy said Republicans are still pushing for measures that passed in the House.

Regarding rescinding unspent COVID-19 relief funds, McCarthy said, "I think at the end of the day it will be in the bill."

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, a Kentucky Republican, said the negotiations "shouldn't be this hard."

"Number one, we know we're not going to default. They know it, we know it," McConnell said. "We're running out of time, and finally, as the speaker has pointed out, the president's agreed to designate somebody to lead."

The White House said in a readout of the meeting that Biden "emphasized that while more work remains on a range of difficult issues, he's optimistic that there is a path to a responsible, bipartisan budget agreement if both sides negotiate in good faith and recognize that neither side will get everything it wants."

"The President directed staff to continue to meet daily on outstanding issues," the White House said. "He said that he would like to check in with leaders later this week by phone, and meet with them upon his return from overseas."

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.

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

Arguments on landmark abortion pill case to be heard Wednesday in appeals court

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - MAY 16, 2023 10:54 AM

WASHINGTON — The lawsuit over access to the abortion pill goes before the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans on Wednesday, the next step on a path that will likely end at the U.S. Supreme Court.

The three-judge panel will decide whether to keep, overturn, or alter a ruling from U.S. District Court from the Northern District of Texas Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk, who sought to end the prescription medication's approval in an early April ruling.

More than a dozen medical organizations — including the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine and the American Society for Reproductive Medicine — argued in support of access to mifepristone in a brief to the appeals court.

The medical organizations wrote that their "ability to effectively care for patients often requires access to mifepristone, which has undergone rigorous testing and review and has been approved for use in the United States for over 20 years."

They wrote in their 48-page brief that the Texas district judge's ruling "is rife with medically inappropriate assumptions and terminology."

"It disregards decades of unambiguous analysis supporting the use of mifepristone in miscarriage and abortion care," the 13 medical organizations wrote. "It relies on pseudoscience and on speculation, and adopts wholesale and without appropriate judicial inquiry the assertions of a small group of declarants who are ideologically opposed to abortion care and at odds with the overwhelming majority of the medical community and the FDA."

The appeals panel deciding the case will include Judges Jennifer Walker Elrod, James C. Ho and Cory T. Wilson.

Elrod was nominated by former President George W. Bush in 2007 and confirmed by the Senate on a voice vote. Ho and Wilson were nominated by former President Donald Trump and were confirmed by the Senate on mostly party-line votes.

The case, Alliance Hippocratic Medicine v. FDA, began in November when anti-abortion groups filed a suit challenging the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's approval of mifepristone in 2000.

The anti-abortion organizations called on a federal judge to overturn the approval, removing mifepristone from the market, though they also challenged changes to how the medication is prescribed and used following changes at the federal level in 2016 and 2021.

Alliance Defending Freedom, the anti-abortion legal organization that filed the lawsuit, wrote in its brief to the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals that the FDA erred when it approved mifepristone.

ADF attorneys claim that mifepristone is not safe and effective for pregnancy termination, rejecting the scientific studies cited by medical organizations that show otherwise.

ADF's legal team also opposes changes the FDA made to mifepristone's use and administration in 2016, including that the medication could be used up to 10 weeks into a pregnancy, an increase from seven weeks.

The 2016 changes reduced the number of in-person visits from three to one, allowed qualified health care providers to prescribe the medication and changed some dosage and timing instructions. Non-fatal adverse incidents no longer had to be reported to the FDA, under the changes.

Then, in 2021, the FDA began allowing mifepristone to be prescribed via telehealth and sent to patients through the mail. The alterations were similarly opposed by ADF in the court filing.

The anti-abortion organizations call on the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals to uphold the Texas district judge's decision that stayed the FDA's approval.

"In sum, FDA has eliminated all safeguards that gave abortion providers the opportunity to rule out ectopic pregnancies, verify gestational age, and identify any contraindications to prescribing mifepristone," ADF wrote in a 90-page brief. "It also eliminated the follow-up care that once allowed doctors to identify complications like sepsis, hemorrhaging, or remaining baby body parts and pregnancy tissue."

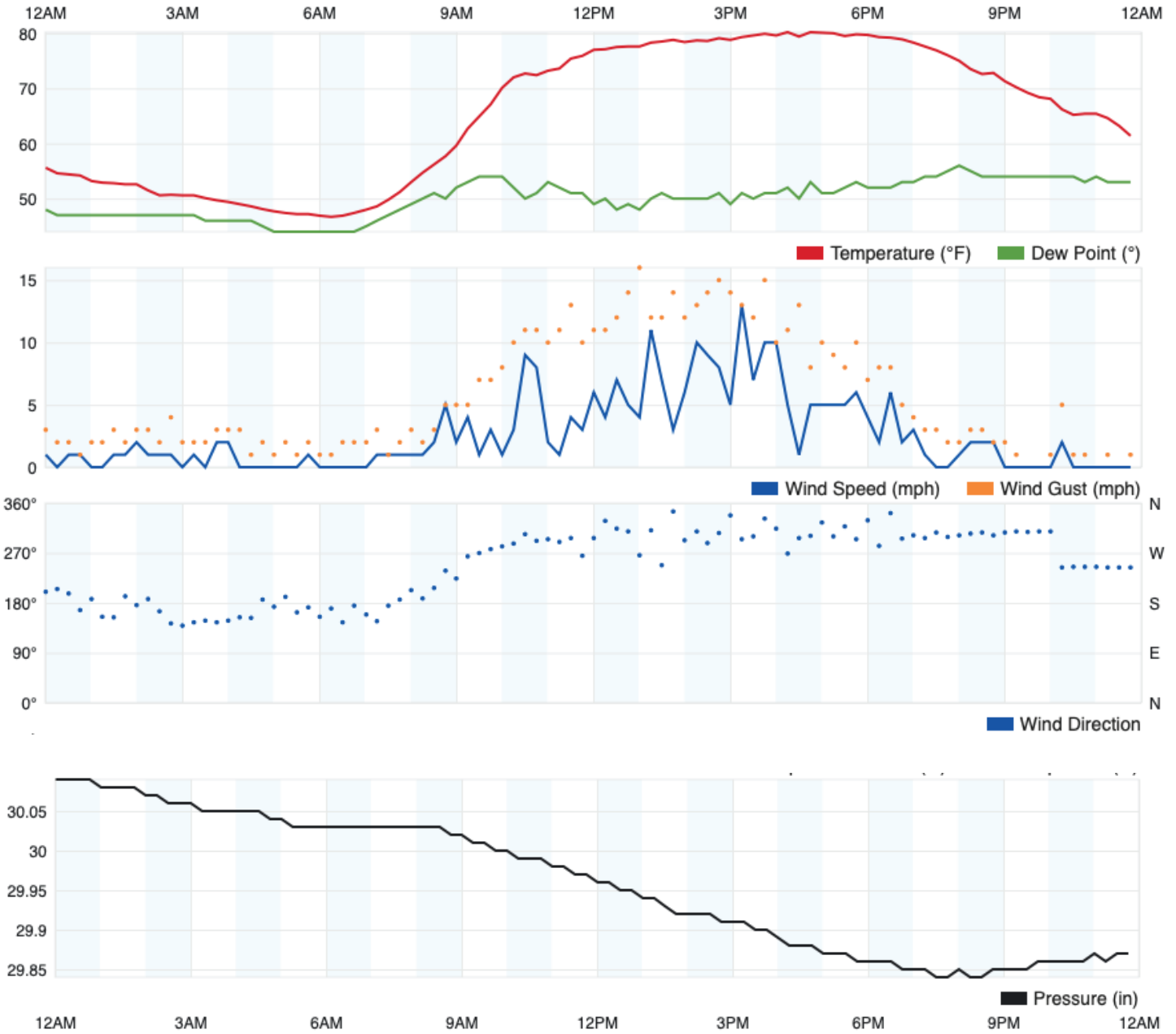
The 5th Circuit Court of Appeals is scheduled to hear arguments in the appeal on Wednesday at 1 p.m. Central. An audio live stream is scheduled to be found here when the hearing begins.

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.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
						
Mostly Sunny	Showers Likely then Chance T-storms	Mostly Sunny then Mostly Sunny and Breezy	Mostly Clear and Breezy then Mostly Clear	Sunny and Breezy	Clear	Sunny
High: 81 °F	Low: 53 °F	High: 69 °F	Low: 41 °F	High: 66 °F	Low: 42 °F	High: 77 °F

Today
May 17, 2023



Highs 78 to 85°

Smoky skies. Showers and storms move from west to east this afternoon & evening


Tonight



Lows 48 to 56°

Showers and storms exit from west to east overnight into Thursday morning

Thursday
May 18, 2023



Highs 67 to 73°

Breezy northwest winds (20-35 mph gusts), lingering showers possible ne SD and wc MN


Thu Night



Lows 37 to 42°

Chilly temperatures. Localized frost?

Friday
May 19, 2023



Highs 62 to 68°

High temperatures 5-10 degrees below normal

Fri Night



Lows 40 to 45°

Clear, calm, chilly



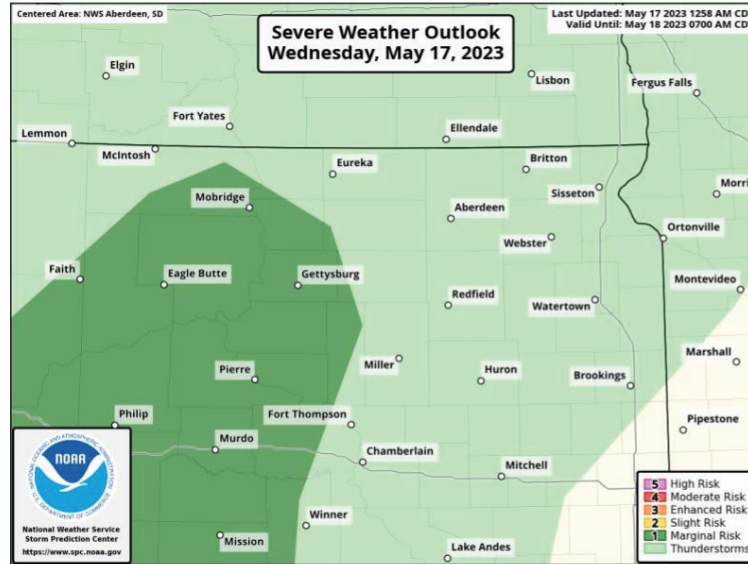
Precipitation chances exist through Thursday, then relatively chilly air moves in through Friday night. However, a warm-up to above normal temperatures is expected into the upcoming work-week.

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Showers & Storms Today

A cold front will spark showers and storms from west to east this afternoon and evening, a few of which could become strong to severe mainly across central South Dakota.



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD Updated: May 17, 2023

Probability of Precipitation Forecast

	5/17 Wed					5/18 Thu							
	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm
Aberdeen			10	50	65	40	15	5	5	10	10	10	0
Britton	0	0	0	50	80	70	30	10	10	20	20	20	5
Brookings			0	5	15	40	45	40	40	35	20	15	0
Chamberlain	0	5	20	55	60	45	30	15	10	5	5	0	0
Clark				10	55	50	40	25	15	15	20	20	0
Eagle Butte	0	35	55	70	35	10	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ellendale			30	70	70	20	10	5	5	5	5	5	5
Eureka		0	65	70	25	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gettysburg		0	40	60	55	15	0	5	0	0	0	0	0
Huron		0	5	30	55	50	35	20	15	15	15	15	0
Kennebec			30	55	65	50	5	10	5	0	0	0	0
McIntosh	0	55	50	30	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Milbank	0	0	0	0	15	60	70	40	30	25	25	25	5
Miller			25	70	60	45	10	10	0	0	0	0	0
Mobridge		10	40	65	10	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Murdo		0	45	55	40	25	5	5	5	0	0	0	0
Pierre		0	40	55	55	20	5	5	5	0	0	0	0
Redfield			0	70	75	45	20	5	5	5	5	5	0
Sisseton	0	0	0	5	45	55	70	30	20	20	25	25	5
Watertown	0	0	0	0	30	55	65	25	25	20	20	20	0
Webster				0	60	50	70	20	10	20	20	20	5
Wheaton	0	0	0	0	15	55	65	35	20	20	20	20	5

*Table values in %

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**Created: 4 am CDT Wed 5/17/2023

***Values are maximums over the period beginning at the time shown.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 80 °F at 4:45 PM

Low Temp: 47 °F at 6:14 AM

Wind: 16 mph at 12:55 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 01 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 103 in 1934

Record Low: 27 in 1925

Average High: 71

Average Low: 45

Average Precip in May.: 1.88

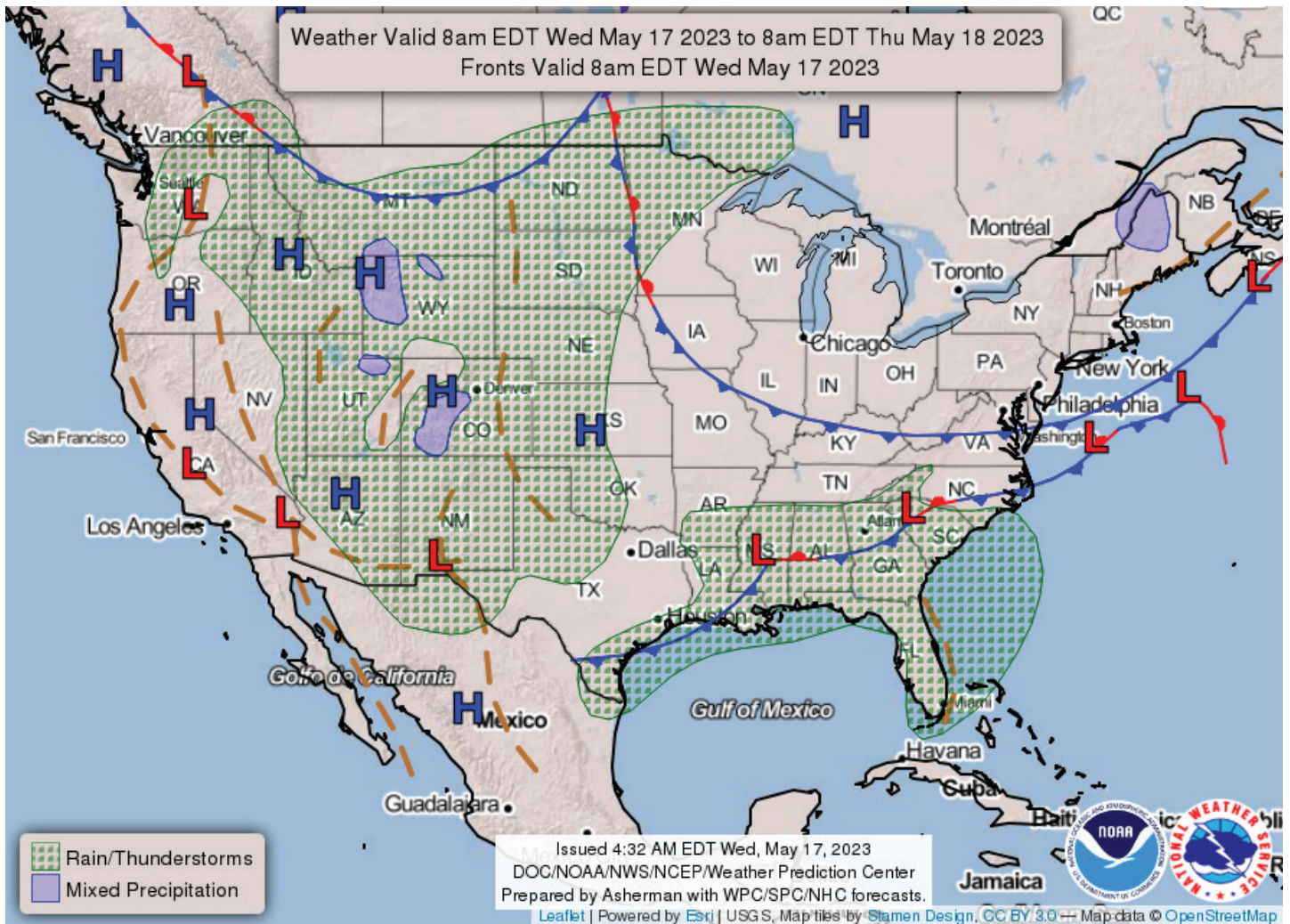
Precip to date in May.: 1.90

Average Precip to date: 5.85

Precip Year to Date: 7.62

Sunset Tonight: 8:59:45 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:56:46 AM



Today in Weather History

May 17, 1902: An estimated F3 Tornado moved northeast from 6 miles southwest of Mina to south of Westport, a distance of about 25 miles. A four-year-old girl was killed in one of two farmhouses blown apart in Edmunds County. Three more homes were damaged in Brown County. There were probably two if not three separate tornadoes involved.

May 17, 1937: A complex of tornadoes and downbursts skipped southeast from near Roslyn and Greenville. This storm also caused \$50,000 in damage in downtown Waubay and damaged farm property to about 4 miles west of Gray, Minnesota. About 20 barns were destroyed. Sheep and horses were killed. These events traveled a distance of about 70 miles. The strongest tornado was estimated at F2 strength.

May 17, 1996: An F1 tornado touched down 20 miles southeast of Wilmot or 5 miles northwest of Ortonville, Minnesota at Schmidts Landing on Big Stone Lake. The roof was ripped off of a house, and a garage wall was blown off its foundation. Three RV's were demolished, and a trailer was overturned and destroyed. This tornado moved into Big Stone County and intensified. An F3 tornado crossed Big Stone Lake from Roberts County, South Dakota destroying on a cabin at the Meadowbrook Resort. It also blew the roof off another cabin, and the third cabin was demolished when a tree fell onto it. Several boats on Big Stone Lake were overturned. Approximately 150 buildings sustained damage or were destroyed as the tornado moved northeast across Big Stone County. Southwest of Clinton, a pontoon boat, and a camper were destroyed. East of Clinton, a farm lost all buildings with severe damage to their home. Estimated property damage was listed at \$1.5 million.

A wind gust of 90 mph blew two garage roofs off, destroyed an antenna, blew large trees down, and also a grain dryer was blown down near Dumont, Minnesota.

1896: An estimated F5 tornado tracked 100 miles through northeastern Kansas and extreme southeastern Nebraska. Seneca, Oneida, Sabetha, and Reserve, Kansas sustained severe damage. While passing through Reserve, the tornado was 2 miles wide. 25 people were killed, and 200 were injured. The cost was estimated at \$400,000.

1979: A reading of 12 degrees at Mauna Kea Observatory established a record low for the state of Hawaii.

Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

WHAT WOULD HE THINK?

A mother lectured her daughter about the importance of keeping family secrets private. One day she got in trouble in school, and the principal called her mother to tell her about the trouble her daughter was in.

After scolding the girl, she said, "Now you must go to your room and ask God to forgive you."

Later, when the family sat down for dinner, she asked, "Sara, did you ask God to forgive you?"

"No, Mom, I didn't," said Sara. "I knew that you wouldn't want Him to know about our family scandals!"

Sara had no doubt that everything she did and everything she said - whether good or bad - was seen or heard by God.

It was true for Job. It is true for us. Nothing that we have done or will ever do will escape His notice because nothing can be hidden from Him. As Job was speaking of the life he lived in the presence of God, he was able to say, "I have not committed any sin in my heart against God or my neighbor." How many of us can repeat those words?

Prayer: Help us to realize, Lord, that we cannot hide anything from You. May we realize the importance of the way we live and strive to be like Your Son. In His Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Isn't it calamity for the wicked and misfortune for those who do evil? Doesn't he see everything I do and every step I take? Job 31:3-4



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

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2023 Community Events

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.16.23

15 34 36 69 70 17

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$132,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 11
DRAW: Mins 21 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.15.23

9 16 33 38 41 8

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,950,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 11 Mins 20
DRAW: Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.16.23

1 14 18 23 34 6

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 14 Hrs 41 Mins 21
DRAW: Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.13.23

1 7 11 24 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$59,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 11 Mins 21
DRAW: Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.15.23

13 36 55 56 68 23

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 10 Mins 20
DRAW: Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.15.23

1 26 28 55 58 25

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$146,000,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 10 Mins 20
DRAW: Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

News from the Associated Press

Ford recalls 310,000 trucks to fix problem with driver's front air bag

DETROIT (AP) — Ford is recalling more than 310,000 trucks in the U.S. because the driver's front air bag may not inflate in a crash.

The recall covers certain F-250, F-350, F-450, and F-550 Super Duty trucks from the 2016 model year.

The company says dust can accumulate in a cable inside the steering wheel, interrupting the electrical connection. Ford says it's not aware of any crashes or injuries caused by the problem.

Dealers will replace the steering wheel wiring assembly at no cost to owners, who will be notified starting July 5.

Owners may hear popping or clicking noises inside the steering wheel, or steering wheel switches and the horn might not work. They may also see an air bag warning light notifying them of the problem.

Heat wave in Asia made 30 times more likely because of climate change, scientists say

By SIBI ARASU Associated Press

BENGALURU, India (AP) — A searing heat wave in parts of southern Asia in April this year was made at least 30 times more likely by climate change, according to a rapid study by international scientists released Wednesday.

Sizzling temperatures of up to 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit) were recorded in monitoring stations in parts of India, Bangladesh, Thailand and Laos last month — which was unusually high for the time of year.

The climate change-fueled heat caused deaths, widespread hospitalizations, damaged roads, sparked fires and led to school closures in the region.

The World Weather Attribution group uses established models to quickly determine whether climate change played a part in extreme weather events. While the studies themselves are not yet peer-reviewed, which is the gold standard for science, they are often later published in peer-reviewed journals.

In Thailand, high temperatures mixed with humidity meant some parts of the country felt above 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit). In India, multiple regions across the country were affected with 13 people dying due to heat at a public event outside India's business capital, Mumbai. The eastern Indian state of West Bengal closed all schools and colleges for a week.

The study found that temperatures were at least 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) hotter in the region because of climate change.

If the global average temperature reaches up to 2 degrees Celsius warmer than it was in the late 1800s, the April heatwave could occur every one to two years in India and Bangladesh, the study said. Currently, the world is around 1.1 to 1.2 degrees Celsius (2 to 2.2 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than pre-industrial times.

"We see again and again that climate change dramatically increases the frequency and intensity of heatwaves, one of the deadliest weather events there are," said Friedrike Otto, a senior climate scientist at Imperial College London and one of the study's authors.

Heat action plans — which are government-run and funded and aim to help people deal with extreme heat through awareness programs, training for healthcare workers and affordable cooling methods — need to be implemented faster in India and other heat-affected countries, the study's authors said.

"Access to healthcare and to cooling solutions like fans and air conditioners is missing for a lot of the population in this region," said Emmanuel Raju, director of the Copenhagen Centre for Disaster Research at the University of Copenhagen and another of the study's nearly two dozen authors.

Raju emphasized that heat affects the poorest people and people whose work requires them to be outside — farmers, street vendors and construction workers — the most.

“It’s important to talk about who can cope and adapt to heat,” he said. “Many are still recovering from the pandemic, and from past heatwaves and cyclones, which leaves them trapped in a vicious cycle.”

The southern Asian region is considered among the most vulnerable to climate change in the world, according to various global climate studies. But India, the largest country in the region and the most populous in the world is also currently the third highest emitter of planet-warming gases.

