

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Groton Community Calendar

### Thursday, May 18

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

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.

## 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.



### 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.

### Monday, May 22

Senior Menu: Hamburger cabbage roll hotdish, corn, pears, muffins.

Girls Golf Meet at Olive Grove Golf Course, 10 a.m.

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

Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center with potluck at noon.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6 p.m.

### Tuesday, May 23

Senior Menu: Pork Cutlet, creamy noodles, mixed vegetables, blushing pears, whole wheat bread.

## OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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## The Bulletin

by Newsweek

JANUARY 24, 2023

### World in Brief

lington hostel that killed at least six people earlier this week.

Wildfires in the Canadian province of Alberta are now affecting the U.S., with Montana, North Dakota, and northern Wyoming all recording poor air quality as smoke continues to drift south.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis signed a bill into law that bans gender-affirming care for minors, going to drag shows, and restricts bathroom usage and pronouns that can be used in schools.

Jack Teixeira, the air national guard member suspected of leaking highly classified military documents, was reportedly warned on multiple occasions about his mishandling of sensitive material, according to a court filing.

Deutsche Bank has agreed to pay \$75 million to settle a lawsuit in which victims of Jeffrey Epstein's sexual abuse accused the bank of enabling his sex-trafficking operations.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, explosions were reported in Ukraine's capital city as Kyiv's military said its air defenses have destroyed dozens of Russian cruise missiles in overnight attacks.

### WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAY AHEAD

President Joe Biden is expected to meet with Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio in Hiroshima ahead of the Group of 7 summit, which starts on Friday.

More housing data is scheduled today, with existing homes sales for April due at 10 a.m. ET. The weekly report on initial jobless claims is due at 8:30 a.m., while the Conference Board is set to release its leading economic index for April at 10 a.m.

Walmart — whose stocks are up about 7.8% this year — is set to report its first-quarter earnings, a day after retailer Target posted better-than-expected earnings even as sales barely grew on a yearly basis.

Three Republican-appointed judges of an appeals court in New Orleans appeared set to block access to the decades-old authorization of abortion pill mifepristone, expressing skepticism that the government followed proper processes to make the drug readily available.

Prince Harry will hand over videos he recorded of a "near-catastrophic" car chase with paparazzi to police in New York City.

New Zealand police have arrested a man and charged him with two counts of arson following a fire at a Wel-

## Groton City Notice

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



## Tornado shelter, city shop, jailhouse discussion on the table at Groton City Council

by Elizabeth Varin

Ideas for new bathrooms and a tornado shelter at the Groton City Park will soon be before the City Council. Council members met with Ken Hier with Clark Engineering Corporation and Dean Marske, president and principal architect at HKG Architects based in Aberdeen. Discussion centered on park bathroom improvements and funding through the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

A safe room for tornadoes and hurricanes has to be able to withstand 250 mile per hour winds, Marske said. That means poured concrete walls or possibly cast walls eight inches thick.

Some things still need to be decided, he said.

"We've got the plans," he said. "We've done it. You have to tell me what ... how (much capacity) you want."

It would be nice to get a sheet of paper with sizing options and what can be inside the tornado shelter, said Mayor Scott Hanlon.

Marske said he and his staff can bring those options to the council's next meeting in June. But the council needs to consider things like how many people may need to use the shelter and how many bathrooms or showers the city needs at the bathroom facility.

The focus wouldn't be how many people attend events at the city park, but rather those who stay at the camp ground at the park and some nearby residents who would need the shelter, Hier said.

Later in the meeting after the engineer and architect left, the council discussed capacity needed at a park-based shelter.

A "bare minimum" number would be room for 30 people, said Councilman Brian Bahr.

Other council members discussed whether bathrooms and showers currently at the city park bathroom facility would be inside or outside of the tornado shelter.

There are additional concerns as a lot of people live near the area, said Councilman Kevin Nehls. There are four apartment complexes within a few blocks.

Decisions about size and building type are set to be continued at the council's June 6 meeting.

"Everybody needs to think on this," Hanlon said. "And we'll cross that road at the next meeting."

### New shop or renovations on the horizon

The city may soon need a new shop, but plans are in discussion for a short-term solution.

The council discussed the city's current shop, which can't house all of the city's current equipment.

Councilman Bahr said he and Councilman Nehls recently looked at the facility, and if a bigger building can't be constructed this summer, a larger overhead door may help keep some of the city's newer equipment out of the elements. There may also be some items the city can declare as surplus and sell to make room.

"There's some things in there that need to go," Bahr said. "There are some lawnmowers we've talked to city employees about, and they haven't been used in years."

Councilwoman Karen Babcock agreed with going through the city's current equipment to see what needs to go.

"We don't need to shelter the junk," she said.

While there may be some short-term solutions, Bahr said newer equipment is getting bigger than ones built in the past.

"Eventually we'll need to have a new shop," he said. "I would rather do it sooner rather than later."

### Jailhouse talks continue

Council members indicated they wanted to donate the city's old jail to the Groton Community Historical Society.

Topper Tastad and Mike Nehls approached the council at its last meeting earlier this month requesting the city donate the jailhouse located near the intersection of East First Avenue and North Third Street.

The jailhouse has been on the City Council agenda on and off for years, said Councilwoman Karyn Babcock.

"In my opinion, I feel like we're not doing anything with it," she said. "The city's not gaining anything. We're not losing anything."

She proposed letting the historical society take the jailhouse off the city's plate.

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Councilman Brian Bahr expressed concerns about restrictions placed on work that can be done to the jailhouse if funding comes from certain historical groups. However, Mayor Scott Hanlon said those restrictions would only be in place for money from groups like the Deadwood Historic Preservation Commission.

Hanlon asked that the item be brought to the council's next meeting in June after lot lines on the property are figured out.

Others on the council were also supportive of handing over the building.

"I think it's great if he's doing it," said Councilman Kevin Nehls.

Babcock added, "we were going to demolish it. If he wants to preserve it, let him preserve it," referring to Groton Community Historical Society President Tastad.

## Sewer violation penalties discussed

Residents may soon have less time before fines are assessed should they violate the city's sewer policy.

The council looked over amendments to ordinance number 768 dealing with the sewer penalty timeframe. Currently, the city must wait 10 days after a resident violates the ordinance before fines can be assessed. The amendment would shorten that time period to 24 hours.

However, some tweaks are being made before the changes go before the council again.

Councilwoman Karyn Babcock expressed concern about how residents would be given notice that they are violating the policy. She asked for clarity on how residents would receive notices, verbally or in writing.

A first reading of the amended ordinance is set to go before the council at an upcoming meeting.

In other action:

- The council approved hiring two additional summer employees. Dillon Abeln was hired as a groundskeeper, and Claire Sbylut was hired as a day baseball/softball coach for all teams.
- Beer can be brought to some Groton Amateur Baseball games at the baseball complex in Groton. The council approved a special event alcoholic beverage license so game attendees could bring their own beer to certain games. Dates for those games are June 9, June 18, July 1, July 16 and July 23 through 27. Beer will not be allowed if little league or softball is present, according to the license.
- The city will start listing items on BigIron Auction. The council approved listing a 1992 digger currently valued at \$5,000 on the online auction site. The city will still advertise that the machine is going to be auctioned at BigIron, but there will be "a lot more exposure that way," said Finance Officer Douglas Heinrich. More city machines may be declared surplus as the city looks to clean up its shop.
- A ribbon cutting for the city's water tower is scheduled for 11:30 a.m. July 20 followed by a lunch served at City Hall and sponsored by IMEG. It's a way to involve the community more with engineering projects going on in the city, Heinrich said. Utility credits can be won as door prizes at the event. Engineering will also be a focus of the summer storytime at the library that day.
- The look of a new sign outside of the Groton Police Department was approved by the council Wednesday evening. The 48-inch by 60-inch sign will look like the police department's patch, with "Est. 1888" added to the bottom.



**Brian Bahr, Councilmember from Groton, and Rick Boschee, Mayor of Bowdle, were elected Vice Chair and Chair respectively of the South Dakota Municipal League's District 6. Area municipal officials elected the pair to represent their district at the annual meeting held May 16, 2023, in Hecla. (Courtesy Photo)**

## **City Officials from Bowdle, Groton Elected to District Offices for SD Municipal League**

HECLA, S.D. – More than 40 municipal officials representing 7 cities gathered at the South Dakota Municipal League's annual District 6 Meeting, held in Hecla on May 16, 2023.

David Reiss, South Dakota Municipal League Executive Director, spoke about the outcome of the 2023 Legislative Session and the effect new laws will have on South Dakota municipalities. Reiss also discussed the direction and future of the Municipal League and services offered to the municipalities.

"More and more we are seeing the need to get better information out to the citizens and legislators. Municipal government provides a vast array of services, and people need to be informed of where their tax dollars are going," said Reiss. "This type of education can only benefit municipal government. The taxpayers would be very proud of their local government if they were fully aware of how much service a municipality provides at a relatively low cost."

The meeting also saw the election of representatives for the district. Rick Boschee, Mayor of Bowdle, was re-elected as District 6 Chair and Brian Bahr, Councilmember from Groton, was elected as Vice Chair. As the district chair, Boschee will act as a contact for and represent their district as a member of the SDML Board of Directors. Duties began immediately.

In other business, those attending voted to hold the 2024 District 6 Meeting in Groton.

## Weber Landscaping Greenhouse Now Open!

620 West Third Ave., Groton

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



## The Life of Dorothy Christianson



Dorothy "Dottie" Mae (Sherman) Christianson born June 3, 1928, a daughter of Inga and Carl Sherman, passed away at her home surrounded by love in St. James, MN on May 9, 2023. She was an R.N. and practiced her profession in and near Gary, Groton, and Coleman, SD and Ruthton, Janesville, and St James, MN. Dorothy had a passion for caring for others and making sure nobody left her home with an empty stomach.

She was preceded in death by her parents and her husband Robert Gordon Christianson.

She is survived by 2 sisters, Imogene and Marlys; 4 children, Roxanne, Vicki, Robert, and Robin; 5 grandchildren, and 9 great grandchildren.

Visitation will be held at Sturm Funeral Home in St. James, MN on May 19th from 5-7 PM. Funeral services will be held at Augustana Lutheran Church in St. James on May 20th at 11:00 AM. Lunch will be served at the church following the burial. Condolences may be sent to the family at 922 5th Street North, St. James, MN 56081

Arrangements are with the Sturm Funeral Home in St. James. Online condolences may be left for the family at [www.sturmfh.com](http://www.sturmfh.com).



## OPEN HOUSE



**403 15th Ave E  
Groton, SD**

**Saturday, May 20, 2023, 1 pm - 3 pm  
\$795,000**

This home features 6 bedrooms, 4 full bathrooms and 2 ½ baths, 7,310 sq. ft. of space. The basement features three bedrooms, secondary kitchen, large family room, theater room, wet bar area, full bathroom, in floor heat and plenty of storage throughout. Attached triple garage with basement access, detached 50 x 36 triple garage with finished above living space.



**Tony Valnes - Broker**  
**605-742-4987**  
[www.dakotaviewrealty.com](http://www.dakotaviewrealty.com)

## Bahr takes 1st in three events at NEC Special Olympics Track & Field

by Dorene Nelson



**Emma Bahr**

Emma Bahr, a student in Groton High School, competed in the Northeast Conference Special Olympics Track and Field Meet in Milbank, South Dakota, on May 5.

Emma had a very successful day since she received three first place awards and one second place.

She received 1st place in the 50-meter run, 1st place in the 100-meter run, and 1st place in the 4x100 meter relay in her respective division. To top off her successful day at this event, Emma then placed 2nd in the shot put.

Emma will now compete in the State Special Olympics Track and Field meet held in Spearfish on May 18-21.

Unified Sports joins people with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team. It was inspired by a simple principle: training together and playing together is a quick path to friendship and understanding.

"Emily Overacker is my 'unified partner' in track. We are on the same team which is divided into groups by age," Emma explained. "I'm in the group that has the sixteen to twenty-One year olds."

"When I started running, I wasn't sure whether it was a good idea or not, but the

more I ran, the more I began to enjoy it. Besides I get to see my friends, and it became a lot of fun! We practice in Aberdeen with our coach Missy Hill," added Emma.

"During the summer, I do a lot of babysitting. That has actually helped me decide what I want to do when I'm an adult. I want to have a day care or work with young children."

"In school I have a full schedule which includes FACS, art, English, choir, math, biology, and study hall."

"My parents are Rachel Bahr and Brian Bahr, and I have a younger sister Caroline," Emma said.

The mission of Special Olympics, the world's largest sports organization for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, is to provide year-round training and activities to 5 million participants.

Special Olympics was founded by Eunice Kennedy Shriver on behalf of her sister Rosemary who was born with intellectual disabilities. Shriver believed that mentally handicapped people could also be happy and live meaningful lives.



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Officials seek help for counties at first listening session on public defense costs

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - MAY 17, 2023 5:57 PM**

ABERDEEN — The caseload of defendants who can't afford a lawyer has increased exponentially in Brown County in recent years, and public defense costs for criminal cases have more than doubled in the last decade in the county and across the state.

That's putting increased pressure on the county to cover the costs for the attorneys, but without extra revenue.

"It's an unbelievable expense," said Tom Cogley, an Aberdeen-based attorney and a member of a task force studying the problem. "I personally have always felt it's a little unfair to put it all on the counties, so I hope that, at least from my standpoint, that's one of the key components that comes out of this task force."

On Wednesday, Brown County hosted the first of 10 listening sessions across the state where representatives of counties, the courts and the public can share their concerns and potential solutions with the Indigent Legal Defense Task Force. Gov. Kristi Noem signed legislation to create the task force earlier this year after lawmakers passed a bill supported by South Dakota Supreme Court Chief Justice Steven Jensen.

Jensen is concerned about the sustainability of South Dakota's "hodgepodge" approach to meeting its constitutional obligation to provide legal services for indigent defendants. Three counties have dedicated public defender's offices. The rest, like Brown County, contract with private attorneys or have attorneys on call.

With fewer lawyers in rural areas and higher-paying legal work available through private practice or in federal court, Jensen said during the first task force meeting, "judges are having more and more difficulty finding counsel to represent indigent defense in criminal and juvenile cases."

Listening sessions will also be held in the Black Hills, Pierre, Vermillion and through a virtual meeting, among other locations, before the task force's next meeting on June 20.

Brown County has about 2,000 indigent cases a year, most of which get appointed and contracted to a group of about eight attorneys in the area. The attorneys receive a monthly fee from the county based on the contracted services. While defendants are expected to repay the county at a lower rate than a standard private attorney's fee, that doesn't always happen.