Scientists say that drastic measures to reduce carbon dioxide emissions immediately is the only solution.

“Heat waves will become more common, temperatures will rise even more and the number of hot days will increase and become more frequent” if we continue to pump greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, said Chaya Vaddhanaphuti, a professor at the Chiang Mai University in Thailand and a co-author of the study.

Vimal Mishra, a professor at the Indian Institute of Technology in Gandhinagar who studies the region’s climate, acknowledged the importance of studies that help attribute specific weather events to climate change but said more action needs to be taken.

“We should go beyond attribution and talk about how climate change is affecting weather fundamentally and look at how we can develop climate resilience,” he said.

Follow Sibi Arasu on Twitter at @sibi123

Associated Press climate and environmental coverage receives support from several private foundations. See more about AP’s climate initiative here. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Russia poised to decide if Ukraine’s grain deal survives. That’s a risk to global food security

By JAMEY KEATEN and COURTNEY BONNELL Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — The United Nations is racing to extend a deal that has allowed shipments of Ukrainian grain through the Black Sea to parts of the world struggling with hunger, helping ease a global food crisis exacerbated by the war Russia launched more than a year ago.

The breakthrough accord that the U.N. and Turkey brokered with the warring sides last summer came with a separate agreement to facilitate shipments of Russian food and fertilizer that Moscow insists hasn’t been applied.

Russia set a Thursday deadline for its concerns to be ironed out or it’s bowing out. Such brinkmanship isn’t new: With a similar extension in the balance in March, Russia unilaterally decided to renew the deal for just 60 days instead of the 120 days outlined in the agreement.

The last ship participating in the deal left Ukraine on Wednesday hauling corn to Turkey. No vessels have been cleared to enter the country’s three open ports since May 6.

U.N. officials and analysts warn that a failure to extend the Black Sea Grain Initiative could hurt countries in Africa, the Middle East and parts of Asia that rely on Ukrainian wheat, barley, vegetable oil and other affordable food products, especially as drought takes a toll. The deal helped lower prices of food commodities like wheat over the last year, but that relief has not reached kitchen tables.

“If you have a cancellation of the grain deal again, when we’re already at a pretty tight situation, it’s just one more thing that the world doesn’t need, so the prices could start heading higher,” said William Osnato, a senior research analyst at agriculture data and analytics firm Gro Intelligence. “You don’t see relief on the horizon.”

U.N. humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths told the Security Council on Monday that the deal was “critical” and talks were ongoing.

Negotiators who gathered in Istanbul last week made little apparent headway. Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Oleksandr Kubrakov said the grain deal “should be extended for a longer period of time and expanded” to “give predictability and confidence” to markets.

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Moscow opposes such an expansion. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Tuesday that there's an "intense session of contacts" but that "a decision is yet to be made."

Russia, meanwhile, is rapidly shipping a bumper harvest of its wheat through other ports. Critics say that suggests Moscow is posturing or trying to wrest concessions in other areas — such as on Western sanctions — and claim it's dragged its heels on joint inspections of ships by Russian, Ukrainian, U.N. and Turkish officials.

Average daily inspections — meant to ensure vessels carry only food and not weapons — have steadily dropped from a peak of 10.6 in October to 3.2 last month. Shipments of Ukrainian grain also have declined in recent weeks.

Russia denies slowing the work.

"We cannot agree that the role of the Russian representative (inspector) should be reduced to automatic rubber-stamping, or approval, or appeals submitted by Kyiv," Russia's ambassador in Geneva, Gennady Gatilov, told reporters last month.

Asked whether a blockade of Ukraine's coast or more attacks on its ports could follow any withdrawal from the agreement, Gatilov said Russian authorities were "considering all possible scenarios if the deal is not extended."

Russia has five main asks, according to Gatilov:

- A restoration of foreign supplies of farm machinery and replacement parts.
- A lifting of restrictions on insurance and access to foreign ports for Russian ships and cargo.
- Resumed operation of a pipeline that sends Russian ammonia, a key ingredient in fertilizer, to a Ukrainian Black Sea port.
- An end to restrictions on financial activities linked to Russia's fertilizer companies.
- Renewed access to the international SWIFT banking system for the Russian Agricultural Bank.

The U.N. says it's doing what it can, but those solutions mainly rest with the private sector, where it has little leverage.

The deal has allowed over 30 million metric tons of Ukrainian grain to be shipped, with more than half that going to developing nations. China, Spain and Turkey are the biggest recipients, and Russia says that shows food isn't going to the poorest countries.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres says Ukrainian corn for animal feed has headed to developed countries, while "a majority" of grain for people to eat has gone to emerging economies.

Even if a "meaningful part" of the shipments headed to developed nations, that "has a positive impact to all countries because it brings prices down," Guterres told reporters in Nairobi, Kenya, this month. "And when you bring prices down, everybody benefits."

Osnato, the analyst, said markets aren't reacting to Russia's threats to exit the deal, with wheat recently hitting two-year lows. If the agreement isn't extended or negotiations drag on, the "loss of Ukraine grains wouldn't be a disaster" for a month or two, he said.

He says there is "bluster" coming from Russia to push for easing some sanctions because it's shipping record amounts of wheat for the season, and its fertilizers are flowing well, too.

"It's more about trying to get a little leverage, and they're doing what they can to put themselves in a better negotiating position," Osnato said.

Trade flows tracked by financial data provider Refinitiv show that Russia exported just over 4 million tons of wheat in April, the highest volume for the month in five years, following record or near-record highs in several previous months.

Exports since last July reached 32.2 million tons, 34% above the same period from last season, according to Refinitiv. It estimates Russia will ship 44 million tons of wheat in 2022-2023.

The issue is more pressing with Ukraine's wheat harvest coming up in June and the need to sell that crop in July. Not having a Black Sea shipping corridor at that point would "start taking another large chunk of wheat and other grains off the market," Osnato said.

Ukraine can send its food by land through Europe, but those routes have a lower capacity than sea

shipments and have stirred disunity in the European Union.

Uncertainties like drought in places including Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Syria and East Africa — big importers of food — are likely to keep food prices high, and an end to the U.N. deal wouldn't help.

"Any shock to the markets can cause massive harm with catastrophic ripple effects in countries balancing on the brink of famine," said Shashwat Saraf, emergency director for East Africa at the International Rescue Committee.

"The expiration of the Black Sea Grain Initiative is likely to trigger increased levels of hunger and malnutrition, spelling further disaster for East Africa," Saraf said.

Bonnell reported from London. AP reporters Evelyne Musambi in Nairobi, Kenya; Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations; and Dasha Litvinova in Tallinn, Estonia, contributed.

North Carolina GOP overrides veto of 12-week abortion limit, allowing it to become law

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM, GARY D. ROBERTSON and DENISE LAVOIE Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Legislation banning most abortions after 12 weeks of pregnancy will become law in North Carolina after the state's Republican-controlled General Assembly successfully overrode the Democratic governor's veto late Tuesday.

The House completed the second and final part of the override vote after a similar three-fifths majority — the fraction necessary — voted for the override earlier Tuesday in the Senate. The party-line outcomes represent a major victory for Republican legislative leaders who needed every GOP member on board to enact the law over Gov. Roy Cooper's opposition.

Cooper vetoed the measure over the weekend after spending last week traveling around the state to persuade at least one Republican to side with him on the override, which would be enough to uphold his veto. But in the end, the four Republicans targeted by Cooper — including one who recently switched from the Democratic Party — voted to override.

Republicans pitched the measure as a middle-ground change to state law, which currently bans nearly all abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy, without exceptions for rape or incest.

The votes came as abortion rights in the U.S. faced another tectonic shift with lawmakers in South Carolina and Nebraska also considering new abortion limits. North Carolina and South Carolina have been two of the few remaining Southern states with relatively easy access.

Such restrictions are possible because the U.S. Supreme Court last year struck down the landmark 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling, which established a nationwide right to abortion.

Under the bill that had been up for a vote Tuesday in the South Carolina House, abortion access would be almost entirely banned after about six weeks of pregnancy — before women often know they're pregnant. The South Carolina state Senate previously rejected a proposal to nearly outlaw abortions.

However, a final vote would have to wait until later Wednesday after the South Carolina House moved to reconvene at 10 a.m. while the computer system rebooted.

Nationally, bans on abortion throughout pregnancy are in effect in 14 states.

Abortion is banned or severely restricted in much of the South, including bans throughout pregnancy in Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas and West Virginia. In Georgia, it's allowed only in the first six weeks.

The Carolinas, Florida and Virginia are now the main destinations in the region for those seeking legal abortions. Florida has a ban that kicks in 15 weeks into pregnancy. Under a recent law, that would tighten to six weeks pending a court ruling. Further west, women often travel to Illinois, Kansas, New Mexico or Colorado.

If both the North and South Carolina bans become law, combined with Florida's recent ban, "it would be just devastating for abortion access in the South," Jamie Lockhart, executive director of Planned Parenthood Advocates of Virginia, said earlier Tuesday.

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After the final vote Tuesday in the North Carolina House, abortion-rights advocates and Democrats in the chamber gallery loudly booed the outcome and shouted "Shame!" Many observers in the gallery were escorted out by General Assembly police.

Similar displeasure poured out after the earlier North Carolina Senate debate, although many anti-abortion demonstrators also were in the audience, pleased with the outcome.

"Today marks the beginning of North Carolina's first real step towards becoming a pro-life state," Tami Fitzgerald, executive director of the socially conservative North Carolina Values Coalition, said after the House vote.

Senate Republicans said Cooper ignored \$160 million within the measure that would boost funding to increase contraceptive services, reduce infant and maternal mortality and provide paid maternity leave for state employees and teachers.

"This bill provides resources for the pregnant woman. It provides broad resources and a significant knowledge base to enable her, to equip her in finding a path forward — a path forward for her, and a path forward for her unborn child," said Rep. Kristin Baker, a Cabarrus County Republican and psychiatrist.

The new abortion limits set to take effect July 1 also will include rape or incest exceptions through 20 weeks of pregnancy and exceptions for "life-limiting" fetal anomalies during the first 24 weeks. An existing exception for when the life of the pregnant woman is in danger will remain.

Democrats focused on details of the abortion rules, which they said would place barriers between women and their doctors, leaving those who are pregnant in danger, with less access to abortion services.

"Women did not ask for your oversight. We didn't ask for your approval," Rep. Julie von Haefen, a Wake County Democrat, told GOP colleagues. "It's our fundamental right to make decisions about our own bodies and our own health care."

Cooper said in a statement after the vote that he'll "continue doing everything I can to protect abortion access in North Carolina because women's lives depend on it."

White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said the law "will make it even more difficult for women to get the reproductive health care they need."

North Carolina Republicans were able to complete the override due in large part to Mecklenburg County Rep. Tricia Cotham's party switch to the GOP last month. That gave Republicans veto-proof seat majorities in both chambers.

Cotham has supported abortion rights in the past. She said in a statement late Tuesday that the bill "strikes a reasonable balance" that anyone not holding "extremist positions" on abortion can support.

In South Carolina, the impasse dates back to a special session last fall when House lawmakers demanding a near-total ban did not meet to negotiate with their Senate counterparts pushing for a ban around six weeks.

The stalemate persisted even after the state Supreme Court in January struck down a previous law banning abortions once cardiac activity is detected.

That decision left abortion legal through 22 weeks of pregnancy. A sharp increase in abortions since then has rankled Republicans.

The House was weighing a Senate bill similar to the one they denied last year. The measure would ban abortion when an ultrasound detects cardiac activity, around six weeks.

A late night is expected even after Republicans invoked rules to limit debate. House Speaker Murrell Smith has said the chamber will not adjourn until the measure gets approval. Democrats slowed the process Tuesday by speaking for all three allotted minutes on each of their hundreds of amendments and forcing other procedural votes.

In Nebraska, conservatives in the Legislature got just enough votes Tuesday to fold a proposed 12-week abortion ban into a bill that would ban gender-affirming health for minors.

Throughout, hundreds of protesters filled the Capitol rotunda just outside the chamber doors, nearly drowning out debate at times with chants, shouts and foot stomping.

The plan won the 33 votes it needed in the state's one-chamber, officially nonpartisan legislature to end

debate and set up other votes to advance it. It must now survive a final round, which could happen as soon as Thursday, to pass.

In Montana, Republican Gov. Greg Gianforte's office announced Tuesday that he had signed into law a bill that makes performing the abortion method most commonly used after 15 weeks of gestation a felony. Planned Parenthood of Montana asked a judge to temporarily block the ban on dilation and evacuation abortions.

A separate challenge to abortion access will be considered Wednesday, when a federal appeals court hears arguments on whether the Food and Drug Administration's approval of the widely used abortion drug mifepristone should be overturned. A three-judge panel of the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals will review a ruling last month by a federal judge in Texas who ordered a hold on approval of mifepristone, a decision that overruled two decades of scientific approval of the drug. That ruling was stayed while the appeal is pending.

The three judges who will hear the case each have a history of supporting restrictions on abortion. A ruling is not expected immediately.

Lavoie reported from Richmond, Virginia. Associated Press writers James Pollard and Jeffrey Collins in Columbia, South Carolina, Geoff Mulvihill in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, Amy Beth Hanson in Helena, Montana and Sarah Rankin in Richmond, Virginia contributed to this report. Schoenbaum and Pollard are corps members 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.

Musk says he's not stepping down as Tesla CEO, tells shareholders the company will advertise

Associated Press undefined

Elon Musk on Tuesday dismissed speculation that he might step down as Tesla's CEO and told the company's annual shareholders meeting that the electric car and solar panel company would start doing some advertising.

"Say it ain't so," one shareholder asked Musk about stepping down as Tesla's leader. "It ain't so," he replied without further discussion.

When another shareholder suggested that Tesla try advertising, Musk said he is open to it.

"This has some merit," he said to the shareholder at the meeting at Tesla's factory site near Austin, Texas. "We'll try a little advertising and see how it goes."

Tesla famously has avoided paying for advertising like its competitors, relying a lot on Musk's ability to generate free publicity — he has 140 million followers on Twitter, the social media company bought for \$44 billion last fall.

Musk told shareholders that the company's "Full Self-Driving" software is getting close to where it's safer than human driving. He previously has said the system should be ready this year, a pledge he has made for several years.

Tesla says on its website that the cars can't drive themselves and humans must be ready to intervene at all times. The company also has been forced by U.S. safety regulators to recall the software because it didn't obey traffic laws in some cases. The problems noted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration are to be fixed with an online software update.

During Tuesday's meeting, Musk cautioned that the next 12 months could be challenging for the Austin-based company, largely because rising interest rates have increased the cost of buying a car.

"Tesla is not immune to the global economic environment," he said, predicting that the company will get through the period and do well, even when a lot of companies will go bankrupt.

Later on CNBC he talked about affordability of Tesla cars. "If the car payments or your home payments go up you have less money for other things," he said.

He told the gathering that sometimes the pain of working has been "quite excruciating." He called his time as CEO of Twitter a "short term distraction" and said the company needed open heart surgery to ensure its survival.

It's now in a stable place, and he's happy to have Linda Yaccarino, whom he hired away from NBCUniversal, to run Twitter. Musk said the amount of time he'll devote to Twitter will be "relatively small" compared with the last six months since he bought the social media platform.

Before Musk's talk, shareholders voted to place Tesla co-founder and former chief technology officer JB Straubel on the company's board for the next three years. Straubel left Tesla in 2019 to start a battery materials recycling company.

Shareholders also re-elected Musk and Chairwoman Robyn Denholm to the board.

Five dead as heavy rains in northern Italy burst riverbanks, flood towns

ROME (AP) — Officials in northern Italy warned residents to get to higher ground Wednesday amid fears that rain-swollen rivers would again burst their banks, after flooding killed at least five people, forced the evacuation of some 5,000 and suspended some train services.

Days of heavy rain stretched across a broad swath of northern Italy and the Balkans, where "apocalyptic" floods, landslides and evacuations were also reported in Croatia, Bosnia and Slovenia.

Italian Civil Protection Minister Nello Musumeci said five people were confirmed killed by flooding that struck Emilia-Romagna particularly hard, forcing the evacuation of 24 towns. At a briefing, Musumeci said he hoped those still reported missing would turn out to be false alarms.

The mayor of the city of Cesena, Enzo Lattuca, posted a video early Wednesday on Facebook to warn that continued downpours in the Emilia-Romagna region could flood the Savio river and smaller tributaries for a second day. He urged residents to move to upper floors of their homes and avoid low-lying areas and riverbanks. He announced the closure to traffic of some bridges and streets after rivers of mud sloshed through town and into basements and storefronts.

"The situation could again become critical," he said. "We cannot in any way lower our guard."

Musumeci said some 5,000 people had been evacuated, 50,000 were without electricity, and more than 100,000 without cell phone or landline use.

The deputy chief of the Civil Protection agency, Titti Postiglione, said rescue operations for those needing emergency evacuations were particularly difficult given so many roads and routes were flooded and phone service interrupted. Speaking on Sky TG24, she noted that the affected flood zone covered a broad swath of four provinces which, until the heavy rains, had been parched by a prolonged drought.

Some regional train routes remained suspended Wednesday around Bologna and Ravenna, with severe delays elsewhere, the Italian state railway said.

Premier Giorgia Meloni, who was traveling home from the G-7 meeting in Japan, said the government was monitoring the situation and was prepared to approve emergency aid.

In the Balkans, the swollen Una river flooded parts of northern Croatia and northwestern Bosnia, where authorities announced a state of emergency. The mayor of the town of Bosanska Krupa in Bosnia said hundreds of homes had been flooded.

"We have an apocalypse," Amin Halitovic told regional N1 network. "We can no longer count the flooded buildings. It's never been like this."

Dozens of landslides were reported in eastern Slovenia, many of which endangered homes and infrastructure.

In Croatia, hundreds of soldiers and rescue teams continued bringing food and other necessities to people in flood-hit areas who have been isolated in their homes. No casualties have been reported so far.

G-7 leaders likely to focus on the war in Ukraine and tensions in Asia at summit in Hiroshima

By ADAM SCHRECK Associated Press

HIROSHIMA, Japan (AP) — The symbolism will be palpable when leaders of the world's rich democracies sit down in Hiroshima, a city whose name evokes the tragedy of war, to tackle a host of challenges including Russia's invasion of Ukraine and rising tensions in Asia.

The attention on the war in Europe comes just days after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy completed a whirlwind trip to meet many of the Group of Seven leaders now heading to Japan for the summit starting Friday. That tour was aimed at adding to his country's weapons stockpile and building political support ahead of a widely anticipated counteroffensive to reclaim lands occupied by Moscow's forces.

"Ukraine has driven this sense of common purpose" for the G-7, said Matthew P. Goodman, senior vice president for economics at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

He said the new commitments Zelenskyy received just ahead of the summit could push members of the bloc to step up their support even further. "There's a kind of peer pressure that develops in forums like this," he explained.

G-7 leaders are also girding for the possibility of renewed conflict in Asia as relations with China deteriorate. They are increasingly concerned, among other things, about what they see as Beijing's growing assertiveness, and fear that China could try to seize Taiwan by force, sparking a wider conflict. China claims the self-governing island as its own and regularly sends ships and warplanes near it.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida also hopes to highlight the risks of nuclear proliferation during the meeting in Hiroshima, the site of the world's first atomic bombing.

The prospect of another nuclear attack has been crystalized by nearby North Korea's nuclear program and spate of recent missile tests, and Russia's threats to use nuclear weapons in its war in Ukraine. China, meanwhile, is rapidly expanding its nuclear arsenal from an estimated 400 warheads today to 1,500 by 2035, according to Pentagon estimates.

Concerns about the strength of the global economy, rising prices and the debt limit crisis in the U.S. will be high on leaders' minds.

G-7 finance ministers and central bank chiefs meeting ahead of the summit pledged to enforce sanctions against Russia, tackle rising inflation, bolster financial systems and help countries burdened by heavy debts.

The G-7 includes the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Canada and Italy, as well as the European Union.

That group is also lavishing more attention on the needs of the Global South — a term to describe mostly developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America — and has invited countries ranging from South American powerhouse Brazil to the tiny Cook Islands in the South Pacific.

By broadening the conversation beyond the world's richest industrialized nations, the group hopes to strengthen political and economic ties while shoring up support for efforts to isolate Russia and stand up to China's assertiveness around the world, analysts say.

"Japan was shocked when scores of developing countries were reluctant to condemn Russia for its invasion of Ukraine last year," said Mireya Solís, director of the Center for East Asian Policy Studies at The Brookings Institution. "Tokyo believes that this act of war by a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council is a direct threat to the foundations of the postwar international system."

Getting a diverse set of countries to uphold principles like not changing borders by force advances Japan's foreign policy priorities, and makes good economic sense since their often unsustainable debt loads and rising prices for food and energy are a drag on the global economy, she continued.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will also be attending. His country, which is overtaking China as the world's most populous and sees itself as a rising superpower, is playing host to a meeting of the much broader group of G-20 leading economies later this year.

For host Kishida, this weekend's meeting is an opportunity to spotlight his country's more robust foreign policy.

The Japanese prime minister made a surprise trip to Kyiv in March, making him the country's first post-war leader to travel to a war zone, a visit freighted with symbolism given Japan's pacifist constitution but one that he was under domestic pressure to take.

Another notable inclusion in Hiroshima is South Korea, a fellow U.S. ally that has rapidly drawn closer to its former colonial occupier Japan as their relations thawed in the face of shared regional security concerns.

U.S. President Joe Biden is expected to hold a separate three-way meeting with his Japanese and South Korean counterparts.

Sung-Yoon Lee, an East Asia expert at Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, said that meeting sends a message to China, Russia and North Korea of "solidarity among the democracies in the region and their resolve to stand up to the increasingly threatening autocracies."

Biden had been expected to make a historic stop in Papua New Guinea and then travel onward to Australia after the Hiroshima meeting, but he scrapped those latter two stops Tuesday to focus on the debt limit debate back in Washington.

The centerpiece of the Australia visit was a meeting of the Quad, a regional security grouping that the U.S. sees as a counterweight to China's actions in the region. Beijing has criticized the group as an Asian version of the NATO military alliance.

The decision to host the G-7 in Hiroshima is no accident. Kishida, whose family is from the city, hopes the venue will underscore Japan's "commitment to world peace" and build momentum to "realize the ideal of a world without nuclear weapons," he wrote on the online news site Japan Forward.

The United States dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945, destroying the city and killing 140,000 people, then dropped a second on Nagasaki three days later, killing another 70,000. Japan surrendered on Aug. 15, effectively ending World War II and decades of Japanese aggression in Asia.

The shell and skeletal dome of one of the riverside buildings that survived the Hiroshima blast are the focal point of the Peace Memorial Park, which leaders are expected to visit.

Associated Press writers Foster Klug and Mari Yamaguchi contributed reporting from Tokyo.

39 missing after Chinese fishing boat capsizes in the middle of the Indian Ocean

BEIJING (AP) — Several ships and aircraft searched Wednesday for 39 people reported missing after a Chinese fishing boat capsized in the middle of the Indian Ocean.

Chinese state broadcaster CCTV said the accident happened around 3 a.m. Tuesday. The report said the crew includes 17 from China, 17 from Indonesia and five from the Philippines.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Li Qiang have ordered Chinese diplomats abroad, as well as the agriculture and transportation ministries, to assist in the search for survivors.

"All-out efforts" must be made in the rescue operation, Xi was quoted as saying by the official Xinhua News Agency. Li ordered unspecified measures to "reduce casualties and strengthen safety management of fishing vessels at sea to ensure safe maritime transport and production," Xinhua said.

No word was given on the cause of the capsizing.

Australia, Indonesia and the Philippines have also expressed their willingness to join in the search. Indonesia's National Search and Rescue Agency said the capsizing occurred about 4,600 kilometers (2,900 miles) northwest of Australia.

Several ships and an Australian Defense Force P-8A Poseidon aircraft have been searching the area. The Indian Ocean stretches from South Asia and the Arabian Peninsula to east Africa and western Australia. No survivors or life rafts have been spotted.

The Philippine Coast Guard Command Center said Wednesday it was monitoring the situation and coordinating with the Chinese Embassy in Manila, as well as search and rescue teams operating near the vessel's last known location.

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The Australian Maritime Safety Authority said it was coordinating the search in what it called a remote location in the Indian Ocean, about 5,000 kilometers (3,100 miles) northwest of the coastal city of Perth. It said the agency received a distress beacon signal from the fishing vessel at about 5:30 a.m. Tuesday, Australian time, and that weather conditions in the area Tuesday were "extreme," but had improved by Wednesday.

Along the Bay of Bengal at the Indian Ocean's northern end, Myanmar and Bangladesh were undergoing recovery from a powerful cyclone that smashed into their coastlines, causing widespread destruction and at least 21 deaths, with hundreds of others believed missing.

Merchant and fishing vessels in the area were also searching for survivors Wednesday.

A Perth-based Challenger rescue aircraft will drop a buoy to help with drift modelling to further assist in the search, the agency said.

The search covered an area virtually in the center of the Indian Ocean. The capsized hull was spotted and the transmitter detected more than 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) south of Sri Lanka, with nearest port appearing to be the island chain of the Maldives, about 500 kilometers (310 miles) to the north of the search area.

The Lu Peng Yuan Yu 028 was based in the eastern coastal province of Shandong, operated by the Penglai Jinglu Fishery Co. Ltd., according to the reports. Another Chinese vessel, Lu Peng Yuan Yu 018, is operating near to the upturned hull and has been asked to conduct a grid search for survivors, according to the Indonesian agency.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said additional rescue assets were on their way to the scene.

"We will continue to take all measures possible with all parties to search and rescue the missing persons. The Chinese side thanks the Australian maritime search and rescue department for promptly dispatching aircraft and coordinating passing foreign ships to participate in the search and rescue," Wang told reporters at a daily briefing Wednesday.

China is believed to operate the world's largest fishing fleet. Many of them stay at sea for months or even years at a time, supported by Chinese state maritime security agencies and a sprawling network of support vessels.

Chinese squid fishing ships have been documented using wide nets to illegally catch already overfished tuna as part of a surge in unregulated activity in the Indian Ocean, according to a report released in 2021 by a Norway-based watchdog group that highlighted growing concerns about the lack of international cooperation to protect marine species on the high seas.

The group, called Trygg Mat Tracking, found that the number of squid vessels in the high seas of the Indian Ocean — where fishing of the species is not regulated — has increased six-fold since 2016.

The U.S. Coast Guard was also involved in a dangerous confrontation with Chinese vessels not far from Ecuador's Galapagos Islands in 2022 during a mission to inspect the vessels for any signs of illegal, unreported or unregulated fishing.

Chinese fishing vessels operating illegally are known to sail "dark," with their mandatory tracking device that gives a ship's position either switched off, transmitting intermittently, or providing false identifiers.

In 2014, Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 was believed to have gone down somewhere in the Indian Ocean with 239 people aboard. That Boeing 777, which remains missing, became invisible to civilian radar when its transponder locating device stopped transmitting during a flight from Kuala Lumpur.

Associated Press writers Rod McGuirk in Canberra, Australia, Niniek Karmini in Jakarta, Indonesia, and Jim Gomez in Manila, Philippines, contributed to this report.

Flirting with climate danger: UN forecasts 2 in 3 chance of briefly hitting key heat limit soon

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

There's a two-out-of-three chance within the next five years that the world will temporarily reach the internationally accepted global temperature threshold for limiting the worst effects of climate change, a new World Meteorological Organization report forecasts.

It likely would only be a fleeting and less worrisome flirtation with the agreed-upon climate danger point, the United Nations weather agency said Wednesday. That's because scientists expect a temporary burst of heat from an El Nino will supercharge human-caused warming from the burning of coal, oil and gas to new heights and then slip back down a bit.

The 2015 Paris climate agreement set 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) as a global guardrail in atmospheric warming, with countries pledging to try to prevent that much long-term warming if possible. Scientists in a special 2018 United Nations report said going past that point would be drastically and dangerously different with more death, destruction and damage to global ecosystems.

"It won't be this year probably. Maybe it'll be next year or the year after" that a year averages 1.5 degrees Celsius, said report lead author Leon Hermanson, a climate scientist at the United Kingdom's Met Office.

But climate scientists said what's likely to happen in the next five years isn't the same as failing the global goal.

"This report does not mean that we will permanently exceed the 1.5C level specified in the Paris Agreement which refers to long-term warming over many years. However, WMO is sounding the alarm that we will breach the 1.5C level on a temporary basis with increasing frequency," WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas said in a statement.

"A single year doesn't really mean anything," Hermanson said. Scientists usually use 30-year averages.

Those 66% odds of a single year hitting that threshold in five years have increased from 48% last year, 40% the year before, 20% in 2020 and 10% about a decade ago. The WMO report is based on calculations by 11 different climate science centers across the globe.

The world has been inching closer to the 1.5-degree threshold due to human-caused climate change for years. The temporary warming of this year's expected El Nino — a phenomenon that starts with a warming of parts of the central Pacific Ocean and then sloshes across the globe — makes it "possible for us to see a single year exceeding 1.5C a full decade before the long-term average warming driven by human emissions of greenhouse gases does," said climate scientist Zeke Hausfather of the tech company Stripe and Berkeley Earth, who wasn't part of the WMO report.

"We don't expect the longer-term average to pass 1.5C until the early-to-mid 2030s," Hausfather said in an email.

But each year at or near 1.5 matters.

"We see this report as more of a barometer of how we're getting close, because the closer you get to the threshold, the more noise bumping up and down is going to bump you over the threshold randomly," Hermanson said in an interview. And he said the more random bumps over the mark occur, the closer the world actually gets to the threshold.

Key in all this is the El Nino cycle. The world is coming off a record-tying triple dip La Nina — three straight years of El Nino's cooler cousin restraining the human-caused warming climb — and is on the verge of an El Nino that some scientists predict will be strong.

The La Nina somewhat flattened the trend of human-caused warming so that the world hasn't broken the annual temperature mark since 2016, the last El Nino, super-sized one, Hermanson said.

And that means a 98% chance of breaking the 2016 annual global temperature record between now and 2027, the report said. There's also a 98% chance that the next five years will be the hottest five years on record, the report said.

Because of the shift from La Nina to El Nino "where there were floods before, there will be droughts and

although Pacific leaders would understand that Biden was needed at home, the cancellation demonstrated how domestic U.S. politics can undermine the nation's foreign policy agenda.

"Unfortunately, it speaks to a pattern of behavior that causes many in the region to regard the U.S. as a less-than-reliable partner," Powles said.

She said the meeting had been framed as a sequel to a summit held with Pacific leaders in Washington last year, and was supposed to represent a deepening of the relationship between the U.S. and the Pacific at a time when China is increasingly exerting its influence in the region.

The U.S. has recently opened embassies in the Solomon Islands and Tonga, and plans to open more in the region as it tries to reassert its presence in the Pacific.

Powles said the hectic schedule leading into the U.S. elections next year would make it difficult for Biden to reschedule.

Home to nearly 10 million people, Papua New Guinea is the largest Pacific Island nation by population. It is located just north of Australia on the eastern side of New Guinea island, the world's second-largest island. The western side of the island is part of Indonesia. Papua New Guinea is relatively poor, with many people leading subsistence lives.

During a 2016 speech in Australia when he was vice president, Biden talked about his connections to the Pacific region and said that two of his uncles had fought in Papua New Guinea during World War II. He said one had been killed and the other had returned home badly injured.

But China ended up sending a top-level delegation first, after Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Papua New Guinea for an APEC summit in 2018.

Ranewa, the lawyer, said that China's increasing influence could be seen throughout the nation, whether it was in providing services or building infrastructure. He said some welcomed China's help, while others did not.

Trump-backed Daniel Cameron to face Democratic Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear in November

By BRUCE SCHREINER Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Daniel Cameron won the Republican primary for Kentucky governor on Tuesday, becoming the first major-party Black nominee for governor in the state's history and setting up a November showdown with Democratic incumbent Andy Beshear.

Cameron, the state's attorney general who was endorsed by former President Donald Trump, claimed a convincing victory over a 12-candidate field that included Kelly Craft, who served as United Nations ambassador in the Trump administration, and state Agriculture Commissioner Ryan Quarles. Beshear easily dispatched two under-the-radar Democratic challengers in his own primary.

Cameron, the state's first Black attorney general, would be the state's first Black governor if elected. He played up the historic nature of his nomination in his victory speech Tuesday, saying his campaign aims to "embody the promise of America, that if you work hard and if you stand on principle, anything is possible."

"To anyone who looks like me, know that you can achieve anything," Cameron told his supporters. "Know that in this country and in Kentucky, all that matters are your values."

The race now shifts to the general election, which will be one of November's most closely watched contests and could provide clues heading into next year's presidential race. Beshear, a popular Democratic governor, will face a tough reelection bid in a Republican-dominated state after a first term marked by a series of tragedies — the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters and a mass shooting that killed one of his closest friends.

Beshear on Tuesday touted his stewardship of Kentucky's economy — pointing to record economic development successes — in setting the stage for his fall reelection campaign. And he blasted the tone of the GOP gubernatorial primary after taking hits for months from the Republican candidates.

"Right now somewhere in America, there is a CEO deciding where to move their business and they're

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considering Kentucky,” Beshear told a gathering of supporters. “Let me ask you: Is seeing people talk down our state and our economy, insult our people and stoke divisions going to help that next company choose Kentucky? Of course not.”

The fall matchup between Beshear and Cameron conjures parallels from the state’s last governor’s race but with a reversal of roles for the governor. In 2019, Beshear used the attorney general’s office as a springboard to the governorship. During his single term as attorney general, Beshear challenged a series of executive actions by then-governor, Republican Matt Bevin. Beshear narrowly defeated Bevin in a race that revolved around Bevin’s combative personality.

Turnout was light in many locations as rain fell across much of the state during part of the day, the secretary of state’s office said. Storm warnings were issued in some areas but there were no reports of voting disruptions. Election officials hoped for an upswing in turnout after the storms passed.

Cameron succeeded Beshear in the attorney general’s office, and the Republican turned the tables on Beshear, mounting numerous legal challenges against state and national Democratic policies that endeared him to conservatives. Cameron led the successful challenge that essentially halted the governor’s COVID-era restrictions, which Cameron said amounted to executive overreach. Beshear says that his actions saved lives and that he leaned heavily on guidance from Trump’s coronavirus task force.

A former aide to Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell, Cameron has risen through the political ranks to become one of the most prominent Black Republicans in the country. His victory Tuesday will play into Trump’s efforts to solidify his status as the leader of the Republican Party heading into the 2024 presidential primary.

If Beshear follows his campaign formula from 2019, he will avoid talking about Trump or dwelling on polarizing national issues that could risk further energizing his opponent’s conservative base.

He is also expected to draw on his family’s strong political brand — his father, Steve Beshear, is a former two-term Kentucky governor who spoke at his son’s primary victory celebration Tuesday — and lean into his role of leading through adversity after a multitude of crises during his first term.

Through it all, Beshear emerged as the front man, holding daily pandemic briefings for months and then leading relief efforts to help those left devastated by tornadoes and floods.

Last month, Beshear publicly and emotionally grieved the loss of a close friend who died when a Louisville bank employee opened fire with an assault-style rifle, killing five coworkers. He has frequently invoked his Christian faith as a cornerstone of his efforts to lead the state through tough times.

In addition to Craft and Quarles, Cameron also defeated state Auditor Mike Harmon and Somerset Mayor Alan Keck, among others.

But it was the combative rivalry between Cameron and Craft that dominated the primary campaign. Cameron endured an advertising blitz by Craft’s campaign — backed by her family’s fortune — and an outside group supporting her campaign. The pro-Craft group portrayed Cameron as an “establishment teddy bear” in claiming he wasn’t tough enough as attorney general. A pro-Cameron group swung back with attacks against Craft, who nabbed a last-minute endorsement from Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis.

Cameron’s handling of an investigation into the fatal shooting of Breonna Taylor by Louisville police in 2020 could come under renewed scrutiny as he campaigns as the GOP nominee. Taylor’s death and the police-related killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis sparked nationwide protests.

In announcing a grand jury’s findings in Taylor’s death, Cameron said jurors “agreed” that homicide charges were not warranted against the officers, because they were fired upon. Three of the jurors disputed Cameron’s account, arguing that Cameron’s staff limited their scope and did not give them an opportunity to consider homicide charges against the police in Taylor’s death.

Cameron’s immediate attention will turn toward building party unity for the fall campaign slog, a task for which he has demonstrated skills in the past. He bridged the gulf between Trump and McConnell despite a growing rift between the two GOP heavyweights. Cameron worked as the senator’s legal counsel and made a high-profile pitch for Trump’s unsuccessful reelection campaign at the 2020 Republican National Convention.

The gubernatorial campaign topped primary races for other constitutional offices in Kentucky.

Republican Secretary of State Michael Adams, who pushed successfully for expanded voter access, won his primary against two candidates, including one who cast doubt on the integrity of elections. He faces Democrat Charles "Buddy" Wheatley in November in his reelection bid.

Other primary winners included Republican Allison Ball, who is running for state auditor after two terms as state treasurer, and now will face Democrat Kimberley Reeder, who ran unopposed. Garrard County Attorney Mark Metcalf won the GOP primary for state treasurer and faces Democrat Michael Bowman in November. The general election race for agriculture commissioner pits Republican Jonathan Shell against Democrat Sierra Enlow, who won their respective primaries. The fall campaign for attorney general will feature Republican Russell Coleman against Democrat Pam Stevenson. Both were unopposed in the primary.

'I only operate:' A Ukrainian trauma surgeon has an all-consuming task during Russia's war

By ILLIA NOVIKOV and VASILISA STEPANENKO Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — As the lead trauma surgeon at a military hospital in Ukraine's capital, Petro Nikitin has his hands deep in a war churning hundreds of kilometers (miles) away. The 59-year-old doctor's work to repair the bodies of some of the most badly injured soldiers is all-consuming.

"I only operate," Nikitin said, taking a short pause as his team continued surgery on a patient. "I do nothing else in my life now. I don't see my children, who have been evacuated, I don't see my wife, who has been evacuated, I live by myself, and all I do is treat the wounded."

While the Ukrainian military does not provide casualty figures, some Western sources estimate more than 100,000 Ukrainian troops have been killed or wounded since Russia invaded the country almost 15 months ago.

Some end up on the operating tables in Nikitin's hospital, which like other Ukrainian military hospitals, is short-staffed because physicians were pulled away to work in field hospitals closer to the front. The Associated Press agreed not to identify the Kyiv hospital for security reasons.

On Feb. 25, 2022, the day after Russian troops invaded, Nikitin posted a photo on Facebook that showed him listening to an Israeli specialist in treating gunshot wounds. Surgeons from around the world had agreed to participate in an online training on combat-related injuries that Nikitin hastily organized as president of Ukraine's chapter of an international association of trauma specialists.

"Every one of us had relevant experience before the invasion, but not in such volume," Nikitin said. "The high numbers of traumas is something new for us."

Gunshot wounds turned out to be rare. "I don't even remember the last time I extracted a bullet," the surgeon said. But during the long days and months, he has become familiar with a range of traumatic injuries: explosive weapons such as landmines, artillery shells and grenades frequently harm many parts of the body at the same time.

"We receive people with damaged legs, chests, stomachs and arms all at once," Nikitin said. "In such cases, we have to decide what part of the injury should be our priority."

The military hospital is one of several in Kyiv. As a top-level trauma center, it receives the most complex cases, typically ones involving patients who were stabilized at the front and spent time in a field hospital before their transfer to the capital, Nikitin said.

"We don't do first aid here. We don't save lives. That's done by the medics," he said. "What we try to do is return these people to a normal life."

Dealing with wounds involving damage to soft tissue, bone and the structures that bind nerves and veins are the most difficult for his surgical team, Nikitin said. Sometimes they are forced to amputate a soldier's arm or leg, which "from a moral point of view" is always a gut-wrenching decision, he said.

"Because you understand that your surgery will lead to a disability of the person, it brings no satisfaction to the doctor or to the patient," he said. "It's emotionally hard not only for the patient, but for the surgeon."

Nikitin typically gets to the hospital at 7:45 a.m. and stays until the work is done, sometimes not leaving

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until about 11 p.m. His wife and children fled Ukraine in March 2022 as Russian forces closed in on Kyiv. He accompanied his family to the border, but then returned to the city.

As the Russian and Ukrainian armies both prepare for possible spring offensives, his schedule has lightened to about three surgeries a day.

Most of the patients he treated recently were wounded in fighting for the eastern city of Bakhmut and elsewhere in Donetsk province, or in northern Ukraine's Chernihiv and Sumy provinces, which are shelled regularly.

A soldier Nikitin operated on recently was Mykyta, a Bakhmut native who was wounded in the lower leg while fighting for his hometown and celebrated his 20th birthday shortly after his surgery. The AP is withholding his last name in accordance with military guidelines.

His last memory of Bakhmut forms a "terrible" image in his mind, the young soldier said.

"It's the city where I spent my childhood, and the city is destroyed," he said from his hospital bed. "The city is on fire."

Compared with the massive trauma suffered by some patients, Mykyta's wound did not look so severe, but he still might lose his lower leg, Nikitin said.

Attempts to graft skin over the wound proved unsuccessful, and doctors tried again on Tuesday. Nikitin said he felt optimistic after the surgery but it would take three weeks to know whether the latest skin graft worked.

"If it does not work out, the next step will be amputation," the surgeon said.

Mykyta is also missing 20 centimeters (about 8 inches) of bone, which will be Nikitin's next task if the graft is successful. The bone treatment will take more than a half-year.

"In seven months, I can tell you if he will ever walk again," he said.

David Rising contributed to this story.

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

Nikola Jokic leads Nuggets past Lakers 132-126 in West opener

By ARNIE STAPLETON AP Sports Writer

DENVER (AP) — Denver Nuggets guard Kentavious Caldwell-Pope was playing for the Los Angeles Lakers the last time these teams met in the Western Conference finals in the 2020 NBA bubble.

So, what similarities does he see between LeBron James and Nikola Jokic?

"I feel like the only difference is Bron can jump higher than Jokic," Caldwell-Pope declared after Jokic's monster performance fueled the Nuggets' 132-126 win in Game 1 Tuesday night.

"That's really offensive," Jokic replied in faux indignation about his athletic abilities. "I'm joking. I mean, to be compared to one of the best ever — or THE best ever — I think is really cool."

Jokic doesn't really see many similarities in their play: "We affect the game in different ways," Jokic said. "But he's a really good player."

Nobody was better than Jokic on Tuesday night.

Jokic recorded his sixth triple-double of these playoffs with 34 points, 21 rebounds and 14 assists, powering the Nuggets to a 1-0 lead in the series.

Behind Jokic's sizzling start and strong finish, and Jamal Murray's 31 points while battling an ear infection, Denver beat the Lakers in the opener of the West finals for the first time ever.

After a slow start, Anthony Davis had 40 points and 10 rebounds, and James finished with 26 points, 12 boards and nine assists. Austin Reaves chipped in 23 points and fueled L.A.'s desperate fourth-quarter run that nearly erased Denver's 14-point cushion after three.

Caldwell-Pope scored 21 points against his former team. Michael Porter Jr. had 15 points and 10 boards and Bruce Brown added 16 points.

The Nuggets led by as many as 21 but the Lakers pulled within three points twice in the fourth quarter,

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once on Reaves' 3-pointer at 124-121 and again on James' pair of free throws that made it 129-126 with 1:12 remaining.

"Yeah, it took us a half to get into the game," James said, "and that was pretty much the ballgame right there. They punched us in the mouth to start. ... I know the game is won in 48 minutes, but they set the tone in 24 minutes and we were playing catch-up for the next 24."

In the fourth quarter, Rui Hachimura guarded Jokic, allowing Davis to crowd the paint and make things harder for the Nuggets big man to dominate the paint. But it wasn't enough.

After Jokic sank two free throws with 26 seconds left to give Denver a 131-126 lead, Murray poked the ball from James as he was about to take it to the hoop and Jokic gathered the loose ball before being fouled with 10.9 seconds left. He sank one of two and James misfired from 3 as the seconds ticked off.

"I'd rather clean things up after a win in the Western Conference finals than after a loss, so I will take it," Nuggets coach Michael Malone said. "But much work to do."

Game 2 is Thursday night at Ball Arena, where the top-seeded Nuggets are 7-0 in the playoffs and 41-7 overall, the best home record in the league this season.

Jokic said a day earlier that the Nuggets desperately needed to avoid following in the sneaker-steps of the Memphis Grizzlies and Golden State Warriors, both of whom dropped their home opener to the Lakers and wound up losing in six games.

Moreover, James has won his last 20 playoff series in which his team has won the opener.

The Nuggets hadn't taken Game 1 against the Lakers since 1979, when they won the opener of the best-of-three series only to lose the next two. That's the closest the Nuggets have ever come to eliminating the Lakers, who have beaten Denver three times in the West finals, including in the Florida bubble in 2020.

Flashing his MVP credentials in a stunning display of power in the first quarter, Jokic pulled down a dozen boards and dished out five assists to go with eight points. That made him the first player since at least 1997 to have a dozen or more boards and at least five assists in any quarter of an NBA playoff game.

The Lakers used an 11-2 run to cut the deficit to 11 points before Jokic responded with a jaw-dropping 3-pointer over the outstretched arm of Davis that barely fluttered the net at the buzzer, leaving Davis to trudge back to the bench in disbelief.

"Sometimes luck is on our side," Jokic said. "It's a crazy shot, of course."

The "Joker," who missed out on his third consecutive NBA MVP award this year when he was edged by Philadelphia's Joel Embiid, had 19 points, 16 rebounds, seven assists and two blocks by halftime as the Nuggets took a 72-54 lead into the locker room.

"Thank God it's the best-of-seven and it's not the NCAA Tournament," Lakers coach Darvin Ham said. "It's the first to four. We'll be OK, trust me."

PLENTY OF POINTS

With 258 combined points, it was the highest-scoring conference finals game that didn't go to overtime since 1987, when Detroit beat Boston 145-119.

TIP-INS

Lakers: L.A.'s only lead came on James' bucket to open the game. ... The Lakers lost to the Nuggets in the playoffs for just the ninth time in 34 tries.