Fifth Circuit Court Judge Tony Portra suggested raising the court costs indigent clients pay back, establishing stronger financial accountability for indigent clients, and putting some of the money toward the state indigent defense fund, which is designed to cover excessive indigent defense costs.

"In my experience, it's 10% of people committing 90% of the crimes," Portra said. "That core group should have a stake in paying for services."

South Dakota is one of only 11 states to use local rather than state dollars to pay for the vast majority of public defense. When South Dakota's courts were reorganized into a unified judicial system in 1975, the system made paying for judges and courts the state's responsibility, but left indigent defense costs to counties.

"While I know counties and municipalities like to have local control – and I think that's very important in politics," said Mark Anderson, interim Brown County state's attorney and former magistrate judge for the Fifth Circuit, "local control in this case should be overruled for the needs of many, and that would be done at the state level."

Brown County has looked into creating a public defender's office, but Portra said public defenders wouldn't help rural counties.

"Aberdeen, like many places, is having a harder and harder time even getting attorneys to come and fill positions," Portra said. "To think about who would be the head public defender – the experience required, the money required to get someone to accept that position and forsake all other cases – I don't think that's feasible anymore."

The contract system allows Brown County to use several attorneys with varying skills and experience, he added.

"Many of these people, if you were in trouble and had money, that's who you would go out and hire anyway," Portra said. "So our indigent defendants are getting very, very good representation."

Those in attendance were also receptive to a proposal to have appellate work and habeas cases – such as those brought by people already in prison – handled and funded at a central state level.

Appeals are a "completely different animal" that can be difficult for local attorneys to juggle while focusing on other cases, Cogley said.

Having a central office handle appellate cases could help speed along the process, Portra said, and would be more fair to defendants so they wouldn't rely on an attorney "who is trying to cram in between appearances."

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

## Transgender rights group's lawsuit against state unlikely to be resolved until 2024

BY: JOHN HULT - MAY 17, 2023 3:54 PM

More than a year could pass before a lawsuit alleging gender discrimination by the state of South Dakota is resolved.

The Transformation Project, a nonprofit advocacy group working on behalf of transgender South Dakotans, filed a federal lawsuit against Gov. Kristi Noem and the South Dakota Department of Health late last year after the department abruptly canceled a contract.

The Sioux Falls-based organization had earned the federally funded contract to hire and train a community health worker last summer. It hired Jack Fonder, a transgender man, to serve in that role by helping to connect transgender citizens with doctors and services.

Shortly after a conservative news outlet called out Noem over the contract, however, the state canceled its agreement with the group. A letter from the health department's Lynne Valenti alleged that The Transformation Project had failed to train Fonder on schedule, among other issues.

The group sued shortly thereafter, arguing that it was compliant with the contract terms, and that the governor's statements to conservative media showed that the cancellation was directly tied to discrimination against transgender South Dakotans.

The state responded to the lawsuit in early August, demanding a jury trial.

A scheduling order filed this week in the U.S. District Court of South Dakota set deadlines for action in the case well into next year. The discovery process, which each side of a case uses to gather evidence from the other prior to a trial, was set to end next February. All motions in the case, such as motions to exclude certain statements or pieces of evidence, must be filed by March 7, 2024.

The filings set the stage for a summer and fall filled with legal fact-finding, including the possibility of sworn statements from Noem and Department of Health Secretary Melissa Magstad, among others, through in-person depositions or written answers to questions. The state of South Dakota, meanwhile, would be able to collect the same from the Transformation Project, Fonder or any expert witnesses the group might call to testify at a trial.

The case will play out with a backdrop of legislation and conversation on transgender rights in South

Dakota. The 2023 legislative session, which began within weeks of the lawsuit's filing date, saw lawmakers pass a bill restricting certain kinds of medical treatment for transgender youth. The year before, lawmakers passed, and Noem signed, a bill barring transgender student athletes from participating on sports teams that don't align with their sex at birth.

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

## Democratic attempt to expel Santos from U.S. House handed over to ethics panel

### SD's Rep. Dusty Johnson votes in favor of motion

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA - MAY 17, 2023 6:37 PM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. House on Wednesday agreed on a motion to refer to the Ethics Committee a Democratic-sponsored resolution to expel New York Republican Rep. George Santos from Congress.

The motion led by Republicans was approved 221-204, with seven Democrats voting present. Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, voted in favor of the motion.

The expulsion resolution introduced by freshman California Democratic Rep. Robert Garcia was privileged, meaning when it was introduced on Tuesday, House Republicans had two days to bring the measure to the floor.

But Wednesday's vote means the resolution now will be considered by the bipartisan Ethics Committee and Republicans do not have to take another vote on the matter unless it returns to the floor. The committee already had been investigating Santos.

"We all know that Representative George Santos is a liar and a fraud and should be expelled from Congress," Garcia said during a Wednesday press conference.

The move is an effort to force Republicans to take a vote on whether they support Santos or not, Garcia said.

House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, a California Republican, has a slim majority in the House and can only afford to lose a handful of votes on any bills brought to the floor.

Santos has spent his freshman year in Congress mired in numerous scandals, including multiple discrepancies in his resume. He faces 13 federal charges for money laundering, wire fraud, stealing public money and making false statements to Congress about personal financial disclosure reports.

He pleaded not guilty to those federal charges.

Various news outlets have uncovered that Santos fabricated many stories about his life, including claims that his mother was killed during the 9/11 terrorist attack, that he lost several employees in the Pulse shooting massacre, that his grandparents survived the Holocaust, and that he earned degrees from New York University and Baruch College.

Earlier this year, Santos stepped down from his committee assignments.

"Taken together, the allegations in the indictment charge Santos with relying on repeated dishonesty and deception to ascend to the halls of Congress and enrich himself," Breon Peace, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York said in a statement.

"He used political contributions to line his pockets, unlawfully applied for unemployment benefits that should have gone to New Yorkers who had lost their jobs due to the pandemic, and lied to the House of Representatives," Peace continued.

Santos is due back in federal court on June 30.

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

## Three-judge panel in U.S. appeals court hears arguments in abortion pill case

BY: GREG LAROSE AND JENNIFER SHUTT - MAY 17, 2023 6:23 PM

NEW ORLEANS — A federal appeals court panel quizzed lawyers during oral arguments Wednesday over a Texas judge's decision that could end access to the abortion pill nationwide.

Observers see the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals as a legal way station for the case, in which anti-abortion groups sued the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, arguing its approval of mifepristone in 2000 was improper and subsequent changes to its use didn't rely on solid science.

The three-judge panel's ruling, which could come anytime after oral arguments, will likely be put on hold as the case moves up to the U.S. Supreme Court.

In the meantime, access to mifepristone, one of two drugs used in medication abortions, remains legal under a temporary order from the U.S. Supreme Court.

U.S. Deputy Assistant Attorney General Sarah Harrington called U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk's ruling to overturn mifepristone's approval an "unjustified attack on FDA scientific expertise."

Physicians who brought the lawsuit failed to demonstrate "imminent risk" of being forced to perform a medical procedure that goes against their conscience as a result of complications from mifepristone, Harrington said.

Physicians aren't required to perform procedures to which they hold a religious or moral objection, under the federal Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act, Harrington said.

Jessica Ellsworth, the lawyer representing Danco Laboratories, which manufactures the name brand version of mifepristone known as Mifeprex, questioned the claims of the anti-abortion physicians who brought the suit and were referenced in court records.

"The declarants offer nonspecific statements that are untethered to actual facts about what drug a patient took," Ellsworth said. "They often say, 'The patients can't tell me what they took,' so we don't know even that it was FDA-approved mifepristone."

One example Ellsworth cited involved a patient who took an unidentified abortion drug from India, which wasn't FDA-approved, and another instance where a pregnant woman took mifepristone while on blood thinners, after being told she wasn't eligible for medication abortion. Neither case supports the anti-abortion groups' contention that mifepristone is an untested, riskier medication, she said.

Alliance Defending Freedom Senior Counsel Erin Morrow Hawley argued the appeal for the anti-abortion legal organization that filed the lawsuit on behalf of four medical organizations and four doctors.

Hawley rejected the notion that mifepristone should be left on the market to aid in miscarriage care, saying that not all doctors prescribe it to treat pregnancy loss and that an "off-label" use shouldn't be used to uphold the approval.

"I don't think that that would be an appropriate basis or an appropriate consideration to uphold FDA approval here," Hawley said.

### Questions for Danco lawyer

The three-judge appeals panel included Jennifer Walker Elrod, who was appointed by former President George W. Bush, as well as James C. Ho and Cory T. Wilson, who were both appointed by former President Donald Trump.

The panel had pointed questions for the appellants' counsel on whether the FDA's role in health policy extended past review and approval of medication. Elrod specifically took exception with language in Danco's briefs, calling it a personal attack on Kacsmaryk, the Texas judge.

"This is much more the kind of remarks towards district court that we normally don't see from learned counsel," Elrod told Ellsworth, "and I'm wondering if you would have had more time and not been under

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a rush and probably exhausted from this whole process, would those have been statements that would have been included in your brief?"

"I don't think that those remarks, any of them, were intended as any sort of personal attack," Ellsworth responded. "They were an attack on the analysis and reasoning."

The judges asked the appellants what repercussions FDA approval — and its possible reversal — might have on telemedicine. In 2021, the agency removed the requirement for an in-person doctor's visit to prescribe mifepristone and misoprostol, the second prescription used in medication abortion.

Elrod questioned how physicians could accurately confirm how far along a pregnancy is without an in-person exam. Harrington said doctors can ask specific questions that inform their decisions on prescribing the abortion drug.

Answering a similar question, Ellsworth told the judges the FDA doesn't regulate the practice of medicine, to which Elrod responded the agency does have a stake in the negative outcomes of the medication it approves.

Questions from the judges for Hawley largely involved the FDA's approval and updates for mifepristone use.

"The FDA acknowledges that emergency room doctors are going to be part of the solution in cleaning up the messes left for women suffering consequences of chemical abortion," Hawley said, referencing the agency's original approval of mifepristone.

She also cited figures from an FDA medication guide published in January that say between 2.9% and 4.6% of women who take mifepristone "will present to the emergency room," although Hawley acknowledged after a probe from Elrod that not all instances involve an actual emergency.

## Lawsuit challenged FDA approval

Alliance Defending Freedom filed the lawsuit in November, arguing the FDA erred in how it approved mifepristone in 2000 while also contending that it's not safe and effective.

The lawsuit called on the federal district court to overturn the 2000 approval, but said that if the judge didn't do that, he should revert prescribing and use pre-2016 instructions.

Changes that year increased when mifepristone could be used from seven to 10 weeks gestation, reduced the number of in-person visits from three to one and changed the dosage and timing of the two-drug regimen.

The FDA broadened who could prescribe the medications from only doctors to health care providers with the ability to prescribe pharmaceuticals.

In 2021, the FDA removed the in-person dispensing requirement allowing qualified health care providers to prescribe mifepristone and the second drug, misoprostol, via telehealth and send the medication through the mail.

Kacsmarky agreed with the claims the anti-abortion organizations made, releasing an opinion in early April revoking the FDA's 2000 approval of mifepristone.

Mifepristone remains available under a ruling the U.S. Supreme Court issued April 21 that blocked enforcement of that ruling.

That likely means whatever action the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals takes following Wednesday's oral arguments would be paused until the nine justices on the Supreme Court decide whether to hear the case.

If the Supreme Court does take the case and issues a ruling on the approval and use of mifepristone it would apply to every state in the country, including those that have protected abortion access up to 10 weeks, the cap on the medication's use.

## Drugmakers file brief

Pharmaceutical companies have raised concerns about the ability of a judge to alter the use and administration of an FDA-approved medication, or overturn that decision altogether.

The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, or PhRMA, and others filed a 40-page brief

with the appeals court arguing against overturning or altering the FDA's judgment.

They argued the federal district judge "erred by replacing FDA's scientific judgments with its own views on what information should be considered and how it should be assessed."

They also wrote the ruling "risks stifling pharmaceutical innovation by disrupting industry's reasonable investment-backed expectations."

And major medical organizations, including the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine and the American Society for Reproductive Medicine, have urged the court to keep mifepristone legal.

They contend the district court's ruling "disregards decades of unambiguous analysis supporting the use of mifepristone in miscarriage and abortion care."

"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," a group of 13 medical organization wrote in a brief to the appeals court.

## U.S. House gets involved

Not everyone, however, agrees with leaving the medical and scientific approval process to the FDA.

U.S. House Republicans sought to change access to medication abortion Wednesday, introducing a funding bill that would nullify changes the FDA made in January.

Those changes allowed brick-and-mortar and mail-order pharmacies to apply to dispense mifepristone to patients after they received a prescription. The FDA also solidified changes made during the pandemic that ended the in-person dispensing requirement.

A summary of the agriculture appropriations bill from House Republicans says the measure includes a "provision that ends mail-order chemical abortion drugs."

The legislation, one of the dozen annual appropriations bills, funds the Agriculture Department and the FDA as well as the Commodity Futures Trading Commission and the Farm Credit Administration.

Maryland Republican Rep. Andy Harris chairs the subcommittee tasked with drafting the legislation.

*Greg LaRose has covered news for more than 30 years in Louisiana. Before becoming editor of the Louisiana Illuminator, he was the chief investigative reporter for WDSU-TV in New Orleans. He previously led the government and politics team for The Times-Picayune | NOLA.com, and was editor in chief at New Orleans CityBusiness. Greg's other career stops include Tiger Rag, South Baton Rouge Journal, the Covington News Banner, Louisiana Radio Network and multiple radio stations.*

## Biden vows debt ceiling talks will continue while he's overseas at G7 summit

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - MAY 17, 2023 1:00 PM

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden will remain in "constant contact" with debt ceiling negotiators and promised to update the nation Sunday upon his return from a shortened trip to Asia for the G7 economic summit.

Biden delivered brief remarks Wednesday before departing on a scheduled trip to Japan that will no longer include stops in Australia and Papua New Guinea previously on the agenda.

"We're going to continue these discussions with congressional leaders in the coming days until we reach an agreement. And I'll have more to say about that on Sunday when I'll have a press conference on this issue. As it stands now, the intention is to go to the G7 and be back here on Sunday."

The White House confirmed Tuesday after Biden's meeting with House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and other leaders that the visit would be adjusted.