Nuggets: Jokic outrebounded the Lakers 16-13 by himself before halftime. ... The only player since 1997 to do what Jokic did in the first quarter was Cleveland's Anderson Varejao, who blitzed the Wizards for 12 rebounds and five assists in a regular-season game in October of 2012.

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

where there were droughts before there might be floods," Hermanson said.

The report warned that the Amazon will be abnormally dry for a good part of the next five years while the Sahel part of Africa — the transition zone between the Sahara on the north and the savannas to the south — will be wetter.

That's "one of the positive things coming out of this forecast," Hermanson said. "It's not all doom-and-gloom and heat waves."

University of Pennsylvania climate scientist Michael Mann said reports like this put too much emphasis on global surface temperature, which varies with the El Nino cycle, even though it is climbing upward in the long term. The real concern is the deep water of oceans, which absorb an overwhelming majority of the world's human-caused warming, leading to a steady rise in ocean heat content and new records set regularly.

Mann said it's wrong to think the world's about to exceed the threshold any time now because "a concerted effort to lower carbon emissions can still avoid crossing it altogether," Mann said. "That's what we need to be focused on."

Follow AP's climate and environment coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/climate-and-environment>

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Associated Press climate and environmental coverage receives support from several private foundations. See more about AP's climate initiative here. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Hopes for historic Pacific visit dashed after Biden cancels trip to Papua New Guinea

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — Papua New Guinea had declared next Monday a public holiday in anticipation of an historic visit by U.S. President Joe Biden and other leaders from the region.

Police were tightening security, billboards were going up, and people were getting ready to sing and dance in the streets. Expectations were high for what would have been the first visit by a sitting U.S. president to any Pacific Island nation.

"I am very honored that he has fulfilled his promise to me to visit our country," Papua New Guinea Prime Minister James Marape had written on Facebook.

Those expectations were dashed Wednesday when Biden canceled the visit to focus on debt limit talks at home.

To be sure, many of the festivities will still be going ahead. Biden's planned three-hour stopover — sandwiched between the Group of Seven meeting of wealthy democracies in Japan and a now-scrapped trip to Australia — was timed to coincide with a trip by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who will still meet with Pacific Island leaders to discuss ways to better cooperate. But now that Biden plans to return home directly after the G-7 meeting, many in Papua New Guinea are feeling deflated.

Steven Ranewa, a lawyer in the capital, Port Moresby, said Biden's planned visit had been very big news across the Pacific, and he planned to watch the motorcades from the street.

"Everyone was excited," he said. "But now that it's been canceled, it's really demoralizing."

Konio Anu, who manages a lodge in the capital, said she was saddened by the news, and wondered if people would still get the day off on Monday. She said she was waiting to see if one international guest who booked for Monday would cancel.

Some other leaders had their doubts as well. New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins deliberated most of the day before announcing that he would still go ahead with his trip to Papua New Guinea.

Anna Powles, a senior lecturer in international security at New Zealand's Massey University, said that

Black Californians hope state reparations don't become another broken promise

By SOPHIE AUSTIN and JANIE HAR Associated Press/Report for America

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — San Francisco resident Pia Harris hopes for reparations in her lifetime. But the nonprofit program director is not confident that California lawmakers will turn the recommendations of a first-in-the-nation task force into concrete legislation given pushback from opponents who say slavery was a thing of the past.

It frustrates Harris, 45, that reparations opponents won't acknowledge that life for Black people did not improve with the abolition of chattel slavery in 1865. Black families have been unable to accumulate wealth through property ownership and higher education. Black boys and teenagers are still told to watch out for law enforcement, and Black businesses struggle to get loans, she said.

"I want them to stop acting like it's so far removed, and it's not currently happening," said Harris of the lingering effects of slavery and discrimination. "I want them to understand that we're still going through things now as a community. It's not — it hasn't been over for us."

Black Californians have watched closely as the state's reparations task force forged ahead in a two-year study, finally signing off this month on a hefty list of recommendations that will be submitted to lawmakers. It's uncertain what lawmakers will do with the proposals, which include payments to descendants of enslaved people and a formal apology from the state.

The Associated Press interviewed a handful of Black advocates and residents who followed the task force's work — as well as those who have long been engaged in the conversation about reparations. The activists who fought for civil rights in the 1960s and young entrepreneurs echoed a common fear: They hope California's exploration of reparations does not become another example of the government offering false hope.

Reparations proposals for African Americans date back to 1865, when Union General William Tecumseh Sherman ordered that newly freed people be given up to 40 acres (16 hectares) of land. That didn't happen. In recent decades, Democratic lawmakers in Congress have tried to pass legislation to study federal reparations to no avail.

In 2020, California became the first state to approve the creation of a reparations task force — in order to study the state's role in perpetuating systemic racism and to find ways to atone. Although California entered the union as a "free" state, it did not enact laws guaranteeing African Americans' freedom, according to a draft report from the task force.

The state faces a projected \$31.5 billion budget shortfall, which reduces the possibility of legislative support for some of the task force's more ambitious recommendations, including direct payments to eligible residents and the creation of a new state agency to help those families research their ancestors and to file claims.

The task force did not recommend specific payment amounts but estimates from economists say that the state is responsible for more than \$500 billion due to decades of overpolicing, mass incarceration and redlining that kept Black families from buying homes in appreciating neighborhoods.

Damien Posey, 44, grew up in historically Black neighborhoods in San Francisco, where he heard gunshots at night and was bussed to schools in neighborhoods that weren't so welcoming to Black children. He spent a decade in prison on a weapons charge and later started a nonprofit called Us 4 Us Bay Area to mentor youth and reduce gun violence.

Meaningful reparations would include an official state apology, public funding for nonprofit organizations that assist Black residents, and cash reparations for every eligible person for the pay denied to their ancestors, who built this country with their labor, he said.

"And our people deserve it, honestly," he said.

Compensation is an important part of state reparations proposals because Black Americans have "been deprived of a lot of money," due to discriminatory policies, said Les Robinson, 66, an associate pastor at the Sanctuary Foursquare Church in Santa Clarita, a city about 30 miles (48 kilometers) north of Los Angeles.

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But money isn't everything, Robinson said, and the task force's other important work shouldn't be lost in a fixation on dollar figures alone. He pointed to efforts to retell California history through a different lens — one that examines the state's role in perpetuating systemic racism despite its label as a "free" state.

Robinson was "hit by a tsunami of emotions" when he learned in 2017 he was descended from a man who founded the first Black church in California and played a critical role in the state's pioneering African American community.

He was disappointed that more people — himself included — were not taught the story of Daniel Blue, his great-great-great-grandfather who created what is now known as the historic Saint Andrews African Methodist Episcopal Church in Sacramento.

Robinson is skeptical that reparations will be approved by lawmakers, if history is an indicator.

"People wonder why African Americans at large are angry," he said. "Because we've been lied to. We've been bamboozled. For centuries — not decades — centuries."

Like Robinson, former Black Panther Party member Joan Tarika Lewis has been researching her lineage and was proud to discover several ancestors came to California in the mid-19th century and helped other Black people escape slavery.

Lewis, who became the party's first female activist when she joined as a teenager, wants more Black residents to learn about their heritage and for all Californians to know more about the contributions of Black pioneers and civic leaders. Lewis, 73, also wants to raise more awareness about what the community has lost.

Her father operated a boxing gym in West Oakland that served as a community space for young people to learn from their elders. But then government officials took the land, and in its place built a freeway and commuter line. The family was paid a pittance for what would go on to become valuable San Francisco Bay Area property.

Lewis is optimistic that state lawmakers can make reparations happen if they have the political will.

So is Vincent Justin, a 75-year-old Richmond resident and retired bus driver who has fought for racial equity for decades. He marched in the 1960s with Martin Luther King Jr., Huey P. Newton, Stokely Carmichael and other major civil rights figures.

Though the fight has been long, he hopes reparations will one day be approved at the federal level.

"I think that we're going to come to a fair and equitable ending," he said.

Har reported from San Francisco. Sophie Austin is a corps member for the Associated Press/ Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues. Follow Austin on Twitter: @sophieadanna

Black victims of violent crime disproportionately denied aid in many states

By CLAUDIA LAUER and MIKE CATALINI Associated Press

The cold formality of the letter is seared in Debra Long's memory.

It began "Dear Claimant," and said her 24-year-old son, Randy, who was fatally shot in April 2006, was not an "innocent" victim. Without further explanation, the New York state agency that assists violent-crime victims and their families refused to help pay for his funeral.

Randy was a father, engaged to be married and studying to become a juvenile probation officer when his life was cut short during a visit to Brooklyn with friends. His mother, angry and bewildered by the letter, wondered: What did authorities see — or fail to see — in Randy?

"It felt racial. It felt like they saw a young African American man who was shot and killed and assumed he must have been doing something wrong," Long said. "But believe me when I say, not my son."

Debra Long had bumped up against a well-intentioned corner of the criminal justice system that is often perceived as unfair.

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Every state has a program to reimburse victims for lost wages, medical bills, funerals and other expenses, awarding hundreds of millions in aid each year. But an Associated Press examination found that Black victims and their families are disproportionately denied compensation in many states, often for subjective reasons that experts say are rooted in racial biases.

The AP found disproportionately high denial rates in 19 out of 23 states willing to provide detailed racial data, the largest collection of such data to date. In some states, including Indiana, Georgia and South Dakota, Black applicants were nearly twice as likely as white applicants to be denied. From 2018 through 2021, the denials added up to thousands of Black families each year collectively missing out on millions of dollars in aid.

The reasons for the disparities are complex and eligibility rules vary somewhat by state, but experts — including leaders of some of the programs — point to a few common factors:

— State employees reviewing applications often base decisions on information from police reports and follow-up questionnaires that seek officers' opinions of victims' behavior — both of which may contain implicitly biased descriptions of events.

— Those same employees may be influenced by their own biases when reviewing events that led to victims' injuries or deaths. Without realizing it, a review of the facts morphs into an assessment of victims' perceived culpability.

— Many state guidelines were designed decades ago with biases that benefited victims who would make the best witnesses, disadvantaging those with criminal histories, unpaid fines or addictions, among others.

As the wider criminal justice system — from police departments to courts — reckons with institutional racism in the aftermath of the police killing of George Floyd, compensation programs are also beginning to scrutinize how their policies affect people of color.

"We have this long history in victims services in this country of fixating on whether people are bad or good," said Elizabeth Ruebman, an expert with a national network of victims-compensation advocates and a former adviser to New Jersey's attorney general on the state's program.

As a result, Black and brown applicants tend to face more scrutiny because of implicit biases, Ruebman said.

In some states examined by AP, such as New York and Nebraska, the denial rates for Black and white applicants weren't too far apart. But the data revealed apparent bias in other ways: While white families were more likely to be denied for administrative reasons, such as missing deadlines or seeking aid for crimes that aren't covered, Black families were more likely to be denied for subjective reasons, such as whether they may have said or done something to provoke a violent crime.

In Delaware, where Black applicants accounted for less than half of the compensation requests between 2018 and 2021 but more than 63% of denials, officials acknowledged that even the best of intentions are no match for systemic bias.

"State compensation programs are downstream resources in a criminal justice system whose headwaters are inextricably commingled with the history of racial inequity in our country," Mat Marshall, a spokesman for Delaware's attorney general wrote in an email. "Even race-neutral policy at the programmatic level may not accomplish neutral outcomes under the shadows that race and criminal justice cast on one another."

The financial impact of a crime-related injury or death can be significant. Out of pocket expenses for things like crime scene cleanup or medical care can add up to thousands of dollars, prompting people to take out loans, drain savings or rely on family members.

After Randy was killed, Debra Long paid for his funeral with money she had saved for a down payment on her first house. Seventeen years later, she still rents an apartment in Poughkeepsie, New York.

Thousands of people are denied compensation every year for reasons having nothing to do with the crime itself. They are denied because of victims' behavior before or after a crime.

Applicants can be denied if police or other officials say they failed to cooperate with an investigation. That can inadvertently harm people who are wary of retribution for talking to police, or people who don't have information. A Chicago woman who was shot in the back was denied for failing to cooperate even

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though she couldn't identify the shooter because she never saw the person.

And compensation can be denied merely based on circumstantial evidence or suspicions, unlike the burden of proof that is necessary in criminal investigations.

Many states deny compensation based on a vaguely defined category of behavior — often called “contributory misconduct” — that includes anything from using an insult during a fight to having drugs in your system. Other times people have been denied because police found drugs on the ground nearby.

In the data examined by AP, Black applicants were almost three times as likely as applicants of other races to be denied for behavior-based reasons, including contributory misconduct.

“A lot of times it's perception,” said Chantay Love, the executive director of the Every Murder is Real Healing Center in Philadelphia.

Love rattles off recent examples: A man killed while trying to break up a fight was on parole and was denied compensation, the state reasoned, because he should have steered clear of the incident; another was stabbed to death, and the state said he contributed because he checked himself out of a mental-health treatment facility a few hours earlier against a doctor's advice.

Long scoured the police account of her son's shooting. She called detectives and pleaded to know if they had said anything to the Office of Victims Services that would have implicated her son in some kind of a crime. There was nothing in the report. And detectives said they hadn't submitted any additional information.

Every chance Long got, she reminded detectives and the state officials reviewing her claim that Randy had never been in trouble with the police. She wanted them to understand the injustice was also being felt by Randy's then-toddler son, who would only know his father through other people's memories.

Long kept information about her son's case in a box near her kitchen. As more than 20 notebooks full of conversations with detectives piled up, Long tucked the state's rejection letter inside a folder so she wouldn't lose it, but also so she didn't have to see it every time she searched for something.

“What plays in their mind is that their loved one wasn't important,” said Love of the Philadelphia-based advocacy group. “It takes the power away from it being a homicide, and it creates a portion of blame for the victim.”

In recent years, several states and cities have changed eligibility rules to focus less on victims' behavior before or after crimes.

In Pennsylvania, a law went into effect in September that says applicants cannot be denied financial help with funerals or counseling services because of a homicide victim's behavior. In Illinois, a new program director has retrained employees on ways unconscious bias can creep into their decisions. And in Newark, New Jersey, police have changed the language they use in reports to describe interactions with victims, leading to fewer denials for failure to cooperate.

Long, who now works as a victims advocate, was in a training in 2021 when a speaker began praising New York state's compensation program. Long tried to stay quiet and get through the training, but couldn't. She told the group about her experience and the weight of the letter.

Later, an Office of Victims Services employee approached Long and convinced her to reapply, saying the agency had been improved through training and other changes that would benefit her case. A few weeks later, and nearly 15 years after Randy was buried, Long's application was approved and the state sent her a check for \$6,000 — the amount she would have received back in 2006. She used part of that money to help Randy's son, who is now in college, pay for summer classes.

“It's not about the monetary amount,” Long said. “It was the way I felt I was treated.”

Catalini reported from Trenton, New Jersey and Lauer reported from Philadelphia.

Abortion pill case moves to appeals court, on track for Supreme Court

By KEVIN MCGILL Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Legal arguments over women's access to a drug used in the most common method of abortion move to a federal appeals court in New Orleans on Wednesday, in a case challenging a Food and Drug Administration decision made more than two decades ago.

The closely watched case is likely to wind up at the Supreme Court, which already has intervened to keep the drug, mifepristone, available while the legal fight winds through the courts.

Three 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals judges with a history of supporting abortion restrictions are set to hear arguments. At issue are the FDA's initial approval of mifepristone in 2000, and FDA actions making the drug more accessible in later years. The judges won't rule immediately.

Judges nominated to the district court and appeals court by former President Donald Trump are playing major roles in the case, which is being argued almost a year after the Supreme Court overturned the *Roe v. Wade* ruling that had established abortion rights. Fourteen states have since banned abortion at all stages of pregnancy and other states have adopted, or are debating, major restrictions.

In November, abortion opponents in Texas filed a lawsuit in federal court in Amarillo, where U.S. District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk, a Trump nominee, presides. Kacsmaryk issued a ruling on April 7 that would have revoked FDA approval of mifepristone in a Texas lawsuit brought by abortion opponents after the Supreme Court reversal of *Roe v. Wade*. The Biden administration and drug maker Danco Laboratories quickly appealed to the 5th Circuit, seeking a stay of Kacsmaryk's ruling.

An appellate panel voted 2-1 to narrow, but not completely block, Kacsmaryk's ruling. Their April 13 ruling said the abortion opponents appeared to be barred by time limits from challenging the initial 2000 approval. But the panel said the reimposed rules for physician visits and bars on mailing the drug could stay in place.

Later, the Supreme Court put the lower court rulings on hold pending appeals, almost certainly leaving access to mifepristone unchanged at least into next year.

For now, the case is in the hands of James Ho and Cory Wilson, both Trump nominees, and Jennifer Walker Elrod, a George W. Bush nominee. The 5th Circuit, with 17 active judges, is dominated by Republican-nominated judges.

In the years since mifepristone's initial approval, the FDA has extended the time it can be used from seven to 10 weeks of pregnancy, reduced the dosage needed to safely end a pregnancy, eliminated the requirement to visit a doctor in person to get it and allowed pills to be obtained by mail.

Mifepristone is one of two pills used in medication abortions, along with misoprostol. Health care providers have said they could switch to misoprostol if mifepristone is no longer available or is too hard to obtain. Misoprostol is somewhat less effective in ending pregnancies.

Criminal cases for killing eagles decline as wind turbine dangers grow

By MATTHEW BROWN and CAMILLE FASSETT Associated Press

ROLLING HILLS, Wyo. (AP) — Criminal cases brought by U.S. wildlife officials for killing or harming protected bald and golden eagles dropped sharply in recent years, even as officials ramped up issuing permits that will allow wind energy companies to kill thousands of eagles without legal consequence.

The falloff in enforcement of eagle protection laws — which accelerated in the Trump administration and has continued under President Joe Biden — was revealed in U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service data obtained by The Associated Press.

It comes amid growing concern that a proliferation of wind turbines to feed a growing demand for renewable energy is jeopardizing golden eagle populations already believed to be declining in some areas.

Dozens of permits approved or pending would allow roughly 6,000 eagles to be killed in coming decades,

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government documents show. Most permits are for wind farms, and more than half the killed birds would be golden eagles.

The AP's findings — that significant numbers of eagles continue to die while fewer criminal cases are pursued — underscore a dilemma facing the Biden administration as it tries to confront climate change. Pursuing that goal through clean power development is requiring trade offs such as more dead birds from collisions with wind turbines that can tower 260 feet (80 meters) with blade tips spinning in excess of 150 miles per hour (240 kilometers per hour).

"They are rolling over backwards for wind companies," said Mike Lockhart a former U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist. "I think they are killing a hell of a lot more eagles than they ever anticipated."

Companies often pledge to perform conservation work to offset the deaths. Some permits include direct payments for dead eagles — about \$30,000 per bird. Numerous permits allow the killing of bald eagles with no compensation required.

A pending proposal from the Biden administration would further streamline permits — making them automatic in some cases as they allow wind-energy projects and power line networks to harm eagles and disturb their nests.

Since retiring from the wildlife service, Lockhart has continued researching wind turbine impacts on golden eagles under a government contract in central Wyoming. Migrating golden eagles routinely soar through the sage brush flats that define the region, where hundreds of wind turbines have gone up over the past 15 years.

Turbines have killed at least six golden eagles Lockhart had previously trapped and tagged for research, including a male that bred successfully in five out of six years. The biologist said it was killed about two months after a wind farm in 2021 started operating about a mile from the nest.

CONFLICTING MANDATES

At some wind farms, companies have relocated turbines or reduced their numbers to minimize deaths. But Lockhart said turbines continue to go up in areas frequented by golden eagles, and the cumulative impacts could be disastrous for the birds.

Many more turbines are planned.

In Wyoming alone, anticipated wind energy projects could kill as many as 800 to 1,000 golden eagles, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist said during a March 28 meeting with eagle researchers, wind energy companies and government officials, according to meeting minutes.

"They're going to more than double the (wind) capacity and in doing that, the impacts on wildlife, particularly golden eagles, are going to be exponentially going up," Lockhart said.

Fish and Wildlife Service officials said they are working to avoid such a scenario by working with companies to reduce bird deaths. "We expect the final number to be much smaller," spokesperson Vanessa Kauffman said.

There have been a small number of high-profile prosecutions of wind companies that continued killing eagles despite prior warnings from wildlife officials — including major utilities Duke Energy, PacifiCorp and NextEra Energy. Each company agreed to take steps to limit eagle deaths.

At Duke Energy's windfarms in Wyoming, eagle deaths became more frequent after the North Carolina company reached a 2013 deal that included a \$1 million fine and shielded it from prosecution for 10 years, according to government and court records. The company says the rate has fallen since it installed a camera system that spots eagles and triggers shutdown of nearby turbines.

Eagle deaths at PacifiCorp's wind farms continued, although at a lower rate, after it paid \$2.5 million in fines and restitution in a 2015 case, documents show. NextEra has not reported how many eagles have been killed at its wind farms since it was ordered to pay \$8 million in fines and restitution last year. PacifiCorp and NextEra did not respond to questions about their cases.

All three companies subsequently received or applied for permits that allow accidental killing of eagles without penalty, providing they took steps to minimize the number.

Wildlife officials approved such permits for more than two dozen major wind projects across the country

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over the past several years, sometimes over opposition from Native American tribes that revere eagles. Despite objections from the Colorado River Indian Tribes, officials approved a permit last year for Tucson Electric Power Co, operator of 62 turbines in southern New Mexico, allowing it to kill 193 golden eagles over 30 years. Federal officials said a permit offered the "only available avenue to require ... conservation measures," such as minimizing or compensating for eagle deaths.

The Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa in Minnesota says the Biden administration should not go forward with its proposal to further streamline permitting. Chairman Robert Deschampe said wildlife officials had "abandoned" protections for eagle nests and ignored tribal concerns.

Gun Lake Tribe Historic Preservation Officer Lakota Hobia said the Michigan tribe was worried about the long-term impact of more eagle nests being disturbed. "Eagles are sacred to us, and their nests need to be protected in the same ways our sacred sites and Tribal historic properties are protected," said Hobia.

Several major environmental groups lobbied the White House with Duke energy and other utilities in support of streamlined permitting. Some environmentalists said regulating the wind industry through permits was preferable to having companies ignore or cover up eagle deaths out of fear of prosecution.

"Part of the issue is that companies have generally not been requesting permits and they've been taking their chances and there hasn't been a lot of law enforcement," said Steve Holmer, vice president of policy at the American Bird Conservancy.

Under the Biden administration, he said, the wildlife service has "conflicting mandates: They are being directed to advance renewable energy and then they have obligations to preserve eagles."

Some conservationists say the changes as proposed are too reliant on companies monitoring themselves, with not enough oversight.

"It's sort of doomed to failure if you don't have objective, neutral people with expertise going in and doing the monitoring," said Eric Glitzenstein with the Center for Biological Diversity.

FALLING CASE NUMBERS

Violations of the Eagle Protection Act rose during the second term of President Barack Obama, after wind farms had proliferated and an AP investigation found dozens of unprosecuted eagle deaths including at Duke Energy's Top of the World wind farm.

Under Trump, new cases fell off sharply. At the urging of the oil and gas industry, utilities and other companies, political appointees in the Republican administration rolled back enforcement of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act — which protects more than a thousand species in addition to eagles.

A Biden order reversed the rollback. However, cases continued sliding and hit their lowest level in a decade in the Democrat's first year with 49 recorded violations, after peaking at 232 under Obama in 2014. They averaged 67 annually under Trump.

The figures do not include most of NextEra's violations because the case against the company — which involved at least 150 eagle deaths at 50 wind farms dating to 2010 — was not fully closed when AP submitted its data request.

In response to questions about the falloff, Fish and Wildlife Service officials initially blamed it on the Trump administration's decision to end enforcement of accidental bird deaths under the migratory bird law. But the agency later retracted that, saying officials were "unable to identify a specific cause as to why violations and investigations dropped."

Only about one in eight cases brought under the Eagle Protection Act from 2012 to early 2022 resulted in fines, probation or jail time, according to AP's analysis. Those cases include golden and bald eagles harmed or killed and nest disturbances and the taking of eagle body parts, such as feathers.

Whether criminal charges are ultimately brought is up to prosecutors. Fines, jail time and other punishments are up to the courts and are outside the wildlife service's control, said agency spokesperson Christina Meister.

"Not every criminal investigation substantiates evidence of a criminal violation of federal law," she said.

Wildlife advocates have long said that the agency's law enforcement operations are understaffed and underfunded. In its 2024 budget request, the service revealed special agents were at historical low levels and that 47 agents will hit mandatory retirement in the next four years.

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'EAGLES FLY...BLADES SPIN'

While bald eagle populations have grown exponentially over the past decade, there are only about 40,000 golden eagles, which need much larger areas to survive and hunt on the same windy plains where utilities have erected thousands of turbines in Western states.

In the five years after Duke Energy pleaded guilty to killing 14 eagles at wind farms in Wyoming, at least 61 more eagles were killed by the company's turbines in the state.

At Top of the World, at least 56 eagles have been killed since it started operating in 2010. The 110 turbines were installed before the company had an adequate process for siting them to avoid areas with eagles, said company scientist Misti Sporer.

Several years ago, Duke deployed an elaborate, computerized camera system at the site to detect incoming eagles. A turbine in a bird's path can be shut down within a minute to keep it from being chopped by a spinning blade.

Since the cameras were installed, eagle deaths have not stopped, although they declined by more than 60%, Sporer said.

"Today, we would likely not put those wind turbines where they are," she said. "We are ... incidentally taking these (eagles) through otherwise lawful operations, and so it just so happens to be that eagles fly in the air and blades spin. And there's inherently a conflict when you have both in the same location."

On Twitter follow Matthew Brown @MatthewBrownAP and Camille Fassett @camfassett.

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The Wembanyama sweepstakes and draft lottery has a winner: It's the Spurs

By ANDREW SELIGMAN AP Sports Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — Victor Wembanyama is set to follow in the footsteps of David Robinson and Tim Duncan, and the San Antonio Spurs are ready to welcome the French phenom.

It sure seems like an ideal pairing.

The Spurs hit the lottery jackpot on Tuesday, landing the No. 1 pick and the right to draft one of the most highly touted prospects in NBA history.

Not since LeBron James made the jump from St. Vincent-St. Mary High School in his hometown of Akron, Ohio, to the NBA two decades ago has a player come with this much fanfare. At 7-foot-3 and with the ability to shoot like a wing player and pass like a point guard, the 19-year-old Wembanyama is expected to make an immediate impact.

And he had a message for San Antonio.

"I'm trying to win a ring ASAP," Wembanyama told ESPN after the lottery results. "So be ready."

It's the third time the Spurs have won the lottery, and on both previous occasions they made picks that paid off for decades. They chose Robinson in 1987, Duncan in 1997, and those Hall of Fame big men were a major part of how the Spurs became a team that won five NBA titles under coach Gregg Popovich.

"Our future was already bright," Spurs managing partner Peter J. Holt said. "Now, it's going to be through the moon."

General manager Brian Wright called it "an incredible day" for the franchise and the fans.

Charlotte will pick second, Portland moved up to third, and Houston fell to fourth.

"Human nature sets you up to get greedy, so when it was two teams left, yeah, I wanted No. 1, right?" Hornets GM Mitch Kupchak said. "For a second there was a little bit of 'aw shucks' but overall to go from four... to two, it's an incredible stroke of luck."

But to get the No. 1 pick in a year like this?

"People talk about generational talents and you only think on-court skill, but it's bigger than that," Wright

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said. "Peter talked about his ability to be a great teammate, his ability to think the game, unique challenges. You see him doing things that you wouldn't have even guessed someone could do — his approach, his professionalism. I think when you use the word generational talent, it extends beyond just your ability to put the ball in the basket. And he's unique in so many ways."

The Spurs were 22-60 this season, tied for the second-worst record in the NBA. Popovich and the Spurs have had incredible success with international players in the past — most notably, Manu Ginobili and Tony Parker, who owns the French team that Wembanyama played for last season.

"He's an incredible young man," NBA Commissioner Adam Silver told ESPN as part of its draft lottery broadcast. "He's 19 years old and I didn't take out a yardstick or meter stick or whatever they use in France, but he seemed all of 7-4 to me. ... He clearly appears to be a generational talent."

Wembanyama finished his regular season with Boulogne-Levallois of France's top pro league earlier Tuesday, his 22-point effort good enough to clinch the league's scoring title. It was shortly past 2 a.m. Wednesday in Paris when the lottery results were revealed, and Wembanyama was gathered with family and friends for a celebration.

"Can't really describe it," Wembanyama said in his interview with ESPN, adding "it's a really special moment."

Finally, he knows where his NBA journey will begin. His agents did not respond to multiple requests for comment from The Associated Press.

"I think the team that has the first choice isn't going to get it wrong," said Vincent Collet, Wembanyama's coach in France and also the coach of the French national team — which Wembanyama is expected to play for this summer at the World Cup and next summer at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Detroit had the worst record in the NBA and was one of the three teams with the best odds of winning. The Pistons wound up falling all the way to fifth, the worst of their possible outcomes.

The rest of the lottery order: Orlando will pick sixth, Indiana seventh, Washington eighth, Utah ninth, Dallas 10th, Orlando (from Chicago as part of an earlier trade) in 11th, Oklahoma City 12th, Toronto 13th, and New Orleans 14th.

Wright said he woke up at 5 a.m. and wished he could have gone back to sleep. He was so anxious he didn't eat all day. But he did perform his end of a secret handshake he and his 9-year-old son have, hoping it would bring good luck.

Wembanyama is wrapping up his third professional season in France and has been the consensus top pick for months. He wasn't at the lottery because of his game schedule in France. But many of the other top prospects — Scoot Henderson of the G League Ignite, Brandon Miller of Alabama, twin brothers Amen and Ausar Thompson of the Overtime Elite program — were in the room to watch the lottery results get unveiled and get a little better idea of where they may be heading to start their NBA careers.

AP Basketball Writer Tim Reynolds and AP Sports Writer Steve Reed in Charlotte contributed to this report.

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

Democrat Cherelle Parker wins primary for Philadelphia mayor

By BROOKE SCHULTZ Associated Press/Report for America

Cherelle Parker, a Democrat with a long political history in Pennsylvania, won Philadelphia's mayoral primary on Tuesday, likely setting her up as the city's 100th mayor and the first woman to serve in the role.

Parker, 50, who served for 10 years as a state representative for northwest Philadelphia before her election to the city council in 2015, asserted herself as a leader whose government experience would allow her to address gaping problems with public safety and quality of life in the nation's sixth-largest city. She will go up against Republican David Oh in the Nov. 7 general election.

The win was a disappointment to progressives who rallied around Helen Gym, who was backed by Vermont U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders and New York U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

Parker emerged from a crowded field of five front-runner Democratic candidates vying to replace Democrat Jim Kenney, who is term-limited. She beat out other former city council members who resigned from their seats to throw their hats in the ring; a state representative; a former city controller and a political outsider businessman.

The Philadelphia race serves as the latest barometer of how residents of some of the nation's largest cities hope to emerge from the pandemic, which heightened concerns about crime, poverty and inequality. The results have sometimes been tumultuous in other parts of the country, leading to the defeat of the incumbent mayor of Chicago in February and the ouster of San Francisco's district attorney last year.

Parker pledged to "stop the sense of lawlessness that is plaguing our city" by putting hundreds more officers on the street to engage in community policing. Parker pushed for officers to use every legal tool, including stopping someone when they have "just cause and reasonable suspicion."

She received support from members of the Philadelphia delegation in the House, as well as members of Congress. She was also backed by labor unions and a number of wards in the city, and Kenney said he had cast his ballot for her.

In another race Tuesday, Voters in Allegheny County, which encompasses the state's second largest city of Pittsburgh, picked sitting state lawmaker Sara Innamorato as their Democratic nominee to face the lone Republican contender, Joseph Rockey, in the November general election. Unlike in the Philadelphia mayor's race, the primary winner will not necessarily be the person most likely to fill the county executive's seat.

"Allegheny County, I'm going to make one promise to you: I will build a team of leaders who will usher in the future of this region and build a more equitable and just county," she said at a campaign event Tuesday, asking supporters to enjoy the victory and recharge. "We better get ready, because we have a lot of work to do."

Our Revolution, a movement born during Sanders' 2016 presidential race and now one of the largest progressive organizations in the country, had endorsed Innamorato — a win for the movement, even with its loss in the mayoral primary.

Associated Press video journalist Tassanee Vejpongsa in Philadelphia contributed to this report.

Elizabeth Holmes loses latest bid to avoid prison and gets hit with \$452 million restitution bill

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Disgraced Theranos CEO Elizabeth Holmes appears to be soon bound for prison after an appeals court Tuesday rejected her bid to remain free while she tries to overturn her conviction in a blood-testing hoax that brought her fleeting fame and fortune.

In another ruling issued late Tuesday, U.S. District Judge Edward Davila ordered Holmes to pay \$452 million in restitution to the victims of her crimes. Holmes is being held jointly liable for that amount with her former lover and top Theranos lieutenant, Ramesh "Sunny" Balwani, who is already in prison after being convicted on a broader range of felonies in a separate trial.

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals decision on Holmes' attempt to avoid prison comes nearly three weeks after she deployed a last-minute legal maneuver to delay the start of her 11-year sentence. She had been previously ordered to surrender to authorities on April 27 by Davila, who sentenced her in November.

Davila will now set a new date for Holmes, 39, to leave her current home in the San Diego area and report to prison.

The punishment will separate Holmes from her current partner, William "Billy" Evans, their 1-year-old son, William, and 3-month-old daughter, Invicta. Holmes' pregnancy with Invicta — Latin for "invincible," or "undefeated" — began after a jury convicted her on four counts of fraud and conspiracy in January 2022.

Davila has recommended that Holmes serve her sentence at a women's prison in Bryan, Texas. It hasn't been disclosed whether the federal Bureau of Prisons accepted Davila's recommendation or assigned Holmes to another facility.

Balwani, 57, began a nearly 13-year prison sentence in April after being convicted on 12 counts of fraud and conspiracy last July. He was incarcerated in a Southern California prison last month after losing a similar effort to remain free on bail while appealing his conviction.

The verdict against Holmes came after a 46 days of trial testimony and other evidence that cast a spotlight on a culture of greed and hubris that infected Silicon Valley as technology became a more pervasive influence on society and the economy during the past 20 years.

The trial's most riveting moments unfolded when Holmes took the witness stand to testify in her own defense.

Besides telling how she founded Theranos as a teenager after dropping out of Stanford University in 2003, Holmes accused Balwani of abusing her emotionally and sexually. She also asserted she never stopped believing Theranos would revolutionize healthcare with a technology that she promised would be able to scan for hundreds of diseases and other potential problems with just a few drops of blood.

While pursuing that audacious ambition, Holmes raised nearly \$1 billion from a list of well-heeled investors that included Oracle co-founder Larry Ellison and media mogul Rupert Murdoch. Those sophisticated investors all lost their money after a Wall Street Journal investigation and regulatory reviews exposed dangerous flaws in Theranos' technology.

In his restitution ruling, Davila determined that Holmes and Balwani should pay Murdoch \$125 million — by far the most among the investors listed in his order. The restitution also requires the co-conspirators in the Theranos scam to pay \$40 million in Walgreens, which became an investor in the startup after agreeing to provide some of the flawed blood tests in its pharmacies in 2013. Another \$14.5 million is owed to Safeway, which has also agreed to be a Theranos business partner before backing out.

In separate hearings, lawyers for Holmes and Balwani tried to persuade Davila their respective clients should be required to pay little, if anything. Prosecutors had been pushing for a restitution penalty in the \$800 million range. Both Holmes — whose stake in Theranos was once valued at \$4.5 billion — and Balwani — whose holdings were once valued around \$500 million — have indicated they are nearly broke after running up millions of dollar in legal bills while proclaiming their innocence.

Holmes's lawyers have been fighting her conviction on grounds of alleged mistakes and misconduct that occurred during her trial. They have also contended errors and abuses that biased the jury were so egregious that she should be allowed to stay out of prison while the appeal unfolds — a request that has now been rebuffed by both Davila and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

DeSantis criticizes Trump for implying Florida abortion ban is 'too harsh'

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

Gov. Ron DeSantis criticized Donald Trump on Tuesday for implying Florida's new six-week abortion ban is "too harsh," stepping up his attacks on the former president as he prepares to challenge him for the 2024 Republican nomination.

DeSantis was responding to a question about Trump's comments in an article published Monday by The Messenger about the six-week ban the Florida governor recently signed into law. "Many people within the pro-life movement feel that that was too harsh," Trump told the online outlet.

DeSantis contended the law has widespread support among opponents of abortion and noted the former president didn't say what limits he would back on the procedure.

"Protecting an unborn child when there's a detectable heartbeat is something that almost 99% of pro-lifers support," DeSantis said at a news conference in Florida, taking questions after he signed a measure to combat human trafficking.

"As a Florida resident, you know, he didn't give an answer about, 'Would you have signed the heartbeat bill that Florida did, that had all the exceptions that people talk about?'" DeSantis added.

The rivalry between Trump and DeSantis is heating up as the Florida governor nears a decision on a 2024 presidential bid. DeSantis allies believe he will launch his candidacy as soon as this week, although

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an announcement could come closer to the end of the month.

Abortion has been an early flashpoint in the still-forming Republican primary field ahead of the first presidential election since the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*. The bickering showcases the GOP's ongoing internal debate over hard-line abortion restrictions, which may be popular in a Republican primary but could create problems in a general election for the party's eventual nominee.

Asked whether he felt Trump had taken a firm enough stance on abortion, former Vice President Mike Pence — a staunch opponent of abortion who is soon expected to enter the race against his former boss — drew a line of distinction with Trump on the issue Tuesday night, saying he supported Florida's bill and would sign such a measure as president.

"For my part, I disagree with President Trump about the heartbeat bill," Pence told reporters after an event in Concord, New Hampshire. "I truly do believe that we ought to advance the cause of life at the state level, but I also want to say, I also believe there is a role at the federal level to advance the sanctity of life."

The bill signed into law last month by DeSantis would ban abortions after six weeks of pregnancy. It will take effect only if the state's current 15-week ban is upheld in a legal challenge before the state Supreme Court, which is controlled by conservatives.

"Ron DeSantis is flailing in the polls and is closer to the bottom of the pack than he is to President Trump, who is dominating in every single poll," Trump campaign Steven Cheung said when asked to respond to DeSantis' remarks. Cheung pointed out an anti-abortion group's recent characterization of Trump's presidency as "the most consequential in American history for the pro-life cause."

Calling into a Newsmax program Tuesday night, Trump repeated comments he made on CNN that he had given abortion opponents "the power of negotiation" and, twice deflecting questions about whether he would support a national abortion ban at a specific point, said that "many pro-life people" are "talking about more weeks than Ron is talking about."

"But I'm going to decide, and I'm going to be in there pushing, and I'm the one that got rid of *Roe v. Wade*," he said.

Trump has referred to himself as "the most pro-life president in American history," as his three nominations of conservative judges to the Supreme Court paved the way for the end of legalized abortion nationwide.

But in the early months of his 2024 bid, Trump has often sidestepped the issue of abortion, even as Republicans across the country celebrate the Supreme Court decision stripping federal constitutional rights to the practice.

In Iowa in March, he repeatedly refused to say whether he would support a federal law restricting abortion in every state — a move that anti-abortion activists have been demanding of the GOP's presidential contenders. "We're looking at a lot of different things," he said when asked by The Associated Press whether he supports a federal abortion ban.

Last week during a primetime CNN town hall in New Hampshire, Trump continued to avoid specifics on a national ban, repeatedly saying he would "do what's right," without specifying what that was.

As he gets closer to an announcement, DeSantis has been escalating his criticism of Trump, who for months has been attacking him directly and through groups supporting his candidacy. Last week in Iowa, as perilous weather sidelined Trump's trip to the state, DeSantis highlighted the GOP's recent string of electoral losses — a clear knock on the former president.

"We must reject the culture of losing that has impacted our party in recent years. The time for excuses is over," DeSantis said at an event in Sioux Center. "If we get distracted, if we focus the election on the past or on other side issues, then I think the Democrats are going to beat us again."

Associated Press writers Michelle L. Price in New York and Holly Ramer in Concord, New Hampshire, contributed to this report.

Meg Kinnard can be reached at <http://twitter.com/MegKinnardAP>

Missouri terminates emergency rule to limit trans care for minors, some adults

By MARGARET STAFFORD Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — Missouri officials on Tuesday abruptly terminated an unusual emergency rule proposed by the Republican attorney general that would have placed limits on transgender care for minors and some adults.

The move was announced without explanation on the Missouri Secretary of State's website, which said: "This emergency rule terminated effective May 16, 2023."

The rule pushed by Attorney General Andrew Bailey would have required adults and children to undergo more than a year of therapy and fulfill other requirements before they could receive gender-affirming treatments such as puberty blockers, hormones and surgery.

Bailey said in a statement Tuesday evening that his office was "standing in the gap" until the GOP-controlled Legislature decided to act on the issue.

"The General Assembly has now filled that gap with a statute," he said. "I'm proud to have shed light on the experimental nature of these procedures, and will continue to do everything in my power to make Missouri the safest state in the nation for children."

House Minority Leader Crystal Quade, D-Springfield, said in a statement that Missouri should not have an attorney general "who persecutes innocent Missourians for political gain."

"Andrew Bailey grossly overstepped his legal authority, and everyone knows it," she said. "So it isn't surprising he withdrew his unconstitutional rule knowing another embarrassing court defeat was inevitable."

Bailey had sought to implement the rule on April 27. But the ACLU of Missouri filed a lawsuit to stop it, arguing that Bailey bypassed the Legislature and did not have the authority to regulate health care through Missouri's consumer-protection law.

St. Louis County Judge Ellen Ribauda later granted a temporary restraining order and scheduled a hearing for July 20.

The law's termination comes less than a week after the Missouri Legislature approved a ban on minors starting care. Gov. Mike Parson, a Republican, who threatened to call a special session if lawmakers did not pass that bill and another banning transgender girls and women playing on female school sports teams, is expected to sign the law.

Bailey's proposed rule would have required people to have experienced an "intense pattern" of documented gender dysphoria for three years and to have received at least 15 hourly sessions with a therapist over at least 18 months before they could receive treatment. Prospective patients also would have been required to be screened for autism, and any psychiatric symptoms from mental health issues would have to be treated and resolved.

Legal experts and transgender advocates have said the rule would have made Missouri the first state in the country to restrict gender-affirming care for adults and the first to enact such restrictions through emergency rules rather than a new law.

Bailey said he proposed the rule to protect minors from what he called experimental medical treatments, though puberty blockers and sex hormones have been prescribed for decades and the rule would also apply to adults.

The attorney general's office has said there are 12,400 Missourians who identify as transgender. The office has estimated that 600 to 700 Missourians would begin treatment in the next year.

Bailey issued the restrictions after he began an investigation in February into Washington University's Transgender Center at St. Louis Children's Hospital after a former employee alleged the center was providing children with gender-affirming care without informed consent, not enough individualized case review and wraparound mental health services.

The university's internal review found the claims were unsubstantiated.

Who is Victor Wembanyama? The NBA is about to get the answer to that question

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

The Victor Wembanyama sweepstakes has a winner. It's the San Antonio Spurs.

The NBA draft lottery was Tuesday night in Chicago and 14 teams had hope that the ping-pong balls will bounce their way, giving them the No. 1 pick this year and the chance to draft Wembanyama.

The Detroit Pistons, Houston Rockets and Spurs all had the best chance of winning the lottery and getting the No. 1 pick — 14%, or about 7-1 odds. But the Spurs got the win, and now Wembanyama's career will start with legendary coach Gregg Popovich, the NBA's all-time win leader.

Here is a look at what all the fuss is about:

WHO IS VICTOR WEMBANYAMA?

He's one of the most talked-about players in the world right now, for good and obvious reasons. He is a 7-foot-3, 19-year-old phenom who is wrapping up his third professional season in France and is about to start his NBA career. LeBron James calls Wembanyama "an alien," and says that with the utmost of respect. Wembanyama has the height of a center, the shooting touch of a wing and the passing ability of a point guard. His wingspan is nearly 8 feet and he can nearly grab the rim — 10 feet in the air — without even jumping.

WHAT WEMBANYAMA'S BACKGROUND?

His parents are both tall and both very athletic. His father, Felix Wembanyama, is about 6-foot-5 and was a high jumper. His mother, Elodie de Fautereau; is about 6-foot-3 and was a basketball standout. They have tried to keep life very normal for a son who just happens to have worldwide fame already. And Wembanyama has tried to be a normal kid; he likes video games, art, reading and soccer.

WHAT HAPPENED TUESDAY?

The winner of the lottery gets the chance to make the No. 1 pick in next month's draft. So, while Wembanyama isn't officially a member of the Spurs yet, it's a foregone conclusion that — barring some sort of incredible trade — he'll be selected by San Antonio in June and could be with his new club for summer league games in early July.

HOW WILL HE FIT IN THE NBA?

There is a learning curve for everybody, even No. 1 draft picks. And it's a rite of passage for all rookies, especially highly touted ones, to get challenged by established NBA players — few of them are taller, but many are stronger and more experienced. He will have some rough moments, for certain. But he will make any team better, maybe much better, right away.

WHERE HAS HE PLAYED?

He became a full-time pro in the 2020-21 season with the French club Nanterre. He has been on three teams in his three seasons in the French league, his year with Nanterre followed by a season with the powerhouse club ASVEL — owned by Spurs great Tony Parker — and this season with Boulogne-Levallois. His current team wrapped up its regular season on Tuesday (which is why he wasn't at the draft lottery) and is about to open the playoffs.

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

Debt limit progress as Biden, McCarthy name top negotiators to avert national default

By LISA MASCARO and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Debt-limit talks shifted into an encouraging new phase Tuesday as President Joe Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy named top emissaries to negotiate a deal to avert an unprecedented national default. Biden cut short an upcoming overseas trip in hopes of closing an agreement before a June 1 deadline.

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The fresh set of negotiators means discussions are now largely narrowed to what the White House and McCarthy will accept in order to allow lawmakers to raise the debt limit in the coming days. The speaker said after a meeting with Biden and congressional leaders that a deal was “possible” by week’s end, even as — in McCarthy’s view — the two sides remained far apart for the moment.