Both parties have agreed to shrink the circle of negotiators to designated representatives, a move that



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McCarthy and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell say they have wanted for weeks.

McCarthy has appointed Louisiana Rep. Garret Graves to negotiate on behalf of Republicans, while the White House has designated budget director Shalanda Young and Steve Ricchetti, counselor to the president.

Biden called Tuesday's meeting "civil and respectful."

"I'm confident that we'll get the agreement on the budget, and America will not default," he said. "And every leader in the room understands the consequences if we fail to pay our bills, and (that) it would be catastrophic for the American economy and the American people."

The nation reached its \$31.4 trillion borrowing limit in January, and the U.S. Treasury has since employed special accounting maneuvers to continue paying the nation's creditors.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has repeatedly warned Congress the accounting maneuvers will be exhausted within weeks and that the nation could default on its bills as early as June 1, causing a spiral of domestic and global economic tumult.

All but a handful of House Republicans supported a bill to temporarily raise the debt ceiling in exchange for caps on future federal spending and other cost-cutting measures, including additional work requirements for Americans who rely on government food and medical assistance.

Biden told reporters Tuesday that he's "not going to accept any work requirements that's going to impact on medical health needs of people."

"I'm not going to accept any work requirements that go much beyond what is already (in place). I voted years ago for the work requirements that exist. It's possible there could be a few others, but not of anything of any consequence," he continued.

## The Quad

In early May, the White House touted Biden's planned visits to Australia and Papua New Guinea as "historic" and as a path to reinforce "critical leadership" in the South Pacific region.

The strategic alliance between the U.S., Japan, Australia and India — referred to as "the Quad" — represents a stronger focus on the Indo-Pacific region as China expands influence in the South Sea.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has since canceled the summit for the Quad that was set to take place in Sydney, and the leaders now plan to meet on the sidelines of the G7 meeting of economic world powers.

When asked by reporters if Biden dropping the trip to the South Pacific nations signals weakness to China, Biden replied "No, because we're still meeting, we still have four good allies."

The trip would have been the first visit to Papua New Guinea by a sitting U.S. president, according to the White House.

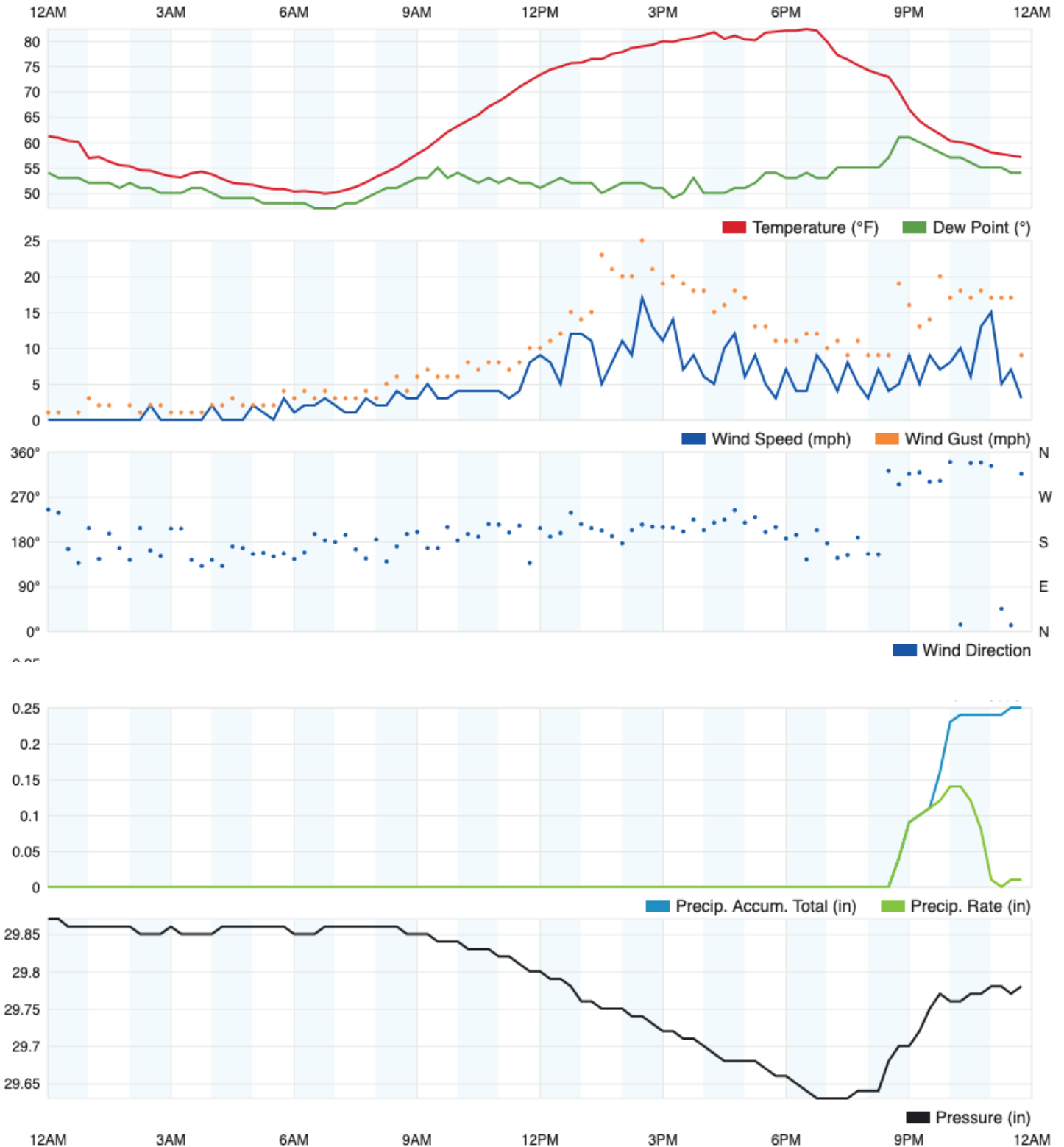
Air Force One is also expected to make a brief stopover in Anchorage, Alaska, later Wednesday on the way to Japan.

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

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs




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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
						
Areas Smoke then Slight Chance Showers	Partly Cloudy and Breezy then Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny	Clear	Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny
High: 68 °F	Low: 39 °F	High: 64 °F	Low: 41 °F	High: 77 °F	Low: 50 °F	High: 79 °F




**NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE**  
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION



## Cool through Friday, Warmer Weekend

[www.weather.gov/lay](http://www.weather.gov/lay)  
May 18, 2023 4:27 AM


*Today*



66-72°

Smoky. Cooler. Lows in the upper 30s possible


*Friday*



58-68°

Less smoke. Coolest across & east of the Prairie Coteau


*Saturday*



72-82°

Warmer. Warmest across central SD

*Sunday*



76-82°

Sunny. Seasonable temperatures

Smoky skies with reduced visibilities and poor air quality are expected to continue today. It will also be cooler, with highs in the 60s and 70s. There's a 20-30% chance for showers and a few storms east of the James Valley this afternoon as well. Friday remains cool, with an improvement to near-surface smoke, though skies may remain milky as Canadian wildfires continue. Additional waves of smoke are possible through the weekend, as temperatures warm.

## Smoke from Canadian Wildfires to continue impacting the area on Thursday, May 18th

### Protect Yourself from Wildfire Smoke...

- ✓ Reduce time spent outdoors
- ✓ Stay indoors if air quality is poor (*air quality reports at [airnow.gov](https://airnow.gov)*)
- ✓ Keep windows and doors closed
- ✓ Be aware of potential for reduced visibilities
- ✓ Check on sensitive groups such as people with cardiovascular or respiratory diseases



Wildfire smoke from Canada is expected to lead to continued visibility reductions and deteriorated air quality today. Here are some tips for mitigating risks.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 82 °F at 6:25 PM**

**Low Temp: 50 °F at 6:37 AM**

**Wind: 25 mph at 2:23 PM**

**Precip: : 0.25**

Day length: 15 hours, 04 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 100 in 1934

Record Low: 26 in 1915

Average High: 71

Average Low: 45

Average Precip in May.: 2.00

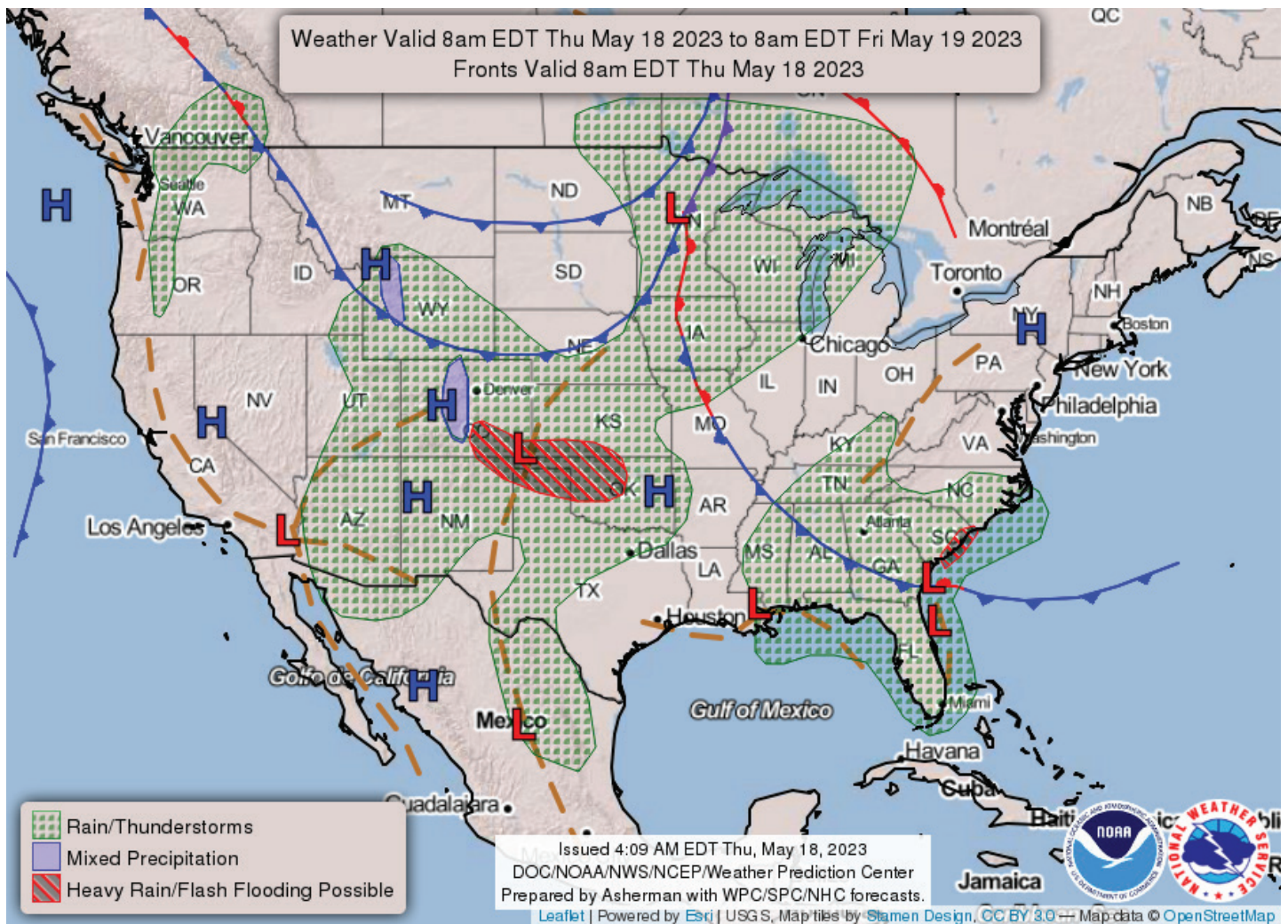
Precip to date in May.: 2.15

Average Precip to date: 5.97

Precip Year to Date: 7.87

Sunset Tonight: 9:00:54 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:55:44 AM



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## Today in Weather History

May 18, 1918: An estimated F2 tornado moved NNE from 5 miles NNW of Ferney, across the eastern edge of Groton. Homes were unroofed, and barns were destroyed. Nine farms lost buildings. One man was injured in a barn, another in a car that was thrown from the road. Estimated damage was set at \$60,000. Tornadoes were also seen in Lincoln and Sanborn Counties in South Dakota.

Also, an estimated F2 tornado moved northeast through the townships of Akron and Artichoke in Big Stone County, Minnesota. About 300 farms had tornado damage. The funnel dissipated on Artichoke Lake.

May 18, 1960: Pierre received 1.96 inches of rain in less than 30 minutes which caused flash flooding. About 30 basements were flooded with extensive cave-in damage at one home. Flash flooding from 2 to 3 inches of rain occurred near Presho, washing out county roads, three bridges, and a grain storage bin. Gettysburg also received 2.5 inches of rain.

May 18, 1996: A brief F0 tornado touchdown and cut a narrow path from 2 miles east of Willow Lake with no damage reported.

A 100 mph wind gust blew down 38 large trees on Highway 81 from the junction of Lake Norden corner on Highway 28 to the intersection of the Hayti corner. Also, four double posted and five single posted signs were broken off, and one single posted steel sign was bent over.

1883: The massive tornado outbreak on record in Illinois affected the northern and central parts of the state. At least 14 strong to violent tornadoes touched down killing 52 people. The largest death toll from a single tornado was 12, with 50 injuries, from an estimated F4 tornado which moved from near Jacksonville to 5 miles west of Petersburg. This tornado destroyed the town of Litterberry. Another tornado, with an estimated F4 intensity, killed 11 people and injured 50 along its path from the south edge of Springfield northeast to near Kenney. This particular tornado reportedly drove 10 inches by 12-inch oak timbers 10 feet into the ground. Another estimated F4 tornado in far northern Illinois touched down near Capron and tracked for 17 miles before lifting in far southern Wisconsin. Lastly, an estimated F4 tornado tracked 20 miles through Kenosha and Racine Counties in Wisconsin. Eight people were killed, and 85 were injured.

1980: Mount Saint Helens erupted, spewing ash and smoke sixty-three thousand feet into the air. Heavy ash covered the ground to the immediate northwest, and small particles were carried to the Atlantic coast.

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### WHAT'S IN YOUR NAME?

Arthur Rubinstein was one of the world's most celebrated pianists. He often wondered what the critics and his audience would say if someone else appeared at a concert to play in his place.

One night, with an assumed name and made-up to look different in a disguise, he performed a concert before a large audience. After the concert, the critics agreed, "The gentleman who played this evening wasn't in the class with the great Rubinstein."

We are reminded in Proverbs that "A good name is more desirable than great riches, and to be esteemed is better than silver or gold."

God has called each of us to fill a unique role in His world. We are "one of a kind."

He has given each of us unique gifts and talents that He expects us to develop and refine. As we work with what He has given us, we develop a reputation for our accomplishments - whatever they may be. We become known to others not only by what we do but how well we do it. Our reputation, our "name," is a result of what we do with what God has given us. We dare not waste His gifts foolishly on meaningless things.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to "work hard" to "earn" a good name, and bring great honor to You. Give us a desire to become all we can become through You! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: A good name is more desirable than great riches, and to be esteemed is better than silver or gold. Proverbs 22:1



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 1 Days 16 Hrs 28  
DRAW: Mins 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.17.23

7 19 32 36 48 4

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$3,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 28  
DRAW: Mins 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.17.23

15 22 28 29 41 6

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

NEXT 15 Hrs 58 Mins 55  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.17.23

14 18 22 28 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$63,000**

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 28  
DRAW: Mins 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.17.23

21 26 37 52 53 26

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

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 27  
DRAW: Mins 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.17.23

18 34 37 45 51 14

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$162,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 27  
DRAW: Mins 54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### Editorial Roundup: South Dakota

By The Associated Press undefined  
Yankton Press & Dakotan. May 16, 2023.

Editorial: A Shifting Of Gears In The Pandemic

Last week's announcement that the South Dakota Department of Health (DOH) is ending its weekly COVID-19 updates, coinciding with the ending of the federal emergency tied to the pandemic, could probably be seen as a milestone in our three-year battle with the coronavirus.

Then again, perhaps people won't notice it much. A lot of us have already moved on, at least mentally, from the shackles of the pandemic

The DOH announcement was made last Wednesday, on the eve of the end of the federal emergency. It's part of a gradual winding down — or fading away — of the emergency situation that arrived in March 2020. The DOH added that it will do monthly updates in some form starting late next month.

As an overwhelming fact of our lives, COVID has indeed faded. The widespread introduction of the vaccines helped turn the tide — despite the controversies, either real or imagined. For the moment, we seem to have gained an upper hand on the coronavirus.

But COVID-19 is still with us. Last week's final weekly update from the DOH reported two more deaths in the state, which has now seen 3,231 pandemic fatalities overall. They probably won't be the last.

We still live with COVID, and some of us are still dying from it.

Until a complete immunization is found, COVID-19 will still lurk as a threat. Any mutation could present new problems and generate new surges.

We're also coming to terms with the nebulous malady of long COVID, or post-COVID-19 syndrome, which encompasses a variety of symptoms that can last months or years. It can impact anyone who has had COVID, even people who are vaccinated and/or only had mild symptoms. It's random and perplexing, and it's something that will be analyzed intensely as time goes on and these symptoms persist.

It's a reminder, perhaps, of what we seem to be leaving behind.

But what's ahead? Will there be new mutations and new surges? Will we be ready for them?

The last question should be the top priority for medical researchers. More specifically, how do we deal with the next outbreak? What can we learn from what we've just endured — and may still yet confront again?

The end of the COVID emergency isn't the last chapter of the story. It's a moment when we can stand down as the threat seems minimized. But we must also be prepared for whatever is next, if anything is, and what will linger.

In many ways, this story may be far from done.

END

### Pakistani police besiege Imran Khan's home as deadline for him to hand over suspects expires

By BABAR DOGAR Associated Press

LAHORE, Pakistan (AP) — Pakistani police kept up their siege around the home of Imran Khan as a 24-hour deadline given to the former premier to hand over suspects allegedly sheltered inside expired on Thursday.

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The siege and the authorities' demand for the suspects, wanted in violent protests over Khan's recent detention, have angered the former prime minister's many followers and raised concerns about more clashes between them and security forces.

Last week, Khan's supporters attacked public property and military installations after he was dragged out of a courtroom and arrested in a graft case. At least 10 people were killed in clashes with police across the country in the days that followed. The violence subsided only when Pakistan's Supreme Court ordered Khan's release.

The popular opposition leader was freed from custody over the weekend and returned to his home in an upscale district of Lahore, Pakistan's second largest city and the capital of the Punjab region. Dozens of his supporters have been staying there with him, along with private guards. Police, who on Wednesday surrounded the residence, say they want 40 suspects handed over.

The ultimatum for Khan ended at 2 p.m. local time, but there were no immediate signs of unusual movement by police. Khan's party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, invited reporters to the house to witness any police raids on the premises.

Typically between 200 to 300 of Khan's supporters, holding sticks, guard his residence around the clock, but most disappeared overnight. Police have barricaded a key road leading to the house and asked residents to use an alternate route.

"Probably my last tweet before my next arrest," the 70-year-old popular opposition leader tweeted on Wednesday, after the siege started. "Police have surrounded my house."

Later, Khan addressed his supporters saying that the police can only search his house with a search warrant and "not barge in, creating chaos."

According to Amir Mir, a spokesman for the Punjab provincial government, police were ready to use firearms if attacked. He told a news conference Thursday that at least 3,400 suspects linked to the clashes have been arrested and that more raids are planned.

Pakistani authorities have said they would prosecute civilians involved in recent anti-government protests in military courts.

The announcement has drawn criticism from the advocacy group Amnesty International and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, which oppose trials of civilians in the military courts. Military trials in Pakistan are usually held behind closed doors, depriving civilians of some of their basic rights, including contracting a lawyer of their choice.

Khan was ousted by a non-confidence vote in Parliament last year. He has claimed the ouster was illegal and a Western conspiracy.

He now faces more than 100 legal cases, mainly on charges of inciting people to violence, threatening officials, and defying a ban on rallies. He also faces a graft case along with his wife and was summoned by the National Accountability Bureau to answer questions in connection with the case on Thursday.

However, Khan is likely to ignore the summons from the anti-corruption authority to show up for questioning in the garrison city of Rawalpindi. He is expected to address a rally of supporters on the outskirts of Lahore later in the day.

Associated Press writer Munir Ahmed in Islamabad contributed to this report.

## World leaders land in Hiroshima for G-7 meeting, with Ukraine war high on agenda

By ADAM SCHRECK Associated Press  
HIROSHIMA, Japan (AP) — World leaders landed Thursday for a Group of Seven meeting in Hiroshima, the site of the world's first atomic bomb attack, with Russia's war in Ukraine expected to be high on the agenda.

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Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida kicked off his summit diplomacy by meeting with U.S. President Joe Biden after his arrival at a nearby military base. He was due to hold talks with British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak a bit later in the day, before the three-day gathering of leaders of the world's wealthy democracies opens on Friday.

The Japan-U.S. alliance is the "very foundation of peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region," Kishida told Biden in opening remarks.

"We very much welcome that the cooperation has evolved in leaps and bounds," he said.

Biden said: "When our countries stand together, we stand stronger, and I believe the whole world is safer when we do."

The U.S. president exited Air Force One and briefly greeted troops at nearby Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni.

As G-7 attendees made their way to Hiroshima, Moscow unleashed yet another aerial attack on the Ukrainian capital. Loud explosions thundered through Kyiv during the early hours, marking the ninth time this month that Russian air raids have targeted the city after weeks of relative quiet.

"The crisis in Ukraine: I'm sure that's what the conversation is going to start with," said Matthew P. Goodman, senior vice president for economics at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Speaking to reporters aboard Air Force One, Jake Sullivan, the White House national security adviser, said there will be "discussions about the battlefield" in Ukraine and on the "state of play on sanctions and the steps that the G-7 will collectively commit to on enforcement in particular."

G-7 leaders and invited guests from several other countries are also expected to discuss how to deal with China's growing assertiveness and military buildup as concerns rise that it could try to seize Taiwan by force, sparking a wider conflict. China claims the self-governing island as its own and its ships and warplanes regularly patrol near it.

Security was tight in Hiroshima, with thousands of police deployed at numerous points throughout the city. A small group of protesters was considerably outnumbered by police as they gathered Wednesday evening beside the ruins of the Atomic Peace Dome memorial, holding signs including one which read "No G7 Imperialist Summit!"

In a bit of dueling diplomacy, Chinese President Xi Jinping is hosting the leaders of the Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan for a two-day summit in the Chinese city of Xi'an starting Thursday.

During the meeting in Hiroshima, Kishida hopes to highlight the risks of nuclear proliferation. Leaders are expected to visit a memorial park that commemorates the 1945 atomic bombing by the U.S. that destroyed the city and killed 140,000 people.

North Korea's nuclear program and a spate of recent missile tests have crystalized fears of an potential attack. So have Russia's threats to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine. China, meanwhile, is rapidly expanding its nuclear arsenal.

The leaders are due to discuss efforts to strengthen the global economy and address rising prices that are squeezing families and government budgets around the world, particularly in developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The debate over raising the debt limit in the U.S., the world's largest economy, has threatened to overshadow the G-7 talks. Biden plans to hurry back to Washington after the summit for debt negotiations, scrapping planned meetings in Papua New Guinea and Australia.

The British prime minister arrived in Japan earlier Thursday and paid a visit to the JS Izumo, a ship that can carry helicopters and fighter jets able to take off and land vertically.

During their bilateral meeting Thursday, Sunak and Kishida are expected to announce a series of new agreements on issues including defense; trade and investment; technology;

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and climate change, Sunak's office said.

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

A host of other countries have been invited to take part. The G-7 hopes to strengthen its members' ties with countries outside the world's richest industrialized nations, while shoring up support for efforts like isolating Russia.

Leaders from Australia, Brazil, India, Indonesia and South Korea are among those participating as guests. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is expected to join by video link.

Associated Press writer Zeke Miller contributed reporting from Air Force One.

## Israel deploys heavy police presence ahead of contentious Jerusalem march

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel deployed over 2,000 police on Thursday for a march by flag-waving Jewish nationalists through the main Palestinian thoroughfare in Jerusalem's Old City, a contentious event that comes as tensions are already running high.

Authorities say the beefed up security is a determined effort to ensure the march passes without violence.

Police have decided to allow the thousands of marchers to take the traditional route through the Old City's Damascus Gate — despite an uptick in Israeli-Palestinian violence over the past year and heavy fighting between Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza last week.

Early Thursday, hundreds of Jews were ascending to a sensitive Jerusalem site holy to both Jews and Muslims as part of the day's activities, visits the Palestinians view as provocative. Among them was at least one Israeli Cabinet minister from the country's right-wing government, according to Jewish activists leading the visits.

While Israeli officials describe the march as a festive parade, it has been marred by anti-Arab racist chants and violence toward local Palestinians by some of the marchers. Two years ago, it helped spark an 11-day war between Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza, and the Hamas militant group has urged Palestinians to confront the parade this year.

Chief Supt. Yoram Segal, a senior Jerusalem police official, told reporters Wednesday that authorities were determined to prevent violence this time around.

He said some 2,500 officers were being deployed throughout the area, both to ensure safety and to react quickly toward any potential violence.

"We are going to deal harshly with anyone who tries to disturb the peace," he said. He said past troubles were caused by a tiny minority of people, but said there would be no tolerance for incitement or violence that could "endanger the people that are along the route or living along the route."

Segal said police have been working "hand in hand" with Jewish and Palestinian community leaders to keep things peaceful. He also confirmed that there had been a number of pre-emptive arrests of people who were believed to be planning violent disruptions. He declined to elaborate.

The march marks "Jerusalem Day," which celebrates Israel's capture of east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war. Israel considers all of Jerusalem to be its eternal capital, but its annexation of the eastern sector, home to the city's most important holy sites, is not internationally recognized. The Palestinians claim east Jerusalem as capital of their future state.

Each year, thousands of Israeli nationalists participate in the march, waving blue and white Israeli flags and singing songs. But in some cases, protesters chant anti-Arab slogans as

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they pass by Palestinian onlookers and businesses.

Israel's national security minister, far-right politician Itamar Ben-Gvir, has joined the march in past years. It was not known whether he would join this year, his first as a Cabinet minister.

On Wednesday, Gaza's ruling Hamas militant group called on Palestinians to oppose the parade.

"We ask the people of Jerusalem to mobilize the masses to confront the march of the flags in Jerusalem tomorrow," said Mushir al-Masri, a Hamas official in Gaza.

Hamas urged Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and inside Israel to "clash with the occupation." It also said it would hold a demonstration, with people waving Palestinian flags along Gaza's heavily fortified frontier with Israel.

Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesman for the Palestinian president, said allowing the march to snake through the Palestinian areas of the Old City "will only lead to a rise in tension and could lead to an explosion."

In a test ahead of the parade, about 900 Jews were visiting Jerusalem's most sensitive holy site early Thursday, according to Beyadenu, an activist group that promotes Jewish visits to the site. Police were seen escorting groups of Jewish visitors walking through the compound and several coalition lawmakers also arrived at the site.

The hilltop compound is known to Jews as the Temple Mount, home to the ancient Jewish Temples, and is the holiest site in Judaism. Palestinians revere it as the Noble Sanctuary, and today it is home to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third-holiest site in Islam.

Under longstanding agreements, Jews are permitted to visit the site but not pray there. But an increase in such visits, along with scenes of some Jews quietly praying, have raised concerns among Palestinians that Israel is trying to alter the status quo — a charge Israel denies.

The competing claims to the site lie at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and often spill over into violence, including the 2021 war between Israel and Hamas.

The parade comes as fighting in the occupied West Bank and east Jerusalem is at its highest level in two decades. It also comes just days after a cease-fire took effect ending five days of heavy fighting between Israel and the Islamic Jihad militant group in Gaza.

Hamas stayed on the sidelines during the fighting, and Israel avoided attacking the group in an effort by both sides to contain the violence.

But if unrest erupts in Jerusalem, Hamas could enter the fray. Two years ago, weeks of unrest in Jerusalem erupted into the 11-day war during the parade.

"The resistance is ready to protect Al-Aqsa Mosque and prevent the Judaization of Jerusalem," al-Masri said.

## **Biden's reelection campaign sees 'viable pathways' to 2024 election win**

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden's reelection campaign is vowing to hold the states that won him the White House in 2020 but also compete in places it lost like North Carolina and increasingly Republican-dominated Florida, providing what it says are "a number of viable pathways to the 270 electoral votes" needed to clinch four more years.

Offering her first extensive comments on strategy since she was named manager of Biden's campaign last month, Julie Chavez Rodriguez wrote in a memo to "interested parties" that the 2024 race presents "significant opportunities to grow Democratic support." It was released while Biden was traveling in Japan, but he is skipping previously planned, subsequent stops in Australia and Papua New Guinea to focus on debt limit talks in Washington.