Biden was publicly upbeat after a roughly hourlong meeting in the Oval Office, despite having to cancel the Australia and Papua New Guinea portions of his overseas trip that begins Wednesday. Biden will participate in a Group of Seven summit in Hiroshima, Japan, but then return to Washington on Sunday.

“There’s still work to do,” Biden said. “But I made it clear to the speaker and others that we’ll speak regularly over the next several days and staff’s going to continue meeting daily to make sure we do not default.”

Senior White House officials, as well as top aides to the four congressional leaders — McCarthy, R-Calif., Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y. — have been meeting daily.

But now, Steve Ricchetti, counselor to the president, Office of Management and Budget Director Shalanda Young and legislative affairs director Louisa Terrell will take the lead in negotiations for the Democratic side, while Rep. Garret Graves, R-La., a key McCarthy ally who has been a point person for the speaker on debt and budget issues, will represent Republicans.

“Now we have a format, a structure,” McCarthy said as he returned to the Capitol.

Negotiators are racing to beat a deadline of June 1, which is when the Treasury Department has said the U.S. could begin defaulting on its debts for the first time in history and risk a financial catastrophe. The revised itinerary of Biden’s upcoming trip showed the urgency of the talks.

White House officials sought to soften the impact of the trip cancellations. National Security Council spokesman John Kirby noted that Biden will already have met with some of the leaders of the “Quad” — the purpose of the Australia leg of the visit — while in Japan, and the president is inviting Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese for an official state visit in Washington.

Still, Kirby added, “We wouldn’t even be having this discussion about the effect of the debt ceiling debate on the trip if Congress would do its job, raise the debt ceiling the way they’ve always done.”

Even as the Democratic president and the Republican speaker box around the politics of the issue — with Biden insisting he’s not negotiating over the debt ceiling and McCarthy working to extract spending cuts with the backdrop of a potential default — various areas of possible agreement appeared to be emerging.

Among the items on the table: clawing back some \$30 billion in untapped COVID-19 money, imposing future budget caps, changing permit regulations to ease energy development and putting bolstered work requirements on recipients of government aid, according to those familiar with the talks.

But congressional Democrats are growing concerned about the idea of putting new work requirements for government aid recipients after Biden suggested over the weekend he may be open to such changes. The White House remains opposed to changes in requirements for recipients of Medicaid and food stamp programs, although it is more open to revisions for beneficiaries of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families cash assistance program.

The idea of imposing more work requirements was “resoundingly” rejected by House Democrats at a morning caucus meeting, according to one Democrat at the private meeting and granted anonymity to discuss it.

Progressive lawmakers in particular have raised the issue. Rep. Pramila Jayapal, the chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, said, “We want to make sure that these negotiations do not include spending cuts, do not include work requirements, things that would harm people, people in rural areas, black, brown, indigenous folks.”

Democratic leader Jeffries’ staff sought to assuage the concerns late Monday, while a separate group of more centrist Democrats signaled to their moderate Republican colleagues they are prepared to work something out to reach a debt ceiling deal, aides said Tuesday.

While McCarthy has complained the talks are slow-going, saying he first met with Biden more than 100

days ago, Biden has said it took McCarthy all this time to put forward his own proposal after Republicans failed to produce their own budget this year.

Compounding pressure on Washington to strike a deal, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Monday that estimates are unchanged on the possible "X-date" when the U.S. could run out of cash.

But Yellen, in a letter to the House and Senate, left some opening for a possible time extension on a national default, stating that "the actual date Treasury exhausts extraordinary measures could be a number of days or weeks later than these estimates."

"It is essential that Congress act as soon as possible," Yellen said Tuesday in remarks before the Independent Community Bankers of America. "In my assessment – and that of economists across the board – a U.S. default would generate an economic and financial catastrophe."

Time is dwindling. Congress has just a few days when both the House and Senate are in session to pass legislation, although scheduled recesses could be canceled if more time is needed to clear whatever deal the White House reaches with McCarthy.

Congressional leaders will also need time to take the temperature of rank-and-file lawmakers on any agreement, and it's not at all clear that the emerging contours go far enough to satisfy McCarthy's hard-right faction in the House or would be acceptable to a sizable number of Democrats whose votes would almost certainly be needed to secure any final deal.

Republicans led by McCarthy want Biden to accept their proposal to roll back spending, cap future outlays and make other policy changes in the package passed last month by House Republicans. McCarthy says the House is the only chamber that has taken action to raise the debt ceiling. But the House bill is almost certain to fail in the Senate, controlled by Democrats, and Biden has said he would veto it.

An increase in the debt limit would not authorize new federal spending. It would only allow for borrowing to pay for what Congress has already approved.

___ Associated Press writers Fatima Hussein and Kevin Freking contributed to this report.

Massachusetts US Attorney Rachael Rollins to resign after Justice Department watchdog probe

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Massachusetts U.S. Attorney Rachael Rollins will resign following a monthslong investigation by the Justice Department's inspector general into her appearance at a political fundraiser and other potential ethics issues, her attorney said Tuesday.

The Justice Department's watchdog has yet to release its report detailing the findings of its investigation, but an attorney for Rollins told The Associated Press that she will be submitting a letter of resignation to President Joe Biden by close of business Friday.

The resignation of a U.S. attorney amid ethics concerns is an exceedingly rare phenomenon and is especially notable for a Justice Department that under Attorney General Merrick Garland has sought to restore a sense of normalcy and good governance following the turbulent four years of the Trump administration.

Rollins' attorney said she has been "profoundly honored" to have served as U.S. attorney and proud of her office's work but "understands that her presence has become a distraction." Attorney Michael Bromwich — a former Justice Department inspector general — said Rollins will make herself available to answer questions "after the dust settles and she resigns."

"The work of the office and the Department of Justice is far too important to be overshadowed by anything else," Bromwich said.

The Justice Department didn't immediately comment Tuesday. The inspector general's office declined to comment.

Rollins was a controversial pick to be Massachusetts' top federal law enforcer and twice needed Vice President Kamala Harris to break a tie for her nomination to move forward in the Senate amid fierce opposition from Republicans, who painted her as a radical.

Before taking the high-profile U.S. attorney job, she was the top prosecutor for Suffolk County, which

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includes Boston. In her role there, she sparred with Boston's largest police union and pushed ambitious criminal justice changes, most notably a policy not to prosecute certain low-level crimes such as shoplifting.

She was the first woman of color to serve as a district attorney in Massachusetts and the first Black woman to become U.S. attorney for the state.

Massachusetts Democratic Sens. Ed Markey and Elizabeth Warren, who had pushed for Rollins to be nominated to the post, said in a joint statement that they will respect her decision to step down.

"Rachael Rollins has for years dedicated herself to the people of Massachusetts and equal justice under the law," they said.

The Associated Press was the first to report in November that the inspector general's office had opened an investigation into Rollins over her appearance last year at a home in Andover, Massachusetts, for a Democratic National Committee fundraiser featuring first lady Jill Biden. That was according to two people briefed on the investigation, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the probe.

The inspector general's office generally investigates allegations of fraud, abuse or violation of other Justice Department policies.

People familiar with the investigation told the AP at the time that the probe had expanded into other areas, including Rollins' use of her personal cellphone to conduct Justice Department business and a trip she took to California that was paid for by an outside group.

Rollins said in a July tweet that she "had approval" to meet the first lady and left the event early to speak at two community events. One person familiar with discussions before that event told the AP that Rollins was only given limited permission to meet Jill Biden outside the home.

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel, another federal watchdog agency, has also been investigating whether Rollins' attendance at the fundraiser violated the Hatch Act, a law that limits political activity by government workers. The status of that investigation is unclear.

The inspector general's office copied the phone contents of some employees in Rollins' office as part of their probe into her possible use of her personal phone for Justice Department business, one person familiar with the matter told the AP last year.

Investigators also examined a trip Rollins took to California that was paid for by an outside group, even though Justice Department employees are not supposed to accept payments for travel. The trip was for CAA Amplify, the annual gathering of entertainment, business and political figures run by one of Hollywood's leading talent agencies, the Creative Artists Agency.

Republican Sen. Tom Cotton of Arkansas, a fierce critic of Rollins who had sought to block her confirmation, had urged the inspector general last year to investigate whether the U.S. attorney's actions violated the Hatch Act.

Cotton said in a letter to Inspector General Michael Horowitz earlier this month that a "whistleblower" recently alleged that Rollins had been "removing significant numbers of documents" from the U.S. attorney's office and "continued removing these documents even after being instructed to stop by the Department of Justice leadership."

Rollins' attorney called the allegation "complete nonsense," adding that Cotton's time "would be better spent learning about the realities of running a law enforcement agency and fighting crime in our major cities."

Cotton said in a statement Tuesday that he had "warned Democratic senators that Rachael Rollins wasn't only a pro-criminal ideologue, but also had a history of poor judgment and ethical lapses."

Tucker reported from Washington. Associated Press reporters Steve LeBlanc in Boston and Lindsay Whitehurst in Washington contributed.

This story has been corrected to reflect that Rollins was the first Black woman, not the first Black person, to serve as Massachusetts U.S. attorney.

UN: Africa's Sahel desperately needs help to fight violent extremism and stop its spread

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Africa's Sahel region has become a hot spot for violent extremism, but the joint force set up in 2014 to combat groups linked to the Islamic State, al-Qaida and others has failed to stop their inroads, and a senior U.N. official warned Tuesday that without greater international support and regional cooperation the instability will expand toward West African coastal countries.

"Resolute advances in the fight against terrorism, violent extremism and organized crime in the Sahel desperately need to be made," U.N. Assistant Secretary-General for Africa Martha Pobeë told a U.N. Security Council meeting.

The counterterrorism force, now comprised of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania and Niger, lost Mali a year ago when its ruling junta decided to pull out. Pobeë said the force hasn't conducted any major military operations since January.

She said the force is adjusting to new realities: France moving its counterterrorism force from Mali to Niger due to tensions with the junta and Mali's decision to allow Russian mercenaries from Wagner to deploy on its territory.

She said Burkina Faso and Niger have recently strengthened military cooperation with Mali to counter an upsurge in extremist attacks, but "despite these efforts, insecurity in the tri-border area continues to grow."

Pobeë criticized the international community, saying a lack of consensus among donors and partners left the joint force without sufficient funding and other needed support to become fully operational and autonomous so it could have "the capacity to help stabilize the Sahel region."

An agreement between the U.N., EU and the force under which the U.N. peacekeeping force in Mali supplied fuel, rations, medical evacuation and engineering support to the joint force is expected to end in June, she said, expressing hope that the Security Council will consider the issue of U.N. financing for African peace operations.

Eric Tiaré, executive secretary of the force known as the G5 Sahel, said experts have finalized a new concept of operations, which will be submitted to its defense council and then to the African Union to be endorsed.

"Given that the Sahel is at a crossroads, as it is seeing many threats to international peace and security, it's absolutely vital that we provide support to the force," he said. "The force needs what it has always lacked and what it has always sought. That is sustainable funding and equipment as we seek to counter terrorism."

U.N. experts have reported in recent years that Africa has been the region hardest hit by terrorism, and U.N. counterterrorism chief Vladimir Voronkov told the Security Council in January that the Islamic State group's expansion in Africa's center, south and Sahel regions is "particularly worrying."

Last August, African security expert Martin Ewi said at least 20 African countries were directly experiencing activity by the Islamic State group, and more than 20 others were "being used for logistics and to mobilize funds and other resources."

Ewi, who coordinates a transnational organized crime project at the Institute for Security Studies in South Africa's capital, Pretoria, told the Security Council that the Islamic State threat was growing by the day in Africa and the continent could be "the future of the caliphate," which is what the Islamic State called the large swath of Syria and Iraq it seized in 2014 but lost in 2017.

Ewi said the Lake Chad Basin — which borders Chad, Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon — was the extremist group's biggest area of operation and areas in the Sahel were now "ungovernable."

Pobeë warned that without significant gains in fighting terrorism, "it will become increasingly difficult to reverse the security trajectory in the Sahel, and the further expansion of insecurity towards coastal West African countries."

She said the recent instability in Sudan was an additional cause for concern. "The devastating effects of the continuing destabilization of the Sahel would be felt far beyond the region and the African continent,"

Pobee said.

The U.S. deputy ambassador, Jeffrey DeLaurentis, said the United States "is especially concerned by the security, humanitarian and political crises unfolding in the Sahel, which stem primarily from governance failures."

He criticized state-led military operations in Burkina Faso and Mali, and Mali's operations with the Wagner mercenaries, which he said have led to "large-scale civilian casualties and reports of human rights violations."

DeLaurentis urged Mali to rejoin the G5 Sahel, saying regional efforts are needed to fight terrorism, criminal networks and climate change. And he extended U.S. support to Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali to complete their transitions to democratically elected civilian governments.

"We and other partners are keen to consider restarting currently restricted support," he said. "The election of democratic governments would help us resume such assistance."

George Santos expulsion coming before House as Democrats force vote

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Democrats took steps Tuesday to force a vote on expelling New York Rep. George Santos from Congress, an effort that is expected to be defeated but puts Republicans in the uncomfortable position of taking a stand on an indicted colleague.

The freshman GOP congressman has been charged with embezzling money from his campaign, falsely receiving unemployment funds and lying to Congress about his finances. He has denied the charges and has pleaded not guilty.

Democratic Rep. Robert Garcia, D-Calif., introduced a resolution in February to expel Santos, something the House has only done twice in recent decades and requires the approval of a two-thirds majority. He brought the measure Tuesday to the House floor under a process that gives lawmakers until Thursday to dispense with it.

Republicans could vote to table the effort. They could also refer it to the House Ethics Committee for consideration, which House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., indicated was his preferred route. Both efforts require a majority vote. Republicans could also just allow the House to vote on Garcia's expulsion resolution, but that is unlikely.

"I wanted him to resign. We gave him plenty of time to do it," Garcia said of his decision to bring the measure up this week. "His other Republican freshmen also want him to resign and it's time for him to go."

Santos, despite the federal charges he's facing, is moving forward with his plans to seek reelection and has defied calls for his resignation. "This is the beginning of the ability for me to address and defend myself," Santos told reporters following his indictment. His office didn't immediately respond to a request for comment on Garcia's resolution.

Republican leaders have said Santos deserves to have his day in court before Congress weighs in. The position Republican leaders have staked out generally follows the precedent that Congress has set in similar criminal cases over the years. The House has expelled just two members in recent decades, and both votes occurred after the lawmaker had been convicted on federal charges.

McCarthy said he would reach out to House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., about referring the resolution to the Ethics Committee, which already has initiated an investigation into whether Santos engaged in unlawful activity with respect to his congressional campaign.

"I think we can look at it very quickly and come to a conclusion on what George Santos did and did not do," McCarthy told reporters.

Democrats are looking to tie Santos to the Republican brand, particularly in key swing districts, and began messaging the effort to expel him as giving New Yorkers the "honest representation they deserve."

"Now is the time for members of Congress to demonstrate where they stand and expel George Santos from Congress," said Rep. Suzan DelBene, chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

Associated Press writer Stephen Groves contributed to this report.

ChatGPT chief says artificial intelligence should be regulated by a US or global agency

By MATT O'BRIEN AP Technology Writer

The head of the artificial intelligence company that makes ChatGPT told Congress on Tuesday that government intervention will be critical to mitigating the risks of increasingly powerful AI systems.

"As this technology advances, we understand that people are anxious about how it could change the way we live. We are too," OpenAI CEO Sam Altman said at a Senate hearing.

Altman proposed the formation of a U.S. or global agency that would license the most powerful AI systems and have the authority to "take that license away and ensure compliance with safety standards."

His San Francisco-based startup rocketed to public attention after it released ChatGPT late last year. The free chatbot tool answers questions with convincingly human-like responses.

What started out as a panic among educators about ChatGPT's use to cheat on homework assignments has expanded to broader concerns about the ability of the latest crop of "generative AI" tools to mislead people, spread falsehoods, violate copyright protections and upend some jobs.

And while there's no immediate sign Congress will craft sweeping new AI rules, as European lawmakers are doing, the societal concerns brought Altman and other tech CEOs to the White House earlier this month and have led U.S. agencies to promise to crack down on harmful AI products that break existing civil rights and consumer protection laws.

Sen. Richard Blumenthal, the Connecticut Democrat who chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee's subcommittee on privacy, technology and the law, opened the hearing with a recorded speech that sounded like the senator, but was actually a voice clone trained on Blumenthal's floor speeches and reciting ChatGPT-written opening remarks.

The result was impressive, said Blumenthal, but he added, "What if I had asked it, and what if it had provided, an endorsement of Ukraine surrendering or (Russian President) Vladimir Putin's leadership?"

The overall tone of senators' questioning was polite Tuesday, a contrast to past congressional hearings in which tech and social media executives faced tough grillings over the industry's failures to manage data privacy or counter harmful misinformation. In part, that was because both Democrats and Republicans said they were interested in seeking Altman's expertise on averting problems that haven't yet occurred.

Blumenthal said AI companies ought to be required to test their systems and disclose known risks before releasing them, and expressed particular concern about how future AI systems could destabilize the job market. Altman was largely in agreement, though had a more optimistic take on the future of work.

Pressed on his own worst fear about AI, Altman mostly avoided specifics, except to say that the industry could cause "significant harm to the world" and that "if this technology goes wrong, it can go quite wrong."

But he later proposed that a new regulatory agency should impose safeguards that would block AI models that could "self-replicate and self-exfiltrate into the wild" — hinting at futuristic concerns about advanced AI systems that could manipulate humans into ceding control.

That focus on a far-off "science fiction trope" of super-powerful AI could make it harder to take action against already existing harms that require regulators to dig deep on data transparency, discriminatory behavior and potential for trickery and disinformation, said a former Biden administration official who co-authored its plan for an AI bill of rights.

"It's the fear of these (super-powerful) systems and our lack of understanding of them that is making everyone have a collective freak-out," said Suresh Venkatasubramanian, a Brown University computer scientist who was assistant director for science and justice at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. "This fear, which is very unfounded, is a distraction from all the concerns we're dealing with right now."

OpenAI has expressed those existential concerns since its inception. Co-founded by Altman in 2015 with backing from tech billionaire Elon Musk, the startup has evolved from a nonprofit research lab with a safety-focused mission into a business. Its other popular AI products include the image-maker DALL-E.

Microsoft has invested billions of dollars into the startup and has integrated its technology into its own products, including its search engine Bing.

Altman is also planning to embark on a worldwide tour this month to national capitals and major cities across six continents to talk about the technology with policymakers and the public. On the eve of his Senate testimony, he dined with dozens of U.S. lawmakers, several of whom told CNBC they were impressed by his comments.

Also testifying were IBM's chief privacy and trust officer, Christina Montgomery, and Gary Marcus, a professor emeritus at New York University who was among a group of AI experts who called on OpenAI and other tech firms to pause their development of more powerful AI models for six months to give society more time to consider the risks. The letter was a response to the March release of OpenAI's latest model, GPT-4, described as more powerful than ChatGPT.

The panel's ranking Republican, Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri, said the technology has big implications for elections, jobs and national security. He said Tuesday's hearing marked "a critical first step towards understanding what Congress should do."

A number of tech industry leaders have said they welcome some form of AI oversight but have cautioned against what they see as overly heavy-handed rules. Altman and Marcus both called for an AI-focused regulator, preferably an international one, with Altman citing the precedent of the U.N.'s nuclear agency and Marcus comparing it to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. But IBM's Montgomery instead asked Congress to take a "precision regulation" approach.

"We think that AI should be regulated at the point of risk, essentially," Montgomery said, by establishing rules that govern the deployment of specific uses of AI rather than the technology itself.

YouTube's recommendations send violent and graphic gun videos to 9-year-olds, study finds

By DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When researchers at a nonprofit that studies social media wanted to understand the connection between YouTube videos and gun violence, they set up accounts on the platform that mimicked the behavior of typical boys living in the U.S.

They simulated two nine-year-olds who both liked video games. The accounts were identical, except that one clicked on the videos recommended by YouTube, and the other ignored the platform's suggestions.

The account that clicked on YouTube's suggestions was soon flooded with graphic videos about school shootings, tactical gun training videos and how-to instructions on making firearms fully automatic. One video featured an elementary school-age girl wielding a handgun; another showed a shooter using a .50 caliber gun to fire on a dummy head filled with lifelike blood and brains. Many of the videos violate YouTube's own policies against violent or gory content.

The findings show that despite YouTube's rules and content moderation efforts, the platform is failing to stop the spread of frightening videos that could traumatize vulnerable children — or send them down dark roads of extremism and violence.

"Video games are one of the most popular activities for kids. You can play a game like "Call of Duty" without ending up at a gun shop — but YouTube is taking them there," said Katie Paul, director of the Tech Transparency Project, the research group that published its findings about YouTube on Tuesday. "It's not the video games, it's not the kids. It's the algorithms."

The accounts that followed YouTube's suggested videos received 382 different firearms-related videos in a single month, or about 12 per day. The accounts that ignored YouTube's recommendations still received some gun-related videos, but only 34 in total.

The researchers also created accounts mimicking 14-year-old boys; those accounts also received similar levels of gun- and violence-related content.

One of the videos recommended for the accounts was titled "How a Switch Works on a Glock (Educa-

tional Purposes Only)." YouTube later removed the video after determining it violated its rules; an almost identical video popped up two weeks later with a slightly altered name; that video remains available.

A spokeswoman for YouTube defended the platform's protections for children and noted that it requires users under 17 to get their parent's permission before using their site; accounts for users younger than 13 are linked to the parental account. "We offer a number of options for younger viewers," the company wrote in emailed statement. "... Which are designed to create a safer experience for tweens and teens."

Along with TikTok, the video sharing platform is one of the most popular sites for children and teens. Both sites have been criticized in the past for hosting, and in some cases promoting, videos that encourage gun violence, eating disorders and self-harm. Critics of social media have also pointed to the links between social media, radicalization and real-world violence.

The perpetrators behind many recent mass shootings have used social media and video streaming platforms to glorify violence or even livestream their attacks. In posts on YouTube, the shooter behind the attack on a 2018 attack on a school in Parkland, Fla., that killed 17 wrote "I wanna kill people," "I'm going to be a professional school shooter" and "I have no problem shooting a girl in the chest."

The neo-Nazi gunman who killed eight people earlier this month at a Dallas-area shopping center also had a YouTube account that included videos about assembling rifles, the serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer and a clip from a school shooting scene in a television show.

In some cases, YouTube has already removed some of the videos identified by researchers at the Tech Transparency Project, but in other instances the content remains available. Many big tech companies rely on automated systems to flag and remove content that violates their rules, but Paul said the findings from the Project's report show that greater investments in content moderation are needed.

In the absence of federal regulation, social media companies must do more to enforce their own rules, said Justin Wagner, director of investigations at Everytown for Gun Safety, a leading gun control advocacy organization. Wagner's group also said the Tech Transparency Project's report shows the need for tighter age restrictions on firearms-related content.

"Children who aren't old enough to buy a gun shouldn't be able to turn to YouTube to learn how to build a firearm, modify it to make it deadlier, or commit atrocities," Wagner said in response to the Tech Transparency Project's report.