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Rodriguez said the reelection campaign is planning early investments to try to retain battleground states Biden won in 2020 including Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Nevada and New Hampshire, and to hold Georgia and Arizona, which hadn't voted Democratic in a presidential race in decades prior to three years ago.

But the campaign will also "look to expand the map even further in states like North Carolina and Florida" and Rodriguez said both would be included in a "7-figure" advertising buy that encompassed investments in a string of swing states.

Biden's reelection campaign is built around asking Americans to allow him to "finish the job" he started, and has sought to paint "extreme" Republicans like former President Donald Trump and supporters of his "Make America Great Again" movement as threats to core American political values.

Trump is now seeking the White House for a third time, and while Rodriguez's memo did not mention him by name, it did predict Biden would "prevail over the MAGA extremist agenda once again."

Biden's political advisers have long argued that Biden beat Trump once and can do so again. If someone else captures the GOP presidential nomination — like Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who is widely seen as a top Trump alternative — Biden's team maintains the same strategy can work since most top Republicans have done little to distance themselves from the MAGA movement.

Though Rodriguez's memo makes no mention of it, contrasting Biden with his opponent may be the president's strongest reelection tactic. An Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll last month found that only about half of Democrats think the 80-year-old Biden should run again, though 81% said they would at least probably support him in the 2024 general election if he is the nominee.

The memo says the reelection campaign plans to spread its message online and through in-person contacts with voters, but will rely heavily on leveraging voters' existing social circles.

"While trust in the media may have eroded, trust in people's personal networks has never been stronger," Rodriguez wrote. She promised that the campaign will "engage early and often" with its traditional base supporters among women, as well as Black, Hispanic and Asian American voters, and young people who didn't turn out for the 2022 midterms. The memo also says organized labor "will be core to our electoral success."

Biden's reelection campaign says it plans to try for gains among targeted groups of voters during next year's race. That includes building on 2020, when Biden "made small, but critical gains among rural and white working class voters in battleground states." It further notes that Democrats saw support rise slightly in those demographics during last year's midterms in "states like Arizona, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Nevada and Wisconsin, and remain consistent in Georgia and North Carolina."

The memo says strong suburban support helped lift Biden to the 306 electoral votes he won in 2020, and there could be room for growth among such voters, who may be energized by the Supreme Court's overturning of the Roe v. Wade decision.

National Democrats have remained strongly unified behind Biden. He faces only token opposition in the party's presidential primary from self-help author Marianne Williamson and anti-vaccine activist Robert Kennedy Jr. That means, Chavez wrote, that the reelection campaign "is able to leverage party infrastructure from Day One, including tools, technology and people, which means we aren't starting from scratch."



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## Stock market today: Global stocks, Wall St futures rise on hopes for US debt deal

By JOE McDONALD AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Global stock markets and Wall Street futures rose Thursday on hopes U.S. political leaders can reach agreement to avoid a potentially disastrous default on government debt.

London and Paris opened higher. Shanghai, Tokyo and Hong Kong advanced. Oil prices edged lower.

Wall Street rallied Wednesday after President Joe Biden expressed confidence "America will not default" despite lack of agreement on Republican demands for cuts in aid to poor families in exchange for raising the amount the government can borrow.

"Markets are now fully pricing an in-time resolution of the crisis," said Clifford Bennett of ACY Securities in a report. "No one wants to sell ahead of an announcement of a deal being made."

In early trading, the FTSE in London rose 0.7% to 7,776.24. The DAX in Frankfurt gained 1.5% to 16,187.47 and the CAC 40 in Paris advanced 0.9% to 7,468.73.

On Wall Street, futures for the benchmark S&P 500 index and the Dow Jones Industrial Average were up 0.1%.

On Wednesday, the S&P 500 and the Dow both rose 1.2%. The Nasdaq composite gained 1.3%.

Stocks of companies that get much of their revenue from the federal government rose. Military contractor Lockheed Martin climbed 2.1%. Northrop Grumman gained 2.7%.

Speaker Kevin McCarthy of the House of Representatives said Tuesday the two sides were far apart but could reach a deal by the end of the week. The U.S. government will run out of cash if they don't agree by June 1 to increase its borrowing limit.

Any disruption in U.S. government borrowing and debt payments could send shockwaves through the global financial system. Treasury debt is regarded as the world's safest asset and influences the price of private sector borrowing.

In Asia, the Shanghai Composite Index gained 0.4% to 3,297.31 and the Nikkei 225 in Tokyo advanced 1.6% to 30,573.93. The Hang Seng in Hong Kong rose 0.9% to 19,727.25.

The Kospi in Seoul was 0.8% higher at 2,515.40 and Sydney's S&P-ASX 200 added 0.5% to 7,236.80.

India's Sensex was up less than 0.1% at 61,57.39. New Zealand and Southeast Asian markets also rose.

In Washington, legislators and the White House are arguing over Republican demands for cuts, curbs on spending growth or work requirements for programs that help poor families pay for food, rent and medical care. The Republican plan also would block Biden's proposal to forgive some student debts and would repeal tax credits to promote use of clean energy and combat climate change.

Traders already expected at least a brief U.S. recession this year following interest rate hikes to rein in stubbornly high inflation by cooling business activity.

Investors also worry about the health of global banks following three high-profile failures in the United States and one in Switzerland. Banks have been squeezed by the unexpectedly fast run-up in interest rates, which caused the market prices of bonds on their books to fall.

On Wednesday, Western Alliance Bancorp recovered some of its losses after it gave an update on its deposit levels. It jumped 10.2% but still is down 41.6% for the year.

PacWest Bancorp, another bank under heavy scrutiny, rose 21.7% to trim its loss for the year to about 75.8%.

In energy markets, benchmark U.S. crude lost 33 cents to \$72.50 per barrel in electronic

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trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract rose \$1.97 on Wednesday to \$72.83. Brent crude, the price basis for international oil trading, declined 38 cents to \$76.58 per barrel in London. It gained \$2.05 the previous session to \$76.96.

The dollar advanced to 137.75 yen from Wednesday's 137.61 yen. The euro declined to \$1.0815 from \$1.0838.

## **Russia fires 30 cruise missiles at Ukrainian targets; Ukraine says 29 were shot down**

By SUSIE BLANN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia fired 30 cruise missiles against different parts of Ukraine early Thursday in the latest nighttime test of Ukrainian air defenses, which shot down 29 of them, officials said.

One person died and two were wounded by a Russian missile that got through and struck an industrial building in the southern region of Odesa, according to Serhiy Bratchuk, a spokesperson for the region's military administration.

Loud explosions were heard in Kyiv as the Kremlin's forces targeted the capital for the ninth time this month in a clear escalation after weeks of lull and ahead of a much-anticipated Ukrainian counteroffensive using newly supplied advanced Western weapons.

Debris fell on two Kyiv districts, starting a fire at a garage complex. There was no immediate word about any victims, Serhiy Popko, head of the Kyiv Military Administration, said in a Telegram post.

Ukraine also shot down two Russian exploding drones and two reconnaissance drones, according to authorities.

The missiles were launched from Russian sea, air and ground bases, General Valerii Zaluzhnyi, the Ukrainian commander in chief, wrote on Telegram.

Several waves of missiles were aimed at areas of Ukraine between 9 p.m. Wednesday and 5.30 a.m. Thursday, he said.

Russian forces used strategic bombers from the Caspian region and apparently fired X-101 and X-55-type missiles developed during Soviet times, Kyiv authorities said. Russia then deployed reconnaissance drones over the capital.

In the last major air attack on Kyiv, on Tuesday, Ukrainian air defenses bolstered by sophisticated Western-supplied systems shot down all the incoming missiles, officials said.

That attack used hypersonic missiles, which repeatedly have been touted by Russian President Vladimir Putin as providing a key strategic advantage. The missiles, which are among the most advanced weapons in Russia's arsenal, are difficult to detect and intercept because of their hypersonic speed and maneuverability.

But 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 the ground fighting is largely deadlocked along that front line, both sides are targeting each other's territory with long-range weapons.

Meanwhile, Kremlin-installed authorities in occupied Crimea reported the derailment of eight train cars Thursday due to an explosion.

Russian state media reported the train was carrying grain.

Quoting a source within the emergency services, state news agency RIA Novosti said that the incident occurred not far from the city of Simferopol. The Crimean Railway reported that the derailment was caused by "the interference of unauthorized persons" and that there were no casualties.

The Russia-installed head of Crimea, Sergei Aksyonov, said that train services on the af-

ected section of the line were suspended.

Also, two people were wounded in a drone attack in Russia's southern Kursk region, which borders Ukraine, the regional governor reported Thursday.

In a Telegram post, Roman Starovoi claimed Ukrainian forces dropped an explosive device from a drone on a sports and recreation complex.

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

## **Dancers at Los Angeles bar to become only unionized strippers in US after 15-month battle**

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Dancers at a Los Angeles bar could soon become the only unionized group of strippers in the U.S.

The Actors' Equity Association labor union says owners of the Star Garden Topless Dive Bar in North Hollywood have withdrawn their opposition and agreed to recognize the strippers' union.

For 15 months, dancers at the club have sought safer workplace conditions, better pay and health insurance, among other benefits. But their unionization drive was stalled by objections and legal challenges from the club's management.

The union announced this week that management had agreed to a settlement. A formal vote count by the National Labor Relations Board has been set for Thursday.

"We're hoping what we've done to unionize this club will have laid the groundwork for any other stripper in the country who decides that they want to also have a voice in the way their workplace is run," Lilith, a dancer at Star Garden, told The Associated Press. Lilith asked not to be identified by her legal name in this article, due to fears of being harassed or stalked. The AP is aware of her legal name.

After being certified, the Star Garden dancers will join Actors' Equity, a union representing more than 51,000 workers in the entertainment industry nationwide.

The Star Garden case is not the first time strippers in the U.S. have sought union recognition. In the late 90s, dancers at San Francisco's Lusty Lady organized the Exotic Dancers Union. But that club was shuttered in 2013 — so, if Thursday's results are certified by the NLRB as expected, the Star Garden dancers will become the country's only existing unionized strippers.

The dancers' union battle at the Star Garden dates back to March 2022 — after security guards at the club "repeatedly failed to protect" dancers from abusive or threatening patron behavior, and fired those who brought concerns to management, Actors' Equity said.

"The positive side of Star Garden is that ... it's where dancers are allowed to express themselves in creative ways. And all of my coworkers looked out for each other — it was like a little family from the start," Lilith said. "So, when we started noticing that there were some safety concerns that we all had, it didn't take long for us to band together and decide we needed to do something about it."

Lilith recalled a handful of instances that made her and other dancers feel unsafe while working — including a lack of adequate protection from sexual harassment and assault often faced by dancers. Star Garden management told dancers that they couldn't go directly to security when they felt unsafe, Lilith said — noting that they were instead instructed to go to management, who would decide "if it was a severe enough instance for security to intervene."

Customers were also allowed to stay in the bar after closing, which made the dancers

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feel unsafe because patrons could see them dressed “out of our stripper personas” and identify which cars they drove when they went home, she said. According to Lilith, one dancer was fired for bringing up her concerns about this to management. Another dancer was fired for intervening when she noticed a customer filming a coworker on stage without her consent, she added.

After the two coworkers were fired, the Star Garden dancers banded together in efforts to get their jobs back. But after delivering a safety petition to their bosses, they were locked out of work, Lilith said — so they began picketing outside of the club. They later announced their affiliation with Actors’ Equity, which filed for a NLRB guild election on behalf of the group.

According to the union, NLRB conducted the election via mail and planned for a November vote count. But those results were put on hold due to legal challenges from the Star Garden, which challenged the eligibility of some voters. The club also filed for bankruptcy protection.

As part of Tuesday’s settlement, Star Garden agreed to dismiss the bankruptcy filing and reopen the club soon after, attorneys representing Star Garden management said in a statement.

“Star Garden decided to settle, as it has always been a fair and equal opportunity employer, that respects the rights of its employees,” attorneys Josiah R. Jenkins and An Nguyen Ruda said, adding that the club “is committed to negotiating in good faith with Actor’s Equity a first of its kind collective bargaining agreement which is fair to all parties.”

Mori Rubin, who approved the settlement as regional director for NLRB’s Region 31, said she admired “the dancers who had the courage to protest their unsafe working conditions” and was “very pleased” with the settlement.

Lilith and other dancers said they were looking forward to preparing a union contract and returning to work.

“I’m feeling really optimistic about going back,” Lilith said. “It will definitely be surreal being back on that specific stage, but I know we’re going to have our community rallying around us .... And hopefully we’ll be able to show the country how successful a union strip club can be.”

## Show must go on for a Ukrainian director drafted for war ahead of opening night

By BERNAT ARMANGUE and HELENA ALVES Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The show must go on, even when its Ukrainian director is drafted by the army weeks before opening night.

“Silence, Silence, Silence, Please,” a play that tackles Russia’s war in Ukraine had its world debut in Portugal last week, but it’s chief creator was conspicuously missing from among the packed audience.

Pavlo Yurov had meant to be there. Weeks before the opening, he had gone to get special documentation that would permit him to make a trip out of Ukraine. Men of fighting age are barred from leaving, but there are exceptions and Yurov, 43, expected to be given a pass to attend his own show.

Instead he was drafted by Ukraine’s National Guard and is now a press officer attached to a brigade preparing to participate in a much anticipated counteroffensive.

So Yurov had no choice but to stay, while his actors took to the stage in the Portuguese city of Coimbra and performed, and his name flashed in neon lights outside the theater halls.

The play is art imitating life. Drawn from real-life experiences of Ukrainians living under constant shelling and enduring Russian occupation, it touches on the lives of soldiers and

paramedics working on the front lines of the war, and volunteers delivering humanitarian aid to the population.

But Yurov wanted the play to touch the audience in a deep and immersive way. The show forces the audience to confront the psychological toll of being exposed to constant artillery fire and of inhabiting life in survival mode.

"My goal is kind of to make it possible for the audience to feel the conditions and mental and physical states of the people who are experiencing this," Yurov told The Associated Press in Kyiv.

The play was originally staged in 2020. When Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Yurov decided to rewrite it to reflect recent, real-life developments.

"I hope many people in the audience, for the ... duration of this play, feel what it's like to be inside this situation," he said.

For the actors, performing in the play was both surreal — the themes were so close to home — and therapeutic.

"I'm playing a woman who has to leave the territory which is under the threat of being occupied, and then it is actually occupied." said 37-year old Ukrainian actress Oksana Leuta. "I can tell you that for me it's special, because I chose not to leave the country and I have different, mixed, feelings about those who left."

Alves reported from Coimbra, Portugal

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

## **Anti-migration operation on French African island of Mayotte stirs tensions, exposes inequalities**

By GREGOIRE MEROT Associated Press

CHIRONGUI, Mayotte (AP) — Facing a migration quagmire on the French island territory of Mayotte, off Africa's east coast, France's government has sent in 2,000 troops and police to carry out mass expulsions, destroy slums and eradicate violent gangs.

But the operation has become bogged down and raised concerns of abuse, aggravating tensions between local residents and immigrants from the neighboring country of Comoros. It is also laying bare entrenched poverty among both communities, tensions over the island's status — and deep inequalities between Mayotte and the rest of France.

While Mayotte is a part of France, Comoros — 100 kilometers (60 miles) to the northwest across a strait in the Indian Ocean — was also once a French colony but has been independent since 1975. Mayotte is by far the poorest corner of France, but its average annual income of around \$3,500 is still more than double that in Comoros. This has created a powerful pull.

"How can they imagine for a second that (the operation) will make things better?" asked Momo, a father of five from Comoros who has lived in Mayotte for 30 years and is opposing efforts to expel him and his family from this island.

He is among those who say a lack of attention from the French state is at the core of Mayotte's problems. Like most people who spoke to The Associated Press, Momo fears having his full name published for fear of reprisals or expulsion.

Meanwhile, anti-migrant collectives on Mayotte, a volcanic island north of Madagascar known for its vanilla and tea plantations, are starting to take things into their own hands.

Some are blocking a hospital treating foreigners, disrupting shipments of medicines and goods to Comoros and threatening to destroy slums if the authorities don't get there first.

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If the police “don’t manage to carry out their mission, it’s the collectives who will do the work. They have warned us,” said Momo, who has submitted documents to try to obtain property rights as a longtime resident of a neighborhood of shanties in the town of Majikavo.

Some of his neighbors are giving up hope, and are demolishing their houses themselves to recover the materials and build elsewhere.

The French government has deported an average of 25,000 Comorians per year since 2018. It gave Comoros 150 million euros between 2019 and 2022 to try to fight illegal migration, according to France’s overseas affairs minister.

But despite the risky sea journey, thousands of those deported return from Comoros. The policy has broken up families and left children and teens unaccompanied, pushing many to join gangs.

Operation Wuambushu enjoys the support of politicians like Mayotte lawmaker Mansour Kamardine, who decries threats and violence against local officials. He said Friday that “it’s a matter of days” before the situation explodes, pleading for tougher police action.

But human rights defenders worry about the fallout.

Among critics are the U.N. children’s agency UNICEF, which warned that a surge in arrests and expulsions would increase the risk of children being separated from their parents. In a statement, it called on the French government to ensure housing for families expelled and mental health support for children whose homes are razed.

French refugees’ rights groups CIMADE warned that the surge would “aggravate the precariousness of the population and exacerbate the social tensions it’s claiming to fight.”

For now, security forces are acting as a buffer between gangs and anti-migrant militias, while the population, split in two, girds for new tensions as the operation unfolds.

Angela Charlton in Paris contributed.

Follow AP migration coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/migration>.

## PGA Championship promises a strong course for the strongest field

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

PITTSFORD, N.Y. (AP) — Four layers of clothes, beanies and hand warmers were everywhere on the eve of the PGA Championship, a reminder how this major will be different from the previous six at Oak Hill.

The temperature was 37 degrees — it felt colder with a morning breeze — and it made the 7,394 yards on the scorecard of a par 70 feel even longer.

“I still can’t believe it’s nearly middle of May and that we’re still going through 40-, 50-degree weather,” Jason Day said. “But that’s this part of the country at this time of the year.”

Ockie Strydom of South Africa was on the 10th tee, taking practice swings and waiting for the clock to hit 7 a.m. for the course to officially open.

“Have you no friends?” someone called out to him.

Strydom laughed and replied, “You’d have to be crazy to play in this.”

Such was the risk of the PGA Championship moving from August to May. The good news for Day, world No. 1 Jon Rahm, defending champion Justin Thomas and the rest of the 156-man field was Wednesday was a blip on an otherwise pleasant forecast.

As for the difficulty, that’s not likely to change. Oak Hill, restored to the intent of famed architect Donald Ross, is likely to test everything.

Jordan Spieth was asked to describe the rough and he took it a step further.

“It’s about as nasty ... there’s nothing that separates this from a U.S. Open,” Spieth said. “This is a U.S. Open. The fairways are firm and narrow, and the rough is thick. As far as

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difficulty, it feels like a U.S. Open course. Par is a nice score."

Jason Dufner is the only player to reach double digits under par (10-under 270) in the six majors at Oak Hill — three U.S. Opens, three PGAs. That was 10 years ago in August, when rain soaked the course and left the greens soft and vulnerable.

This effectively is a new course — it certainly looks that way. The bunkers are deeper, with steep, nearly vertical lips. Some greens have deep rough on one side and closely mown areas on the other that send balls rolling some 20 yards away.

Thomas went long of the 230-yard third green. He tried a flop shot back up the slope the putting surface and it kept rolling until it was back in the fairway.

There is trouble everywhere, capable of punishing mistakes.

"You miss greens out here, you're going to make a lot of bogeys," two-time PGA champion Brooks Koepka said. "You miss fairways, you're going to be making quite a few bogeys if you're out of position."

Koepka is coming off a runner-up finish at the Masters, where he had the 54-hole lead until Rahm tracked him down on the final day. He arrived at Augusta National having won a LIV Golf event in Florida.

He is healthy again, and Koepka seemed to take his game up a notch for the majors because of the discipline it requires. That's the word Rory McIlroy used to describe what it takes at Oak Hill, and Koepka concurred.

"It's a grind," Koepka said. "A major week is always tough. It's always going to be a tough golf course. You've got to plot your way around, understand where to miss it, where not to miss it. It just comes down to discipline. I feel like every time I've won, I've been super disciplined. ... I think that's a massive thing to win a major."

Dustin Johnson won on the Saudi-funded series last week in Oklahoma, delivering clutch birdies on the 18th in regulation and in a three-man playoff.

He appears to be back in form, and to Johnson, it didn't matter where he was playing or how many guys he had to beat in the 48-man fields.

"Still playing against unbelievably good golfers," Johnson said. "To be honest, the scores the last few tournaments we played were a lot lower than I thought they would be. You've got to play well every single day if you want a chance to win. The game last week, a lot of really good things. I'm driving it well, controlling the distance with the irons, starting to wedge it a lot better, and then rolled in a few putts.

"It's nice coming off a win, coming into this championship, and especially this golf course."

It all gets started Thursday, with temperatures again expected to be bone-chilling in the morning before yielding to warmer weather — certainly not August weather — later in the day and through the rest of the week.

The PGA Championship again features the strongest field of the majors, with only the injured Will Zalatoris missing from the top 100 players in the world.

A strong field, a strong course.

"This is going to be a big golf course to handle," Tony Finau said. "None of the holes I played I looked at and said, 'I'm going to birdie this hole this week for sure.' It's going to be that type of test. The guys that can mentally overcome the hurdle of just trying to stay patient ... you just have to play well for all four days if you're going to win this week."

AP golf: <https://apnews.com/hub/golf> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Sports](https://twitter.com/AP_Sports)

## 8-year-old girl dies in Border Patrol custody in Harlingen, Texas, as agency seeks to ease crowding

HARLINGEN, Texas (AP) — An 8-year-old girl died Wednesday in Border Patrol custody, authorities said, a rare occurrence that comes as the agency struggles with overcrowding.

The child and her family were being held at a station in Harlingen, Texas, in Rio Grande Valley, one of the busiest corridors for illegal crossings, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the Border Patrol's parent agency, said in a statement.

The girl experienced "a medical emergency" and was taken to a nearby hospital, where she died, according to the statement, which did not disclose her nationality or provide additional information about the incident.

Customs and Border Protection's internal affairs office will investigate, and the Homeland Security Department's inspector general and Harlingen police have been notified, Miller said. Sgt. Larry Moore, a spokesman for the Harlingen Police Department, said he had no information about the death.

The Border Patrol had 28,717 people in custody on May 10, the day before pandemic-related asylum restrictions expired, which was double from two weeks earlier, according to a court filing. By Sunday, the number had dropped 23% to 22,259, still unusually high.

The average time in custody on Sunday was 77 hours, five hours more than the maximum allowed under agency policy.

Last week, the Border Patrol began releasing migrants in the U.S. without notices to appear in immigration court, instead directing them to report to an immigration office within 60 days. The move spares Border Patrol agents time-consuming processing duties, allowing them to open space in holding facilities. A federal judge in Florida ordered an end to the quick releases.

Also last week, a 17-year-old Honduran boy traveling alone died in U.S. Health and Human Services Department custody.

## China asks embassies to avoid 'propaganda' in apparent reference to pro-Ukrainian displays

By JOE McDONALD Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Foreign embassies in Beijing were asked by the Chinese government to avoid displaying what it calls propaganda in an apparent response to shows of support for Ukraine.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping's government says it is neutral in Moscow's 15-month-old invasion of Ukraine but has repeated Russian justifications, accusing Washington and the U.S.-European military alliance NATO of provoking Moscow.

A Chinese envoy visited Ukraine this week and was due to go to Russia to discuss a possible "political settlement," but little progress is expected.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry asked diplomatic missions last week not to use their exterior walls to display "political propaganda," according to a European Union spokesperson and a diplomat from a European government.

The May 8 request cites a need to "avoid causing disputes between countries," but doesn't define propaganda or give other details, EU spokesperson Nabila Massrali wrote in a statement.

Massrali said the EU Delegation in Beijing "has not changed any items displayed at its front wall."

The request didn't mention Ukraine, according to the diplomats. But flags and placards set up by embassies of Canada, France, Germany and other governments are the only public



displays by most foreign missions, other than tourism advertisements.

The European diplomat, who asked not to be identified further due to the sensitivity of the issue, said his government doesn't "see any reason to change" its display.

A 2-meter (6.5-foot) -tall placard at the front gate of the Finnish Embassy has the flags of Finland and Ukraine and says "#WeStandWithUkraine." A billboard hung on Sweden's Embassy has the same phrase and flags of the two countries.

Those displays have been up for months. It wasn't clear why China made the removal request now.

Some embassies also raised rainbow flags for Diversity Week and Wednesday's International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia. Such issues are considered politically sensitive by China's ruling Communist Party.

Asked for confirmation and details, foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said embassies were obliged to "respect Chinese laws and regulations," but gave no details.

"China calls on embassies of all countries in China and representative offices of international organizations in China to perform their duties in accordance with the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations or relevant international agreements," Wang said.

The Chinese envoy, Li Hui, met over two days with Ukraine Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, according to the two governments.

The Ukrainian government said they discussed "ways to stop Russian aggression," but neither side gave details.

Li said the two governments should "create conditions for ending the war and peace talks," according to a Chinese foreign ministry statement.

Political analysts see little chance of progress toward peace because neither side appears to be ready to stop fighting. But they say Xi's government might be trying to deflect criticism of its friendship with Russian President Vladimir Putin and split European allies away from Washington.

Beijing released a proposed peace plan in February, but Ukraine's allies largely dismissed it, insisting Putin's forces must withdraw and face prosecution for war crimes.

## **UK-based group documents rights abuses since Taliban takeover of Afghanistan with 'witness map'**

By RAHIM FAIEZ Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — A U.K.-based rights group on Thursday launched an interactive map documenting rampant human rights abuses and violence against civilians since the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan nearly two years ago.

The documented violations — committed by both the Taliban and militant groups such as the Islamic State group — paint a harrowing picture of present-day Afghanistan. The project by the independent, non-profit Center for Information Resilience is meant to draw wider attention to the surge in abuses against civilians, journalists, and ethnic minorities across the troubled country.

With more than 1,300 data points of incidents since Aug. 17, 2021, the map is part of the center's Afghan Witness initiative.

"The map reveals the violence and human rights abuses occurring under Taliban rule against women, independent journalists, and minorities, sometimes in the form of ad hoc beatings in the street or staged public punishment, as well as violence used to suppress peaceful protest and armed resistance," said Benjamin Den Braber, lead analyst at Afghan Witness.

He described the map as a "transparent record of verified human rights violations in Af-

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ghanistan.”

“What we can verify represents only the tip of the iceberg of human rights violations in Afghanistan; many abuses are hidden from view and never recorded online,” Den Braber said.

The Britain-based center has used open-source data and techniques to investigate human rights abuses, war crimes and disinformation in Afghanistan, Ukraine, and Myanmar. To develop the map, the Afghan Witness team collaborated with C4ADS, a U.S.-based group that uses data-driven analysis and technology to shine a light on conflicts, instability, environmental crimes and human rights abuses.

“Our ability to tell the stories of the Taliban’s human rights abuses through visualization is a powerful tool,” said Lawrence Henderson, a program director at C4ADS.

Earlier this month, a report released by the United Nations strongly criticized the Taliban for carrying out public executions, lashings and stoning, and urged them to halt such practices. In the past six months alone, 274 men, 58 women and two boys were publicly flogged in Afghanistan, according to the report by the U.N. mission in Afghanistan.

The Taliban seized Afghanistan in mid-April 2021, during the last weeks of the U.S. and NATO troops drawdown from the country. Despite initial promises of a more moderate rule than during their previous stint in power in the 1990s, they swiftly moved to impose harsh measures in line with their strict interpretation of Islamic law, or Sharia.

In the months following their takeover, the Taliban gradually tightened restrictions on women, barring them from public spaces, such as parks and gyms, and banning education for girls beyond the sixth grade.

The restrictions have triggered an international uproar, increasing the country’s isolation at a time when its economy has collapsed — and worsening a humanitarian crisis.

The Afghan Witness map contains more than 450 pieces of footage showing attacks on civilians, more than 100 clips of attacks in the minority Shiite and Hazara communities, and more than 350 videos of protests. A viewer can search for a particular incident using keywords, access footage, original tweets or a report about it.

“Afghan Witness investigates, verifies where possible and archives data in the hope that one day accountability mechanisms will bring the perpetrators to justice,” said David Osborn, a team leader at Afghan Witness.

A statement released Thursday alongside the map, which can be accessed through the website of the Center for Information Resilience, said that the project “will continue to work with journalists around the world and civil society in Afghanistan to increase access to accurate, reliable sources of information.”