Similar concerns have been raised about TikTok after earlier reports showed the platform was recommending harmful content to teens.

TikTok has defended its site and its policies, which prohibit users younger than 13. Its rules also prohibit videos that encourage harmful behavior; users who search for content about topics including eating disorders automatically receive a prompt offering mental health resources.

Goodbye, fish and chips? New England haddock imperiled by overfishing

By PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — A staple seafood species caught by East Coast fishers for centuries is experiencing overfishing, and regulators have cut catch quotas by more than 80% to prevent the fish's population from collapse.

Haddock are one of the most popular Atlantic fish, and a favorite for fish and chips and other New England seafood dishes.

But fewer haddock will be caught in New England this year after regulators cut fishing quotas. A recent scientific assessment found that the Gulf of Maine haddock stock declined unexpectedly, and that meant the catch quotas for the fish were unsustainably high, federal fishing managers said.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration added the Gulf of Maine haddock stock to its overfishing list last month. The New England Fishery Management Council, a regulatory board, has lowered catch limits of the fish in an attempt to halt the overfishing, said agency spokesperson Allison Ferreira.

However, numerous fishers said the assessment doesn't match what they're seeing on the water, where haddock appear to them to be plentiful. And the warning from the federal government arrives as more New England fishers rely on haddock than in previous decades because of the collapse of other seafood species, such as Atlantic cod.

"We seem to find plenty, but they can't," said Terry Alexander, a Maine-based fisher who targets haddock and other species. "It's a disaster is what it is. A total, complete disaster."

The fishery management council mandated the 84% reduction in catch quotas for the current fishing year, which started May 1. The change applies to fishers who harvest haddock from the Gulf of Maine, a body of water off Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine. Fishers also harvest from Georges Bank, a fishing ground to the east where quotas were also reduced for this year, including adjoining areas overseen by Canadian officials who issued their own major cuts.

Americans are still likely to find haddock available despite the cuts because most of it is imported, according to federal data from 2021. Some countries that export haddock are also cutting quotas this year. But recent announcements of cuts by major exporters like Norway have been much lower than in the Gulf of Maine, and they represent a much larger share of global fish stocks.

Declining fish stocks threaten economies, food security and cultures around the world. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization says more than a third of global fish stocks are overfished, and the rate of unsustainable fishing is rising. However, seafood species' health varies significantly from region to region. Some, such as American lobster, have grown in catch volume in recent decades.

The U.S. catch of haddock has fluctuated over the past century. In the early 1950s, over 150 million pounds (70 million kilograms) were caught each year. Overfishing caused catches to plummet below a million pounds (450,000 kilograms) per year in the mid-1990s, and rebuilding efforts followed. Over the past few years, catches have ranged from 12 million to 23 million pounds (25 million to 50 million kilograms).

Haddock are caught by the same fishers who target other bottom-dwelling groundfish species such as cod, pollock and flounders. They are harvested at a much higher volume than any of those fish.

The fish are one of few profitable species on the East Coast said Ben Martens, executive director of the Maine Coast Fishermen's Association. He says losing the ability to catch them is a big hardship for the industry.

"I don't think this stock is in trouble, and I think fishermen are in trouble because of that," Martens said. "With this significant cut that is coming, that's a major gut punch."

Infertility is common in the US, but insurance coverage remains limited

By TOM MURPHY AP Health Writer

Jessica Tincopa may leave the photography business she spent 14 years building for one reason: to find coverage for fertility treatment.

After six miscarriages, Tincopa and her husband started saving for in vitro fertilization, which can cost well over \$20,000. But the pandemic wiped out their savings, and they can't find coverage for IVF on their state's health insurance marketplace. So, the California couple is saving again, and asking politicians to help expand access.

"No one should ever have to go through this," Tincopa said.

Infertility, or the inability to get pregnant after a year or more of trying, is a common problem. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that it affects nearly one in five married girls or women between the ages of 15 and 49.

Yet coverage of fertility treatments can be hard to find in many corners of health insurance even as it grows briskly with big employers who see it as a must-have benefit to keep workers.

It's a divide researchers say is leading to haves and have nots for treatments, which can involve a range of prescription drugs and procedures like artificial insemination or IVF, where an embryo is created by mixing eggs and sperm in a lab dish.

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"It is still primarily for people who can afford to pay quite a bit out of pocket," said Usha Ranji, associate director of women's health policy at KFF, a nonprofit that studies health care issues.

Clouding this picture are insurer concerns about cost as well as questions about how much fertility coverage should be emphasized or mandated versus helping people find other ways to build families, such as adoption.

"If you're going to offer one, there should be a corollary and maybe even more significant benefits for adoption," medical ethicist Dr. Philip Rosoff said.

A total of 54% of the biggest U.S. employers — those with 20,000 workers or more — covered IVF in 2022, according to the benefits consultant Mercer. That's up from 36% in 2015. Walmart started offering coverage last fall and banking giant JPMorgan began this year.

Many businesses that offer the coverage extend it beyond those with an infertility diagnosis, making it accessible to LGBTQ+ couples and single women, according to Mercer.

The benefits consultant also said there's big growth among employers with 500 or more workers, as 43% offered IVF coverage last year. But coverage gets spotty with smaller employers.

Lauderhill (Florida) Fire Rescue Lt. Ame Mason estimates she and her husband have spent close to \$100,000 of their own money on fertility treatments over the past few years, including several unsuccessful IVF attempts. Mason and her husband both work for the same department.

Her brother-in-law also has a fertility issue. He works for a bigger fire department in nearby Palm Beach County and got coverage. Mason said that couple has a son.

"It's pretty wild. You could work a county away and have coverage," Mason said. "There's nothing regulating it ... both government jobs."

Twenty-one states have laws mandating coverage of fertility treatments or fertility preservation, which some patients need before cancer treatments, according to the nonprofit patient advocacy organization Resolve. Of those states, 14 require IVF coverage.

But most of these requirements don't apply to individual insurance plans or coverage sold through small employers.

"People tell us that their biggest barrier to family building is lack of insurance coverage," Resolve CEO Barbara Collura said, adding that some insurers don't view the care as medically necessary.

The state and federally funded Medicaid program for people with low incomes limits coverage of fertility issues largely to diagnosis in several states, according to KFF, which says Black and Hispanic women are disproportionately affected. States also can exclude fertility drugs from prescription coverage.

"By not covering this for poor folks, we're saying we don't want you to reproduce," said medical ethicist Lisa Campo-Engelstein of the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, Texas. She noted Medicaid programs do cover birth control and sterilization procedures like vasectomies.

In California, Tincopa says she has talked to both state and federal legislators about creating some sort of option for people to purchase individual insurance with the coverage.

Some insurers in the state do offer "higher premium health care packages" that include an IVF coverage option, said Mary Ellen Grant, a spokeswoman for the California Association of Health Plans. She noted that health plans in the state are required to cover the treatment of underlying causes for infertility, like endometriosis or low testosterone, but not required to cover procedures like IVF.

The state Senate is weighing a bill that would require such coverage for plans offered through large employers. But the insurer association opposes it.

Grant noted independent analysis has shown that bills like this could increase premiums by as much as \$1 billion in the state. She also said it would create a coverage gap because it wouldn't apply to the state's Medicaid enrollees.

"This is not about the treatment itself," she said. "It's strictly based on the increased costs for our members. It would impact everybody regardless of whether they received the benefit."

But large fertility cost estimates often overstate how many people will use the benefit, said Sean Tipton, of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine. He also said most people with fertility problems don't

need IVF.

Tipton, who has advocated for benefit mandates in several states, said he expects to see fertility treatment coverage grow, especially with small employers who may need to offer it to attract and keep workers.

Any states that decide to require fertility treatment coverage should also require support for adoption, said Rosoff, a retired Duke University medical school professor. He said "fairness and justice" dictate doing so, adding that adoption promotes the social good of finding homes for children.

Many companies that have expanded fertility benefits also support adoption.

Ame Mason's employer helps with neither.

Mason said she has thought about adoption, but will stick with IVF for now — scrimping wherever they can and working overtime as much as possible to pay for it. They've found a doctor in Florida after traveling to Barbados for care that was slightly less expensive.

Plus, she and her husband are seeing improvements in their most recent IVF attempts. This makes her reluctant to stop trying.

"We keep getting that glimmer of hope," she said.

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Science and Educational Media Group. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Ukraine says it downed Russian hypersonic missiles during 'exceptional' air attack on Kyiv

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian air defenses, bolstered by sophisticated Western-supplied systems, thwarted an intense Russian air attack on Kyiv early Tuesday, shooting down all missiles aimed at the capital, officials said.

The bombardment, which targeted locations across Ukraine, included six Russian Kinzhals hypersonic missiles, the most fired in a single attack in the war so far, according to Ukrainian air force spokesman Yuriy Ihnat.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly touted the Kinzhals as providing a key strategic competitive advantage and among the most advanced weapons in his country's arsenal. The missiles are difficult to detect and intercept because of their hypersonic speed and maneuverability.

If Ukraine's claim of having shot down six fired Tuesday is confirmed, it would mark another blow to Putin's war efforts and show the increasing effectiveness of the country's air defenses.

Air force spokesman Ihnat, who said in March that Ukraine lacked the equipment to intercept the Kinzhals, didn't explain Tuesday what systems were used to knock them down. Since March, Western countries have supplied Ukraine with various air defense systems.

Russia fired the Kinzhals from MiG-31K warplanes, along with nine cruise missiles from ships in the Black Sea and three S-400 cruise missiles launched from the ground, Ihnat said. In all, Ukraine's military said later, Russia had targeted Ukraine with 27 missiles in a day and launched 37 airstrikes.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu late Tuesday contested the Ukrainian claims, telling the state-run RIA-Novosti news agency: "We have not launched as many Kinzhals as they allegedly shoot down every time with their statements."

Loud explosions boomed over Kyiv in the major nighttime attack apparently aimed at overwhelming Ukraine's air defenses. Kyiv's mayor reported three people were wounded.

The barrage came as European leaders sought new ways to punish Russia for the war and a Chinese envoy sought traction for Beijing's peace proposal, which appears to have made little impression on the warring sides. It also came as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy returned home from a whirlwind European tour to seek more military aid.

The overnight attack on Kyiv was "exceptional in its density — the maximum number of attacking missiles in the shortest period of time," said Serhii Popko, the head of the Kyiv military administration.

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Kyiv resident Valentyna Myronets, 64, said she felt "pain, fear, nervousness, restlessness" amid the assaults. "God, we are waiting for victory and when all this is over," she said.

U.K. Ambassador Melinda Simmons tweeted that the barrage was "pretty intense."

"Bangs and shaking walls are not an easy night," she wrote.

It was the eighth time this month that Russian air raids had targeted the capital, a clear escalation after weeks of lull and ahead of a much-anticipated Ukrainian counteroffensive using newly supplied advanced Western weapons.

After the first onslaught, Russia also launched Iranian-made Shahed attack drones and conducted aerial reconnaissance, Ihnat said.

Debris fell across several districts in the capital, starting fires, Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said.

Sophisticated Western air defense systems, including American-made Patriot missiles, have helped spare Kyiv from the kind of destruction witnessed along the main front line in the country's east and south. While most of the ground fighting is stalemated along that front line, both sides are targeting other territory with long-range weapons.

Associated Press reporters saw a metal fragment that landed inside the Kyiv zoo labeled Lockheed Martin and Boeing, two of the companies involved in manufacturing the Patriot missile system.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said a Kinzhal destroyed a Patriot missile battery in Kyiv but he didn't provide evidence, and the statement couldn't be independently verified. Ihnat, the Ukrainian air force spokesman, refused to comment on the claim.

Russia began using the Kinzhal to strike targets in Ukraine early in the invasion but has used the expensive weapon sparingly and against priority targets, apparently reflecting limited availability.

The Russian military says the missile's range is up to 2,000 kilometers (about 1,250 miles) and it can fly at 10 times the speed of sound. Its speed and heavy warhead allow the Kinzhal to destroy heavily fortified targets, such as underground bunkers or mountain tunnels.

Ukraine's bolstered air defenses have deterred Russia's aircraft from going deep into the neighbor country and helped shape the course of the war, military experts say.

In Iceland, European leaders are taking part in a rare summit of the 46-nation Council of Europe, the continent's main human rights body, to discuss how to manage claims for compensation from Russia's damage to Ukraine.

Meanwhile, a Chinese envoy is preparing to visit Ukraine and Russia as Beijing advocates a peace plan it released in February. Li Hui, a former ambassador to Moscow, also will visit Poland, France and Germany, according to the Chinese foreign ministry.

Ukraine has cautiously welcomed China's proposal while saying it would wait to see what specific actions China takes. Chinese leader Xi Jinping's government says it is neutral and wants to mediate in the war, but has given Moscow political support, and a breakthrough appears unlikely.

In Russian-occupied southern Ukraine, about 500 kilometers (300 miles) from Kyiv, Russian officials began training to evacuate 3,100 staff members of the shut-down Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant and their families, a representative of Energoatom, Ukraine's state nuclear company, said Tuesday.

The plant, Europe's largest nuclear power station, employed around 11,000 people before the war, some 6,000 of whom remain at the site and in the surrounding town of Enerhodar.

More Russian military units have arrived at the plant and are mining it, the representative told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly on the matter. Russian troops have barred remaining workers from communicating with each other or leaving, Energoatom said on Telegram.

In other developments:

—Ukrainian forces recaptured around 20 kilometers (7.7 square miles) of territory north and south of Bakhmut since last week, but Russian troops continue their grinding advance within the city, Ukraine's deputy defense minister said Tuesday. "Heavy battles continue with differing results," Hanna Malyar said on Telegram. The Russian-installed head of the partially occupied Donetsk region, Denis Pushilin, told Russian state TV that Russian forces near Bakhmut have reinforced their flanks in the face of Ukrainian successes.

—Ukraine's intelligence chief made a rare acknowledgement Tuesday of his country's involvement in assassinations of Russian officials. In an interview posted on YouTube with a Ukrainian journalist, Kyrylo Budanov responded to a question about the deaths of "Russian propagandists" by saying: "We have already got a lot of people." He declined to provide any details.

— In Ukraine's latest corruption scandal, which saw the head of the Supreme Court detained for alleged bribery on Monday, the chief of Ukraine's National Anti-Corruption Bureau, Semen Kryvonos, identified the main suspect in the case as mining magnate Kostiantyn Zhevago. Zhevago was arrested in the French Alps in January on suspicion of embezzling tens of millions of dollars.

— South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said his Russian and Ukrainian counterparts have agreed to separate meetings with a delegation of African leaders to discuss a possible plan to end the war. Ramaphosa's office said he spoke with Putin and Zelenskyy by phone over the weekend and they agreed to host "an African leaders peace mission" in Moscow and Kyiv, respectively.

Vasilisa Stepanenko in Kyiv, and Yuras Karmanau in Tallinn, Estonia, contributed to this report.

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

Virginia man charged in baseball bat attacks on three women, including congressional staffers

By MATTHEW BARAKAT and DENISE LAVOIE Associated Press

FAIRFAX, Va. (AP) — A man with untreated schizophrenia, according to his father, was arraigned Tuesday on charges involving baseball-bat attacks on three women, including two staffers for U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly.

Xuan-Kha Tran Pham, 49, of Fairfax heard the charges by video hookup from the Fairfax County jail. A judge ordered him held without bond pending a preliminary hearing in July.

The four counts include aggravated wounding and malicious aggravated wounding in the attack at Connolly's district office in Fairfax, and counts of felony destroying property and misdemeanor hate crime for an episode less than an hour earlier, when police say he hit a car windshield with the bat and chased a woman after asking if she was white.

Capitol Police and Fairfax City Police said they are jointly investigating the case, and the suspect's motivations aren't clear.

Pham's father, Hy Pham, told The Washington Post his son was diagnosed with schizophrenia and has dealt with mental illness since his late teens. He also said he's been trying without success to arrange mental health care for his son. The father could not immediately be reached by The Associated Press.

The veteran Democratic congressman, who wasn't in the office at the time, said in an interview that an intern working her first day on the job was struck in her side and an outreach director was hit on the head. Both were released after hospital treatment.

"It does underscore for all of us the vulnerability potentially of our district offices because we don't have the level of security we have here on Capitol Hill," said Connolly, now in his eighth term representing his district in the Washington suburbs.

One Fairfax police officer involved in detaining Pham on Monday also received treatment, for a minor injury, police spokesperson Sgt. Lisa Gardner said.

Other officers sustained minor injuries in January 2022 when they responded to a call from Pham saying he wished to harm others, Fairfax Police said.

Charges of assault on a law enforcement officer, resisting arrest and attempting to disarm a law enforcement officer were dropped in September after he complied with conditions requiring him to seek treatment, according to a person with the Fairfax County Commonwealth's Attorney's office who spoke on condition of anonymity because Pham now has an ongoing criminal case.

During that time — in May 2022 — Pham sued the Central Intelligence Agency in federal court, claiming

that the CIA had been torturing him “from the fourth dimension,” court records show.

Since the Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol, threats to lawmakers and their families have increased sharply. The U.S. Capitol Police investigated around 7,500 cases of potential threats against members of Congress in 2022. The year before, they investigated around 10,000 threats to members, more than twice the number from four years earlier.

In October, a man broke into the San Francisco home of then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, demanding to speak with her, before he smashed her husband, Paul, over the head with a hammer.

Associated Press writers Lisa Mascaro and Kevin Freking in Washington, and Sarah Rankin in Richmond, Virginia, contributed to this report. Lavoie reported from Richmond.

Job cuts, no Social Security checks: How consumers could be pinched by a US government default

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — All the hand-wringing in Washington over raising the debt limit can seem far removed from the lives of everyday Americans, but they could end up facing huge consequences.

Millions of people in the U.S. rely on benefits that could go unpaid and services that could be disrupted, or halted altogether, if the government can't pay its bills for an extended period.

If the economy tanked due to default, more than 8 million people could lose their jobs, government officials estimate. Millions of Social Security beneficiaries, veterans and military families could lose their monthly payments. Vital federal services including border and air traffic control could be disrupted if workers can't get their government paychecks.

The economy could nosedive into a recession.

President Joe Biden and the top congressional leaders from both parties met at the White House on Tuesday to try to resolve it all, their second such meeting in as many weeks.

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

If the government's legal borrowing limit of \$31.4 trillion is not raised or suspended by June 1, the result could be financial havoc. The inability to borrow money to keep paying government obligations could mean businesses sent into bankruptcy, crashes piling up across financial markets and lasting economic pain. The damage would be financial, but the cause would be political, a breakdown between Republicans and Democrats, rather than a problem with a basically healthy U.S. economy.

WHAT'S HOLDING UP AN AGREEMENT?

Philosophical differences with financial consequences.

Republicans want spending cuts in exchange for raising the debt ceiling, saying the current pace of spending is unsustainable. Biden and congressional Democrats want the debt limit raised without conditions, arguing that the two issues should not be linked.

Biden had said he would not negotiate over the debt limit, but that he would have a separate conversation with McCarthy about the federal budget.

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH THE BUDGET?

First the budget is not the debt. The budget is the money the government takes in and spends each year. If it spends more than it brings in — a budget deficit — that adds to the debt that has been building basically forever.

Biden dared McCarthy to produce a budget plan, and House Republicans responded by narrowly approving a bill to reduce deficits by \$4.8 trillion over 10 years. It would do so by cutting discretionary spending to 2022 levels and placing an annual 1% cap on future increases. The bill would also reclaim billions of unspent COVID-19 funding, eliminate clean energy tax credits Biden signed into law last year and reverse his student debt forgiveness and repayment plan.

It's unclear how Democrats can get the debt ceiling increased without support from House Republicans. But Democrats say the GOP bill's unspecified budget cuts would harm individuals — and the economy —

as domestic spending would likely be cut. Moody's Analytics estimates the Republican bill would cause the loss of 780,000 jobs next year alone.

ARE THERE ANY POSSIBLE AVENUES OF AGREEMENT?

Besides repurposing unspent COVID-19 funding, the White House and House Republicans could agree to tighten certain work requirements for federal aid programs that benefit the needy. The GOP-controlled House passed legislation that imposes more stringent conditions for people receiving food stamps, or SNAP benefits, as well as adults without dependents on Medicaid and recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, which offers aid to low-income families with children.

Biden over the weekend appeared to rule out changes to Medicaid. The White House said he would reject proposals that take away people's health coverage or push them into poverty.

WHO WOULD SUFFER THE MOST FROM A DEFAULT?

Basically everyone, because the jolt to the U.S. and global financial systems would be so "catastrophic," Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Tuesday in a speech to community bankers.

But working people, those living paycheck to paycheck and people who rely on government benefits and services would face the biggest blows through job losses and the loss of income.

Yellen, in her speech, urged Congress to act quickly. "The U.S. economy hangs in the balance. The livelihoods of millions of Americans do, too," she said.

HOW DOES IT END?

No one really knows, though McConnell, a longtime Senate Republican leader, said this after last week's White House meeting: "The United States is not going to default. It never has and it never will."

AP Congressional Correspondent Lisa Mascaro and Associated Press writers Josh Boak, Seung Min Kim and Mary Clare Jalonick contributed to this report.

Man and 12-year-old boy arrested after fatal shooting at Sonic restaurant in Texas

KEENE, Texas (AP) — A 12-year-old boy and a 20-year-old man have been arrested on a murder warrant in the fatal shooting of a Sonic Drive-In employee in Texas, police said.

Matthew Davis, 32, was shot and killed Saturday night as he fought with Angel Gomez, 20, in the parking lot of the restaurant in Keene, about 40 miles (64 kilometers) southwest of Dallas, police said.

The boy was at the restaurant with Gomez, who was causing an unspecified disturbance in the parking lot, and shot Davis several times after taking a gun from Gomez's vehicle, according to a police statement.

Davis was taken to a hospital where he was pronounced dead, police said.

The boy used an AR-style rifle in the shooting, Police Chief James Kidd told The Dallas Morning News on Tuesday.

Both Gomez and the boy fled the scene, but Gomez later returned and was arrested on a murder warrant and the boy, whose name has not been released, was found and arrested in the nearby town of Rio Vista, said police.

Court records do not show that formal charges have been filed.

The shooting comes in the wake of two mass shootings that has focused attention on guns in Texas.

CTE cases in soccer players raise fresh questions about safety of heading the ball

By JIMMY GOLEN AP Sports Writer

English soccer star Jimmy Fryatt was known for his ability to head the ball, and the proof of his prowess may be in the damage it did to his brain.

Still physically fit in his late 70s, Fryatt played tennis but couldn't keep score or remember which side of the net he was supposed to be on. He lived in Las Vegas for almost 50 years but started to get lost while

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riding his bicycle in the neighborhood.

"I had to put a tracker on him," his wife, Valerie, said this week. "I'd call him and say: 'Stop. I'm coming to get you.'"

A North American Soccer League champion who played 18 years in Britain, Fryatt is one of four former professional soccer players newly diagnosed with chronic traumatic encephalopathy. The Concussion Legacy Foundation announced Tuesday that English pro and Oregon State head coach Jimmy Conway, Scottish and Seattle NASL midfielder Jimmy Gabriel, and NCAA champion Franny Pantuosco also were found to have the degenerative brain disease that has been linked to concussions in athletes, combat veterans and others who have sustained repeated head trauma.