## **‘Clock has hit midnight’: China loans pushing world’s poorest countries to brink of collapse**

By BERNARD CONDON Associated Press

A dozen poor countries are facing economic instability and even collapse under the weight of hundreds of billions of dollars in foreign loans, much of them from the world’s biggest and most unforgiving government lender, China.

An Associated Press analysis of a dozen countries most indebted to China — including Pakistan, Kenya, Zambia, Laos and Mongolia — found paying back that debt is consuming an ever-greater amount of the tax revenue needed to keep schools open, provide electricity and pay for food and fuel. And it’s draining foreign currency reserves these countries use to pay interest on those loans, leaving some with just months before that money is gone.

Behind the scenes is China’s reluctance to forgive debt and its extreme secrecy about

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Youth gangs are fighting back, and resisting efforts to make peace. Military forces and police are struggling to keep Mayotte under control.

Both communities are majority Black and trace their origins to a chain of islands whose status is the source of historical dispute.

In 1841, France bought Mayotte from its self-proclaimed sultan in exchange for protection. French colonization then extended to the other three main islands of the Comoros chain. As independence movements emerged after World War II, tensions arose among the populations of the different islands.

In a 1974 referendum, three islands supported independence and became the new nation of Comoros, but Mayotte voted against and remained French. Comoros still claims Mayotte as part of the same chain.

While development in Mayotte remains far behind that of the French mainland, Comoros is wracked by corruption and struggles to provide even basic public services. Mayotte is seen by Comorians as a land of refuge where people can at least get medical care and children can go to school.

Since 1991, the population of Mayotte has almost quadrupled to around 260,000, according to the French statistics agency Insee — and many other immigrants are believed to remain uncounted. Many people arrive so that their children are born with French residency. Insee says that of the 10,600 children born on Mayotte in 2021, 46.5% had two parents who weren't French.

But once they turn 18, these young people have few job options. Those with only a residence permit can't travel to mainland France. Many turn to the underground economy. Crime has flourished.

That's the backdrop for "Operation Wuambushu," launched on April 24 for two months. It's expected to be extended because of setbacks suffered by the French government and Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin, the architect of the operation and the driving force in France's overall efforts to stem migration.

Just as the police contingent arrived from the French mainland, a court blocked expulsions, and Comoros refused to take the migrants back. French President Emmanuel Macron hosted Comoros President Azali Assoumani last week to try to break the deadlock.

Many residents welcome the security surge. Earlier this month, more than 1,000 people demonstrated in Chirongui in southern Mayotte in support of the operation, and to express their attachment to France.

On Sunday, people in the village of Tsimkoura in southern Mayotte compiled a list of "foreigner settlements" and sent it to the mayor, demanding that he expel the residents by the end of the week.

"Otherwise, we will take care of it," said Kourati Youssouffa, a public servant with the local administration of Mayotte.

In the isolated village of Hagnoundrou, a printed message circulating this week warned of an imminent "hunt for migrants." It warned, "Don't forget your children, they are part of your luggage." Local authorities banned any such move.

There is little room for moderation or neutrality, and tension is worsening between those who define themselves as "true Mahorais" or Mayotte residents, and the population of Comorian origin.

Many Mahorais feel the arrivals from Comoros deprive them of potential development and of their right to live in peace.

Comorians like Momo, meanwhile, are well-anchored on Mayotte, but now live in fear of military patrols coming to mark their home with red paint to indicate the bulldozers are coming — or violence by anti-Comorian militant "collectives."

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how much money it has loaned and on what terms, which has kept other major lenders from stepping in to help. On top of that is the recent discovery that borrowers have been forced to put cash in hidden escrow accounts that push China to the front of the line of creditors to be paid.

Countries in AP's analysis had as much as 50% of their foreign loans from China and most were devoting more than a third of government revenue to paying off foreign debt. Two of them, Zambia and Sri Lanka, have already gone into default, unable to make even interest payments on loans financing the construction of ports, mines and power plants.

In Pakistan, millions of textile workers have been laid off because the country has too much foreign debt and can't afford to keep the electricity on and machines running.

In Kenya, the government has held back paychecks to thousands of civil service workers to save cash to pay foreign loans. The president's chief economic adviser tweeted last month, "Salaries or default? Take your pick."

Since Sri Lanka defaulted a year ago, a half-million industrial jobs have vanished, inflation has pierced 50% and more than half the population in many parts of the country has fallen into poverty.

Experts predict that unless China begins to soften its stance on its loans to poor countries, there could be a wave of more defaults and political upheavals.

"In a lot of the world, the clock has hit midnight," said Harvard economist Ken Rogoff. "China has moved in and left this geopolitical instability that could have long-lasting effects."

## HOW IT'S PLAYING OUT

A case study of how it has played out is in Zambia, a landlocked country of 20 million people in southern Africa that over the past two decades has borrowed billions of dollars from Chinese state-owned banks to build dams, railways and roads.

The loans boosted Zambia's economy but also raised foreign interest payments so high there was little left for the government, forcing it to cut spending on healthcare, social services and subsidies to farmers for seed and fertilizer.

In the past under such circumstances, big government lenders such as the U.S., Japan and France would work out deals to forgive some debt, with each lender disclosing clearly what they were owed and on what terms so no one would feel cheated.

But China didn't play by those rules. It refused at first to even join in multinational talks, negotiating separately with Zambia and insisting on confidentiality that barred the country from telling non-Chinese lenders the terms of the loans and whether China had devised a way of muscling to the front of the repayment line.

Amid this confusion in 2020, a group of non-Chinese lenders refused desperate pleas from Zambia to suspend interest payments, even for a few months. That refusal added to the drain on Zambia's foreign cash reserves, the stash of mostly U.S. dollars that it used to pay interest on loans and to buy major commodities like oil. By November 2020, with little reserves left, Zambia stopped paying the interest and defaulted, locking it out of future borrowing and setting off a vicious cycle of spending cuts and deepening poverty.

Inflation in Zambia has since soared 50%, unemployment has hit a 17-year high and the nation's currency, the kwacha, has lost 30% of its value in just seven months. A United Nations estimate of Zambians not getting enough food has nearly tripled so far this year, to 3.5 million.

"I just sit in the house thinking what I will eat because I have no money to buy food," said Marvis Kunda, a blind 70-year-old widow in Zambia's Luapula province whose welfare payments were recently slashed. "Sometimes I eat once a day and if no one remembers to help me with food from the neighborhood, then I just starve."

A few months after Zambia defaulted, researchers found that it owed \$6.6 billion to Chi-

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nese state-owned banks, double what many thought at the time and about a third of the country's total debt.

"We're flying blind," said Brad Parks, executive director of AidData, a research lab at the College of William & Mary that has uncovered thousands of secret Chinese loans and assisted the AP in its analysis. "When you look under the cushions of the couch, suddenly you realize, 'Oh, there's a lot of stuff we missed. And actually things are much worse.'"

## DEBT AND UPHEAVAL

China's unwillingness to take big losses on the hundreds of billions of dollars it is owed, as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank have urged, has left many countries on a treadmill of paying back interest, which stifles the economic growth that would help them pay off the debt.

Foreign cash reserves have dropped in 10 of the dozen countries in AP's analysis, down an average 25% in just a year. They have plunged more than 50% in Pakistan and the Republic of Congo. Without a bailout, several countries have only months left of foreign cash to pay for food, fuel and other essential imports. Mongolia has eight months left. Pakistan and Ethiopia about two.

"As soon as the financing taps are turned off, the adjustment takes place right away," said Patrick Curran, senior economist at researcher Tellimer. "The economy contracts, inflation spikes up, food and fuel become unaffordable."

Mohammad Tahir, who was laid off six months ago from his job at a textile factory in the Pakistani city of Multan, says he has contemplated suicide because he can no longer bear to see his family of four go to bed night after night without dinner.

"I've been facing the worst kind of poverty," said Tahir, who was recently told Pakistan's foreign cash reserves have depleted so much that it was now unable to import raw materials for his factory. "I have no idea when we would get our jobs back."

Poor countries have been hit with foreign currency shortages, high inflation, spikes in unemployment and widespread hunger before, but rarely like in the past year.

Along with the usual mix of government mismanagement and corruption are two unexpected and devastating events: the war in Ukraine, which has sent prices of grain and oil soaring, and the U.S. Federal Reserve's decision to raise interest rates 10 times in a row, the latest this month. That has made variable rate loans to countries suddenly much more expensive.

All of it is roiling domestic politics and upending strategic alliances.

In March, heavily indebted Honduras cited "financial pressures" in its decision to establish formal diplomatic ties to China and sever those with Taiwan.

Last month, Pakistan was so desperate to prevent more blackouts that it struck a deal to buy discounted oil from Russia, breaking ranks with the U.S.-led effort to shut off Vladimir Putin's funds.

In Sri Lanka, rioters poured into the streets last July, setting homes of government ministers aflame and storming the presidential palace, sending the leader tied to onerous deals with China fleeing the country.

## CHINA'S RESPONSE

The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a statement to the AP, disputed the notion that China is an unforgiving lender and echoed previous statements putting the blame on the Federal Reserve. It said that if it is to accede to IMF and World Bank demands to forgive a portion of its loans, so do those multilateral lenders, which it views as U.S. proxies.

"We call on these institutions to actively participate in relevant actions in accordance with the principle of 'joint action, fair burden' and make greater contributions to help developing countries tide over the difficulties," the ministry statement said.

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China argues it has offered relief in the form of extended loan maturities and emergency loans, and as the biggest contributor to a program to temporarily suspend interest payments during the coronavirus pandemic. It also says it has forgiven 23 no-interest loans to African countries, though AidData's Parks said such loans are mostly from two decades ago and amount to less than 5% of the total it has lent.

In high-level talks in Washington last month, China was considering dropping its demand that the IMF and World Bank forgive loans if the two lenders would make commitments to offer grants and other help to troubled countries, according to various news reports. But in the weeks since Beijing there has been no announcement and both lenders have expressed frustration with Beijing.

"My view is that we have to drag them — maybe that's an impolite word — we need to walk together," IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said earlier this month. "Because if we don't, there will be catastrophe for many, many countries."

The IMF and World Bank say taking losses on their loans would rip up the traditional playbook of dealing with sovereign crises that accords them special treatment because, unlike Chinese banks, they already finance at low rates to help distressed countries get back on their feet. The Chinese foreign ministry noted, however, that the two multilateral lenders have made an exception to the rules in the past, forgiving loans to many countries in the mid-1990s to save them from collapse.

As time runs out, some officials are urging concessions.

Ashfaq Hassan, a former debt official at Pakistan's Ministry of Finance, said his country's debt burden is too heavy and time too short for the IMF and World Bank to hold out. He also called for concessions from private investment funds that lent to his country by purchasing bonds.

"Every stakeholder will have to take a haircut," Hassan said.

China has also pushed back on the idea, popularized in the Trump administration, that it has engaged in "debt trap diplomacy," leaving countries saddled with loans they cannot afford so that it can seize ports, mines and other strategic assets.

On this point, experts who have studied the issue in detail have sided with Beijing. Chinese lending has come from dozens of banks on the mainland and is far too haphazard and sloppy to be coordinated from the top. If anything, they say, Chinese banks are not taking losses because the timing is awful as they face big hits from reckless real estate lending in their own country and a dramatically slowing economy.

But the experts are quick to point out that a less sinister Chinese role is not a less scary one.

"There is no single person in charge," said Teal Emery, a former sovereign loan analyst who now runs consulting group Teal Insights.

Adds AidData's Parks about Beijing, "They're kind of making it up as they go along. There is no master plan."

## LOAN SLEUTH

Much of the credit for dragging China's hidden debt into the light goes to Parks, who over the past decade has had to contend with all manner of roadblocks, obfuscations and falsehoods from the authoritarian government.

The hunt began in 2011 when a top World Bank economist asked Parks to take over the job of looking into Chinese loans. Within months, using online data-mining techniques, Parks and a few researchers began uncovering hundreds of loans the World Bank had not known about.

China at the time was ramping up lending that would soon become part of its \$1 trillion "Belt and Road Initiative" to secure supplies of key minerals, win allies abroad and make

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more money off its U.S. dollar holdings. Many developing countries were eager for U.S. dollars to build power plants, roads and ports and expand mining operations.

But after a few years of straightforward Chinese government loans, those countries found themselves heavily indebted, and the optics were awful. They feared that piling more loans atop old ones would make them seem reckless to credit rating agencies and make it more expensive to borrow in the future.

So China started setting up offshore shell companies for some infrastructure projects and lent to them instead, which allowed heavily indebted countries to avoid putting that new debt on their books. Even if the loans were backed by the government, no one would be the wiser.

In Zambia, for example, a \$1.5 billion loan from two Chinese banks to a shell company to build a giant hydroelectric dam didn't appear on the country's books for years.

In Indonesia, a Chinese loan of \$4 billion to help it build a railway also never appeared on public government accounts. That all changed years later when, overbudget by \$1.5 billion, the Indonesian government was forced to bail out the railroad twice.

"When these projects go bad, what was advertised as a private debt becomes a public debt," Parks said. "There are projects all over the globe like this."

In 2021, a decade after Parks and his team began their hunt, they had gathered enough information for a blockbuster finding: China's hidden loans amounted to at least \$385 billion in 88 countries, and many of those countries were in far worse shape than anyone knew.

Among the disclosures was that Laos was on the hook for a \$3.5 billion Chinese loan to build a railway system, which would take nearly a quarter of country's annual output to pay off.

Another AidData report around the same time suggested that many Chinese loans go to projects in areas of countries favored by powerful politicians and frequently right before key elections. Some of the things built made little economic sense and were riddled with problems.

In Sri Lanka, a Chinese-funded airport built in the president's hometown away from most of the country's population is so barely used that elephants have been spotted wandering on its tarmac.

Cracks are appearing in hydroelectric plants in Uganda and Ecuador, where in March the government got judicial approval for corruption charges tied to the project against a former president now in exile.

In Pakistan, a power plant had to be shut down for fear it could collapse. In Kenya, the last key miles of a railway were never built due to poor planning and a lack of funds.

## JUMPING TO THE FRONT OF THE LINE

As Parks dug into the details of the loans, he found something alarming: Clauses mandating that borrowing countries deposit U.S. dollars or other foreign currency in secret escrow accounts that Beijing could raid if those countries stopped paying interest on their loans.

In effect, China had jumped to the front of the line to get paid without other lenders knowing.