They are the first diagnoses among those who played in the NASL, a precursor to MLS as the top U.S. pro soccer league that attracted attention with high-profile signings — including Pelé — before folding in 1985.

Valerie Fryatt said her husband had several diagnosed concussions, but CTE researchers believe the disease can also be caused by repeated sub-concussive blows to the head.

In soccer, that means heading the ball.

"Jimmy was a prolific header of the ball. He was very skilled at that," Valerie Fryatt said. "A lot of players from that era said he was the best header of the ball they'd ever seen."

The new diagnoses come as soccer officials gather in Chicago for a Head Injury Summit, a conference cohosted by U.S. Soccer and the top American men's and women's pro leagues that promises "two days of presentations and panel discussions led by medical professionals, stakeholders and researchers."

But CTE researchers and families of those affected by the disease say that the agenda, the guest list — and even the name — belie a desire to only give the appearance of confronting brain injuries, part of a trend among sports leagues to downplay the long-term effects of concussions and delay measures that could prevent them.

"In rugby and hockey and, of course, still in football, we're so familiar with that," said Dr. Ann McKee, director of the Boston University CTE Center — the brain bank that has led the research into the disease that can cause memory loss, violent mood swings, depression and other cognitive difficulties.

"I'm sorry. I'm very, have a jaded point of view about these summits," she said. "I think they're largely a PR stunt production to make people think that they're taking the injury and the condition seriously. But they're so shallow in the representation ... that the outcome is a foregone conclusion."

A U.S. Soccer spokesman listed as the media contact on a summit release did not immediately respond to a request for comment. A Major League Soccer spokeswoman forwarded an agenda, which lists panels conducted by, among others, scientists, soccer officials and unnamed current and former players.

But no researchers from the BU CTE Center were invited to speak at the summit, even though McKee and Robert Cantu are two of the most-published, most prolific — and most outspoken — in the field. (U.S. Soccer Federation President Cindy Parlow Cone is among those who have pledged their brains to BU for research.)

"What happens with these large sports groups is they often invite a roster filled with people who minimize the long-term effects," McKee said. "And they come away saying: 'Here, we have held a summit. We looked at the evidence. It's not very strong, and the scientists are undecided.' And so it's sort of fait accompli that they don't have to do anything about it."

Even the title was a problem for Concussion Legacy Foundation co-founder Chris Nowinski, a former Harvard football player-turned-professional wrestler-turned Ph.D. who has been a leader in educating professional and amateur athletes about the dangers of concussions.

"Head injury' is what you say when you don't take it seriously," Nowinski said. "To call it 'head injury' when you're actually talking about 'brain injury' is a tactic the NFL used to use."

BU researchers have diagnosed more than 100 football players with CTE; it also has been found in boxers and rugby players and professional wrestlers and members of the military. Cases among soccer players — at least in the United States — have been less common, but researchers expect the numbers to increase now that those who began playing the growing sport as children are reaching old age.

Last year, Scott Vermillion was announced as the first former MLS player to be diagnosed with CTE.

His father, David Vermillion, said he would have made it his "first priority" to attend the summit if he had been invited.

Instead, he is going on a family vacation.

"They're not going to have people there that have dealt with it first-hand," Vermillion said. "Folks like that have all this knowledge, that can have input into trying to make things safer for the athletes, aren't going to be there."

Nowinski said he offered to connect summit organizers with families of those who died with CTE but was ghosted.

"It's not good for business, I assume," said Bruce Murray, a former U.S. national team member who has gone public with his cognitive difficulties.

"They need to hear the ugly side of it, too. I had an ugly side, and Scott Vermillion died very ugly," Murray said. "He was pretty normal and then he went upside down. I don't know if I'm going to go upside down again. There's no doubt that something's going on."

CTE can only be diagnosed posthumously. Vermillion, Fryatt and Conway died in 2020. Conway revealed 10 years before his death that he'd been diagnosed with dementia. Gabriel's family reported cognitive difficulties and depression for the last dozen years of his life before he died in 2021. Pantuosco also died in 2021.

All four had the most severe stage of the disease, McKee said.

McKee said the families of CTE victims are often the best source of information on how to recognize brain injuries, which can take years to develop and cause problematic behavior like alcohol abuse or violent mood swings that can destroy families uneducated to the underlying cause.

"These are human beings. These are the people that played the game, that made the owners rich, that caused the fans that have all the enjoyment, who are really responsible for the popularity of soccer today," McKee said. "And yet when they get into trouble, when they start to develop problematic behaviors, when their families start suffering, when they start suffering, no one pays any attention, including these summits."

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

21 pieces of jewelry worth \$129 million were stolen. A court convicts 5 men in museum heist

By KIRSTEN GRIESHABER Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — A German court convicted five men Tuesday of breaking into a Dresden museum and stealing 21 pieces of jewelry containing more than 4,300 diamonds.

The men ages 24 to 29 received prison sentences ranging from four years and four months to six years and three months, German news agency dpa reported. One defendant was acquitted.

The Dresden state court ruled that the five were responsible for the theft of the 18th century jewelry from the Green Vault Museum on Nov. 25, 2019. Officials said at the time that the stolen items included a large diamond brooch and a diamond epaulet.

The crime was considered one of Germany's most spectacular jewelry heists in recent history. The pieces taken had a total insured value of at least 113.8 million euros (\$129 million).

The men were accused of starting a fire just before the break-in to cut the power supply to street lights outside the museum, and also setting fire to a car in a nearby garage before fleeing to Berlin. They were caught several months later during raids in Germany's capital.

The court convicted them of particularly aggravated arson in combination with dangerous bodily injury, theft with weapons, damage to property and intentional arson.

The judges who heard the case observed that some of the men had acted with "considerable criminal energy," dpa reported. The aim was "to get rich," the judges said.

More than 100 witnesses and 11 experts gave testimony during the trial's main proceedings, according to the news agency.

The Green Vault is one of the world's oldest museums. It was established in 1723 and contains the treasury of Augustus the Strong of Saxony, comprising around 4,000 objects of gold, precious stones and other materials.

In January, the defense, prosecution and court reached a plea bargain after most of the stolen jewels were returned. However, some of the most important pieces featuring large diamonds remain missing, according to dpa.

Four defendants who agreed to the plea bargain subsequently admitted their involvement in the crime through their lawyers. The fifth defendant also confessed, but only to helping to procure objects such as the axes used to make holes in the museum display case, dpa reported.

The returned pieces do not erase the fact that the museum's collection of complete jewelry sets "is probably destroyed forever," Presiding Judge Andreas Ziegel Ziegel said.

The state of Saxony, where Dresden is located, claimed damages of almost 89 million euros to cover the cost of pieces that were returned damaged, the missing jewelry and repairs to the destroyed display cases and the museum building.

In his remarks Tuesday, Ziegel directly addressed the defendants, saying it is up to them to decide whether to continue committing crimes.

"There are things in your life that are worth living a different life for," the judge said, according to dpa. "It's your choice what you do with your life."

Prince Harry seeks to challenge denial of request to pay for own UK police protection

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A lawyer for Prince Harry argued in a London court Tuesday that he should be allowed to challenge a government decision that denied him the right to pay for police protection when he visits the U.K.

The case is one of six the Duke of Sussex has pending in court that center around two issues: his security and claims that British tabloids hacked his phone and unlawfully obtained other information about him.

His high-profile phone hacking trial against the publisher of the Daily Mirror is underway before a different High Court judge.

The hearing in the security case centered around Harry's claim that he doesn't feel safe bringing his young children, Archie, 4, and Lilibet, nearly 2, from the U.S. to visit his home country without a police security detail.

A spokesperson for the prince has said his U.S. security team doesn't have jurisdiction abroad or access to intelligence in the U.K..

The British government stopped providing security for Harry after he and his wife, Meghan, quit their royal duties and moved to California in 2020. Harry has a separate legal case challenging the decision to deny providing him security in the U.K.

Harry's lawyer asked a judge to allow the duke to bring a legal case against the Home Office and the Executive Committee for the Protection of Royalty and Public Figures for denying him the right to personally pay for his security.

Attorney Shaheed Fatima argued the committee, which includes members from London's Metropolitan Police department, the Home Office and Buckingham Palace, exceeded its authority and its denial was inconsistent with legislation that allows a police chief to provide special police services for payment.

"Parliament has clearly decided that in principle, payment for policing is not inconsistent with the public interest," Fatima wrote.

The government's lawyer, Robert Palmer, said reimbursing police for security at special events such as a marathon, soccer matches and celebrity weddings was not the same as using "police officers as private bodyguards for the wealthy."

Palmer said the denial was within the authority of the committee and set a policy position.

The judge is expected to rule later.

How the American Dream convinces people loneliness is normal

By TED ANTHONY AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — At the end of “The Searchers,” one of John Wayne’s most renowned Westerns, a kidnapped girl has been rescued and a family reunited. As the closing music swells, Wayne’s character looks around at his kin — people who have other people to lean on — and then walks off toward the dusty West Texas horizon, lonesome and alone.

It’s a classic example of a fundamental American tall tale — that of a nation built on notions of individualism, a male-dominated story filled with loners and “rugged individualists” who suck it up, do what needs to be done, ride off into the sunset and like it that way.

In reality, loneliness in America can be deadly. This month, U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy declared it an American epidemic, saying that it takes as deadly a toll as smoking upon the population of the United States. “Millions of people in America are struggling in the shadows,” he said, “and that’s not right.”

He cited some potent forces: the gradual withering of longstanding institutions, decreased engagement with churches, the fraying bonds of extended families. When you add recent stressors — the rise of social media and virtual life, post-9/11 polarization and the way COVID-19 interrupted existence — the challenge becomes even more stark.

People are lonely the world over. But as far back as the early 19th century, when the word “loneliness” began to be used in its current context in American life, some were already asking the question: Do the contours of American society — that emphasis on individualism, that spreading out with impunity over a vast, sometimes outsized landscape — encourage isolation and alienation?

Or is that, like other chunks of the American story, a premise built on myths?

Alexis de Tocqueville, watching the country as an outsider while writing “Democracy in America” in the mid-1800s, wondered whether, “as social conditions become more equal,” Americans and people like them would be inclined to reject the trappings of deep community that had pervaded Old World aristocracies for centuries.

“They acquire the habit of always considering themselves as standing alone, and they are apt to imagine that their whole destiny is in their own hands,” he wrote. “Thus not only does democracy make every man forget his ancestors, but it ... throws him back forever upon himself alone, and threatens in the end to confine him entirely within the solitude of his own heart.”

This has been a recurring thread in how Americans perceive themselves. In the age before democracy, for better and for worse, “People weren’t lonely. They were tied up in a web of connections. And in many countries that’s more true than it was in the United States,” says Colin Woodard, director of the Nationhood Lab at the Pell Center for International Relations and Public Policy.

“There’s this idea that going out into those vast spaces and connecting with the wilderness and escaping the past was precisely what made us Americans,” Woodard says.

Yet many frontier myths skip over how important community has been in the settling and growth of the nation. Some of the biggest stories of cooperation — the rise of municipal organizations and trade unions, the New Deal programs that helped drag many Americans out of the Depression in the 1930s, war efforts from the Civil War to World War II — sometimes get lost in the fervor for character-driven stories of individualism.

Those omissions continue. Fueled in part by pandemic distrust, a latter-day strain of individual-over-community sentiment often paired with invocations of liberty and freedom occupies a significant chunk of the national conversation these days — to the point where advocacy about community thinking is sometimes met with accusations of socialism.

Let’s not consign Americans to be the heirs of a built-in loneliness gene, though. A new generation is insisting that mental health be part of the national conversation, and many voices — among them women

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and people of color — are increasingly offering new alternatives to the old myths.

What's more, the very place where the discussion about loneliness is being held today — in the office of the surgeon general, a presidential appointee — suggests that other paths are possible.

The ways Americans perceive themselves as solitary (whether or not it's true) can be seen in their art. One of the nation's early art movements, the mid-19th-century Hudson River School, made people tiny parts of outsized landscapes, implying both that the land dwarfed humans and that they were being summoned to tame it. From that, you can draw a line straight to Hollywood and director John Ford's Westerns, which used vast landscapes to isolate and motivate humans for the purposes of telling big stories. Same with music, where both the blues and the "high lonesome sound" helped shape later genres.

In the suburbs, Betty Friedan's groundbreaking "The Feminine Mystique" helped give voice to a generation of lonely women. In the city, Edward Hopper's work — like the iconic "Nighthawks" — channeled urban loneliness. At around the same time, the emergence of film noir — crime and decay in the American city its frequent subject — helped shape the figure of the lonely man alone in a crowd who might be a protagonist, might be an antagonist, might be both.

Today, loneliness plays out on streaming TV all the time in the forms of shows like "Severance," "Shrinking," "Beef" and, most prominently, the earnest "Ted Lasso," a show about an American in Britain who — despite being known and celebrated by many — is consistently and obviously lonely.

In March, the show's creator and star, Jason Sudeikis, appeared with his cast at the White House to talk about the issue that the show is, in its final season, more about than ever: mental health. "We all know someone who has, or have been that someone ourselves actually, that's struggled, that's felt isolated, that's felt anxious, that has felt alone," Sudeikis said.

Solitude and isolation do not automatically equal loneliness. But they all live in the same part of town. During the pandemic, Murthy's report found, people tightened their groups of friends and cut time spent with them. According to the report, Americans spent 20 minutes a day with friends in 2020 — down from an hour daily two decades ago. Granted, that was during peak COVID. The trend, though, is clear — particularly among young people ages 15 to 24.

Perhaps many Americans are alone in a crowd, awash in a sea of voices both physical and virtual yet by themselves much of the time, seeking community but suspicious of it. Some of the modernizing forces that stitched the United States together in the first place — commerce, communication, roads — are, in their current forms, part of what isolates people today. There's a lot of space between the general store and Amazon deliveries to your door, between mailing a letter and navigating virtual worlds, between roads that connect towns and freeways that overrun them.

And if Americans can figure out more about what connects and what alienates, some answers to the loneliness epidemic might reveal themselves.

"We must, indeed, all hang together or, most assuredly, we shall all hang separately," Benjamin Franklin, not incidentally the country's first postmaster general, said under very different circumstances. Or perhaps it's put better by the American poet Amanda Gorman, one of the country's most insightful young voices. This is from her poem "The Miracle of Morning," written in 2020 during the early part of the pandemic.

"While we might feel small, separate, and all alone,
our people have never been more closely tethered.
Because the question isn't if we can weather this unknown,
but how we will weather this unknown together."

Ted Anthony, director of new storytelling and newsroom innovation at The Associated Press, has been writing about American culture since 1990. Follow him on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/anthonyted>

Home Depot sees first annual sales decline in more than a decade as housing streak ebbs, rates jump

By MICHELLE CHAPMAN AP Business Writer

After years of explosive growth during the pandemic, Home Depot's revenue during the first quarter fell short of expectations and the company cut its profit and sales outlook for the year, sending shares lower at the opening bell.

Home Depot on Tuesday projected its first decline in annual revenue since 2009 in the aftermath of the bursting of the housing bubble and financial crisis.

It was a rough start to a busy week of retail earnings and the numbers from the nation's biggest home improvement chain dragged down retails stocks as well as the Dow. Shares in rival Lowe's fell harder than Home Depot.

For the three months ended April 30, revenue dropped to \$37.26 billion from last year's \$38.91 billion, and it was short of the \$38.45 billion projected by analysts polled by Zacks Investment Research.

Sales at stores open at least a year, a key indicator of a retailer's health, dropped 4.5%, and it dropped 4.6% for stores in the U.S.

"After a three-year period of unprecedented growth for our sector, during which we grew sales by over \$47 billion, we expected that fiscal 2023 would be a year of moderation for the home improvement market," said CEO Ted Decker.

Decker said weak sales were mostly due to lumber deflation and bad weather, particularly in its Western division which had to contend with extreme weather in California.

But the Atlanta company cut its expectations for the year with as shift in spending becomes more clear with the economy slowing and costs rising for builders and homeowners.

The U.S. Federal Reserve has hiked benchmark interest rates 10 consecutive times with hopes of slowing the economy and cooling inflation.

The U.S. economy slowed sharply from January through March, decelerating to just a 1.1% annual pace as higher interest rates hammered the housing market and businesses reduced their inventories. An estimate from the Commerce Department last month showed that the nation's gross domestic product — the broadest gauge of economic output — weakened after growing 3.2% from July through September and 2.6% from October through December.

Home Depot cautioned in February that it expected profits to slip this year. The chain saw remarkable growth over the past three years, as many people hunkered down at home or were searching for a new home during the pandemic. Americans spent heavily on home renovations and other projects.

With the easing of the pandemic, Americans began to spend on things that had faded in recent years, like dinners out and vacations.

Home Depot earned \$3.87 billion, or \$3.82 per share, in the quarter. A year earlier it earned \$4.23 billion, or \$4.09 per share. That was better than the per-share earnings of \$3.80 that industry analysts were expecting.

Home Depot Inc. now expects sales and same-store sales to decline between 2% and 5% this year. Several months ago, the company said it expected sales to be flat compared with 2022.

The chain now expects full-year earnings to fall between 7% and 13%, expanding the potential decline from earlier expectations that the retreat would remain solidly in the single-digit percentage range.

Shares dropped 2% when the markets opened Tuesday.

Skeletons found in Pompeii ruins reveal deaths by earthquake, not just Vesuvius' ancient eruption

MILAN (AP) — The discovery of two skeletons buried beneath a collapsed wall in the Pompeii archaeological site point to deaths by powerful earthquakes that accompanied the devastating eruption of Mount Vesuvius in the first century, experts said Tuesday, in addition to the victims of volcanic ash and gas.

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The two skeletons believed to be men at least 55 years old were found in the Casti Amanti, or House of Chaste Lovers, beneath a wall that collapsed before the area was covered in volcanic material. The area was likely undergoing reconstruction work at the time of the eruption in A.D. 79, following an earthquake a few days earlier.

"In recent years, we have realized there were violent, powerful seismic events that were happening at the time of the eruption," said Gabriel Zuchtriegel, director of the Pompeii Archaeological Park.

New archaeological techniques and methodology "allow us to understand better the inferno that in two days completely destroyed the city of Pompeii, killing many inhabitants," he added, making it possible to determine the dynamic of deaths down to the final seconds.

More than 1,300 victims have been found in the archaeological site south of Naples over the last 250 years.

Today in History: May 17, Brown v. Board of Education ruling

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, May 17, the 137th day of 2023. There are 228 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 17, 1954, a unanimous U.S. Supreme Court handed down its Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka decision which held that racially segregated public schools were inherently unequal, and therefore unconstitutional.

On this date:

In 1536, Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer declared the marriage of England's King Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn invalid after she failed to produce a male heir; Boleyn, already condemned for high treason, was executed two days later.

In 1940, the Nazis occupied Brussels, Belgium, during World War II.

In 1946, President Harry S. Truman seized control of the nation's railroads, delaying — but not preventing — a threatened strike by engineers and trainmen.

In 1973, a special committee convened by the U.S. Senate began its televised hearings into the Watergate scandal.

In 1980, rioting that claimed 18 lives erupted in Miami's Liberty City after an all-white jury in Tampa acquitted four former Miami police officers of fatally beating Black insurance executive Arthur McDuffie.

In 1987, 37 American sailors were killed when an Iraqi warplane attacked the U.S. Navy frigate Stark in the Persian Gulf. (Iraq apologized for the attack, calling it a mistake, and paid more than \$27 million in compensation.)

In 1996, President Bill Clinton signed a measure requiring neighborhood notification when sex offenders move in. ("Megan's Law," as it's known, was named for Megan Kanka, a 7-year-old New Jersey girl who was raped and murdered in 1994.)

In 2004, Massachusetts became the first state to allow same-sex marriages.

In 2010, the Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that young people serving life prison terms should have "a meaningful opportunity to obtain release" provided they didn't kill their victims.

In 2015, a shootout erupted between bikers and police outside a restaurant in Waco, Texas, leaving nine of the bikers dead and 20 people injured.

In 2017, the Justice Department appointed former FBI Director Robert Mueller as a special counsel to oversee a federal investigation into potential coordination between Russia and the 2016 Donald Trump campaign.

In 2020, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo was tested for the coronavirus on live TV as he announced that all people in the state who were experiencing flu-like symptoms were eligible for tests.

Ten years ago: The ousted head of the Internal Revenue Service, Steven Miller, faced hours of intense grilling before Congress; both defiant and apologetic, Miller acknowledged agency mistakes in targeting

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tea party groups for special scrutiny when they applied for tax-exempt status, but insisted that agents broke no laws and that there was no effort to cover up their actions. Jorge Rafael Videla (HOHR'-hay rah-fay-EHL' vih-DEH'-lah), 87, the former dictator who took power in Argentina in a 1976 coup and led a military junta that killed thousands during a "dirty war" against alleged subversives, died in Buenos Aires while serving life in prison for crimes against humanity.

Five years ago: With six Democrats joining Republicans in voting to confirm her, Gina Haspel won Senate confirmation to become director of the CIA. The Miss America Organization announced that it would now have women in its three top leadership positions, after an email scandal in which male officials were caught making vulgar and insulting comments about past winners.

One year ago: President Joe Biden condemned the poison of white supremacy and said the nation must "reject the lie" of the racist "replacement theory" espoused by a shooter who killed 10 Black people in Buffalo, New York. Mariupol appeared on the verge of falling to the Russians as Ukraine moved to abandon the steel plant where hundreds of its fighters held out for months under relentless bombardment in the last bastion of resistance in the devastated city. Baltimore Orioles pitcher Matt Harvey was suspended for 60 games by Major League Baseball for distributing a prohibited drug of abuse.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Peter Gerety is 83. Singer Taj Mahal is 81. Rock musician Bill Bruford is 74. TV personality Kathleen Sullivan is 70. Boxing Hall of Famer Sugar Ray Leonard is 67. Sports announcer Jim Nantz is 64. Producer Simon Fuller (TV: "American Idol") is 63. Singer Enya is 62. Actor-comedian Craig Ferguson is 61. Rock singer-musician Page McConnell is 60. Actor David Eigenberg is 59. Singer-musician Trent Reznor (Nine Inch Nails) is 58. Actor Paige Turco is 58. Actor Hill Harper is 57. TV personality/interior designer Thom Filicia is 54. Singer Jordan Knight is 53. R&B singer Darnell Van Rensalier (Shai) is 53. U.S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo is 52. Actor Sasha Alexander is 50. Rock singer-musician Josh Homme (HAHM'-ee) is 50. Rock singer Andrea Corr (The Corrs) is 49. Actor Sendhil Ramamurthy (SEN'-dul rah-mah-MURTH'-ee) is 49. Actor Rochelle Aytes is 47. Singer Kandi Burruss is 47. Actor Kat Foster is 45. Actor Ayda Field is 44. Actor Ginger Gonzaga is 40. Folk-rock singer/songwriter Passenger is 39. Dancer-choreographer Derek Hough (huhf) is 38. Actor Tahj Mowry is 37. Actor Nikki Reed is 35. Singer Kree Harrison (TV: "American Idol") is 33. Actor Leven Rambin is 33. Actor Samantha Browne-Walters is 32. Actor Justin Martin is 29.