In Uganda, Parks revealed a loan to expand the main airport included an escrow account that could hold more than \$15 million. A legislative probe blasted the finance minister for agreeing to such terms, with the lead investigator saying he should be prosecuted and jailed.

Parks is not sure how many such accounts have been set up, but governments insisting on any kind of collateral, much less collateral in the form of hard cash, is rare in sovereign lending. And their very existence has rattled non-Chinese banks, bond investors and other lenders and made them unwilling to accept less than they're owed.

"The other creditors are saying, 'We're not going to offer anything if China is, in effect, at the head of the repayment line,'" Parks said. "It leads to paralysis. Everyone is sizing each

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other up and saying, 'Am I going to be a chump here?'"

## LOANS AS 'CURRENCY EXCHANGES'

Meanwhile, Beijing has taken on a new kind of hidden lending that has added to the confusion and distrust. Parks and others found that China's central bank has effectively been lending tens of billions of dollars through what appear as ordinary foreign currency exchanges.

Foreign currency exchanges, called swaps, allow countries to essentially borrow more widely used currencies like the U.S. dollar to plug temporary shortages in foreign reserves. They are intended for liquidity purposes, not to build things, and last for only a few months.

But China's swaps mimic loans by lasting years and charging higher-than-normal interest rates. And importantly, they don't show up on the books as loans that would add to a country's debt total.

Mongolia has taken out \$5.4 billion in such swaps, an amount equivalent to 14% of its total debt. Pakistan took out nearly \$11 billion in three years and Laos has borrowed \$600 million.

The swaps can help stave off default by replenishing currency reserves, but they pile more loans on top of old ones and can make a collapse much worse, akin to what happened in the runup to 2009 financial crisis when U.S. banks kept offering ever-bigger mortgages to homeowners who couldn't afford the first one.

Some poor countries struggling to repay China now find themselves stuck in a kind of loan limbo: China won't budge in taking losses, and the IMF won't offer low-interest loans if the money is just going to pay interest on Chinese debt.

For Chad and Ethiopia, it's been more than a year since IMF rescue packages were approved in so-called staff-level agreements, but nearly all the money has been withheld as negotiations among its creditors drag on.

"You've got a growing number of countries that are in dire financial straits," said Parks, attributing it largely to China's stunning rise in just a generation from being a net recipient of foreign aid to the world's largest creditor.

"Somehow they've managed to do all of this out of public view," he said. "So unless people understand how China lends, how its lending practices work, we're never going to solve these crises."

Condon reported from New York and Washington. AP writers Munir Ahmed in Islamabad and Noel Sichalwe in Lusaka, Zambia, contributed to this report.

Contact AP's global investigative team at [Investigative@ap.org](mailto:Investigative@ap.org).

## US metros are growing, many reversing 2021 drops, new estimates show

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — The flight from urban areas that took place during the first year of the pandemic either reversed or slowed in its second year, as last year metropolitan areas in Texas and Florida boomed and declines in New York and Los Angeles were halved, according to new estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau.

During the first full year of the pandemic in 2021, more than half of the 20 largest U.S. metro areas lost residents, and all U.S. metro areas grew by just 0.1%, as fear of the virus sent residents fleeing the most densely-populated urban areas and the popularity of remote work allowed people to live far from their workplaces.

By comparison, only eight of the 20 largest metro areas decreased in 2022, and the



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growth rate for all U.S. metros was 0.4%. Among the largest U.S. metros that had gains in 2022 after experiencing losses in 2021 were Washington, Miami-Fort Lauderdale, Seattle, Minneapolis and San Diego, according to 2022 population estimates released Thursday by the Census Bureau.

The Dallas-Fort Worth area grew the most among U.S. metros, jumping by six-digit figures for a second consecutive year, as it gained another 170,000 residents last year. Metro Dallas-Fort Worth's 7.9 million residents made it the nation's fourth-largest metropolitan area, behind only New York, Los Angeles and Chicago, all of which lost population last year but with much smaller losses compared to the first year of the pandemic.

Other metropolitan areas which saw the largest growth in number were Houston, adding more than 124,000 residents; Atlanta, with almost 79,000 new residents; Phoenix, with an additional nearly 73,000 people; and Orlando, Florida, adding almost 65,000 new residents.

Metro Phoenix also surpassed the 5 million-person threshold for the first time last year.

There were other signs that 2021's pandemic-related migration changed a year later.

Boise Idaho and Provo, Utah — two metros that were popular destinations in 2021 for residents fleeing the West Coast's most populous cities — dropped out of the top 20 in population growth in 2022.

By that same token, smaller communities known as micropolitan statistical areas grew by 0.1% last year compared to 0.2% in 2021.

Metropolitan statistical areas consist of one or more counties containing a central city with a population of at least 50,000 residents that together have a high degree of economic and social connections. The central city in a micropolitan statistical area must have at least 10,000 residents but no more than 50,000 residents.

Population change is driven by migration, including within U.S. borders as people move around and internationally as people arrive from abroad. It is also dependent on a community's number of births and deaths. Thursday's data release doesn't show the reasons behind population changes, but similar data at the county level released in March showed it was mostly driven by international migration.

Individually, cities that make up the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area were among those that grew the most in the U.S. last year. With 19,100 new residents, the city of Fort Worth led the nation, followed by the city Phoenix with more than 19,000 additional residents and the city of San Antonio, Texas, with more than 18,800 residents gained.

Two other cities in the Dallas-Fort Worth metro area — Dallas and Frisco — also were among those whose numbers most dramatically spiked, jumping respectively by 8,800 residents and 8,500 residents. These new residents were lured by a strong economy, mild winters and good schools.

The Villages, Florida, a relatively new retirement community northwest of Orlando, was the fastest-growing U.S. metro area between 2021 and 2022, increasing by 7.5%.

Follow Mike Schneider on Twitter at @MikeSchneiderAP

## 'Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny' debuts Tuesday at the Cannes Film Festival

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

CANNES, France (AP) — Indiana Jones and Harrison Ford will swing into Cannes on Thursday for the world premiere of "Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny" in one of the most anticipated events of the French Riviera festival.

Ford, who has said "Dial of Destiny" will be his last performance as the character, is also

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set to receive an honorary Palme d'Or from the Cannes Film Festival. Last year, Cannes feted "Top Gun Maverick" and Tom Cruise in a similar manner.

It's not the first "Indiana Jones" film to premiere in Cannes. The fourth installment, "Indiana and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull" launched at the 2008 edition of the festival. Critics and fans alike dismissed "Crystal Skull" as a misjudged sequel, though it still made \$790 million worldwide.

This time, "Dial of Destiny" is hoping to make a similar if not larger global impact without its famous filmmakers. The new film, which the Walt Disney Co. will release June 30 in the U.S., is the first "Indiana" film not directed by Steven Spielberg or with a story credit to George Lucas. Instead, James Mangold ("Ford vs. Ferrari," "Logan") takes the reins for a film co-starring Phoebe Waller-Bridge, Antonio Banderas and Mads Mikkelsen.

## Butler scores 35, Heat rally to beat Celtics 123-116 in East finals opener

By KYLE HIGHTOWER AP Sports Writer

BOSTON (AP) — The Miami Heat were in need of a calming presence following a sluggish start to their latest conference finals showdown with the Boston Celtics.

Jimmy Butler provided that and a lot more.

Butler scored 35 points, including 20 after halftime, and the Heat rallied in the second half to beat the Celtics 123-116 in Game 1 of the Eastern Conference finals on Wednesday night.

He said his teammates have given him confidence.

"I'm playing at an incredible level because they are allowing me to do so," Butler said. "They are not putting a limit on my game. They are trusting me with the ball, on the defensive end. I think that's what any basketball player wants."

Miami trailed by nine at the half before turning it around with a franchise playoff-record 46 points in the third and outscoring Boston 66-50 over the final two quarters. It was Butler's fifth game with 30 or more points this postseason and he added seven assists, six steals and five rebounds.

"One of the premier two-way basketball players of this association. ... That's what we needed." Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said. "Down the stretch Jimmy was able to do everything we needed — as a scorer and as a facilitator."

Bam Adebayo added 20 points and eight rebounds. Kyle Lowry, Caleb Martin, Gabe Vincent and Max Strus all added 15 points apiece. The Heat went 16 of 31 from the 3-point line.

The No. 8-seeded Heat have opened all three playoff series with road victories. Game 2 is Friday in Boston.

Jayson Tatum led the Celtics with 30 points, but didn't take a shot in the fourth quarter. Jaylen Brown finished with 22 points and nine rebounds. Malcolm Brogdon added 19 points.

Boston is just 4-4 at home during this postseason.

"I don't know why," Tatum said of their home struggles. "You've still got to play the game, you've got to make plays, regardless of whether you're home or away."

The Celtics, who are at their best when they're defending and getting up more shots than their opponents, were 10 of 29 from beyond the arc.

"We lost our offensive purpose," Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla said.

The tip-off of the series marked the third time in four seasons that the Heat and Celtics have met in this round. Boston won last year's matchup in seven games.

Wednesday's opener felt every bit like a continuation of that most recent meeting. Boston dominated inside early on and led by nine at halftime.

Spoelstra said his team was "more intentional" over the final 24 minutes.

Miami took a page out of the Celtics' book and used a 13-1 run to quickly erase that gap,

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tying the game at 78 in the third quarter. During the next timeout Mazzulla was captured by broadcast cameras throwing a clipboard in frustration.

Boston couldn't stop the onslaught and Miami then nudged back in front as Butler penetrated to create opportunities for his teammates.

The Heat outscored the Celtics 46-25 in the period and took a 103-91 lead into the fourth, prompting a few boos from the TD Garden crowd.

Boston responded, scoring the first seven points of the final period before a 3-pointer by Vincent ended the run.

Miami led 114-109 with just over three minutes to play when Brogdon was fouled by Butler. But he connected on just 1 of the 2 free throws. Butler was trapped on the next Miami possession before finding Martin for a corner 3.

Tatum travelled, giving the ball back to the Heat. A Miami miss gave the ball back to Boston, but Tatum was called again for travelling.

Miami wound the shot clock down before getting a 3-pointer by Butler to rattle in with 1:03 remaining.

But everything changed in the second half.

"We are just playing really good basketball," Butler said. "More than anything, we are staying together through the good and through the bad."

## ROAD WARRIORS

The Heat are the fifth team to open with road wins in each of their first three series, joining the 2021 Hawks, 1999 Knicks, 1989 Bulls and 1981 Rockets. The Knicks were the only other No. 8 seed to make the conference finals.

## TIP-INS

Heat: Miami's previous high in the playoffs was 43 points in a half against Charlotte in 2016. ... Lowry hit 5 of his first 6 shots, scoring 13 points in his first nine minutes of action. ... Butler (12) and Adebayo (6) combined for 18 of Miami's 28 points in the first quarter. It marked the seventh time Butler has reached double figures in the first period this post-season.

Celtics: Marcus Smart finished with 13 points and 11 assists. ... Led 66-57 at halftime. With the score tied at 47, Boston outscored Miami 19-10 over the final 5:26 of the half. ... Brown wore his black protective mask after going without it for the final two games of their semifinals matchup with the 76ers. He fractured a facial bone late in the regular season. ... New England Patriots coach Bill Belichick was in attendance.

AP NBA: <https://apnews.com/hub/NBA> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Sports](https://twitter.com/AP_Sports)

## The pandemic widened gaps in reading. Can one teacher 'do something about that'?

By CAROLYN THOMPSON Associated Press

NIAGARA FALLS, N.Y. (AP) — Richard Evans makes his way through rows of his students in his third grade classroom, stooping to pick up an errant pencil and answering questions above the din of chairs sliding on hardwood floors.

The desks, once spread apart to fight COVID-19, are back together. Masks cover just a couple of faces. But the pandemic maintains an unmistakable presence.

Look no further than the blue horseshoe-shaped table in the back of the room where Evans calls a handful of students back for extra help in reading — a pivotal subject for third grade — at the end of each day.

Here is where time lost to pandemic shutdowns and quarantines shows itself: in the students who are repeating this grade. In the little fingers slowly sliding beneath words

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sounded out one syllable at a time. In the teacher's patient coaching through reading concepts usually mastered in first grade — letter "blends" like "ch" and "sh."

It is here, too, where Evans jots pluses and minuses and numbers on charts he's made to track each child's comprehension and fluency, and circles and underlines words that trip up a student a second or third time.

In a year that is a high-stakes experiment on making up for missed learning, this strategy — assessing individual students' knowledge and tailoring instruction to them — is among the most widely adopted in American elementary schools. In his classroom of 24 students, each affected differently by the pandemic, Evans faces the urgent challenge of having them all read well enough to succeed in the grades ahead.

Here is how he has tackled it.

## GOING FROM PANDEMIC TO 'NORMAL' IS HARD

It is a Thursday in October, early in the school year. Six students surround Evans at the blue table, each staring down at a first-grade-level book about baseball great Willie Mays. Many are struggling.

"What sound does '-er' make?" Evans asks 9-year-old Ke'Arrah Jessie, who focuses through glasses on the page. She puts "hit" and "ter" together to make "hitter."

Next to her, a boy takes a turn. He pronounces "high" as "hig." Evans grabs a pen and jots down "night" and other "igh" words for a sidebar phonics refresher on the letter grouping. Meantime, the rest of the class reads on their own. While some page through below-grade-level readers, others plunge into advanced chapter books.

Most of these students were sent home as kindergartners in March 2020. Many spent all of first grade learning remotely from home full- or part-time. Even after schools reopened full time for second grade, COVID-related obstacles remained: masking and distancing rules that prevented group work, quarantining that sent kids home for a week without warning, and young children by then unaccustomed to — and unhappy about — full weeks of school rules.

Says Evans, who came to teaching at age 40 after a career as a computer graphics designer: "All year long, I had kids ask me, 'Why do I have to be in school for five days?'"

## MOVING FROM 'LEARNING TO READ' TO 'READING TO LEARN'

At the beginning of this school year, assessments showed that 15 of Evans' initial 23 students were reading below grade level. Of those, nine were considered severely behind, lacking basic foundational skills usually learned in first grade. In a typical year, four or five students would be reading at the lowest level, he said.

"I know I have to do something about that. That's my job," Evans said, looking back.

There is no time to waste. Third-grade students are under urgent pressure to progress from "learning to read" to "reading to learn." Studies show those who don't read fluently by the end of this school year are more likely to drop out or fail to finish high school on time.

Among those starting out behind is Ke'Arrah, who spent more than a year learning remotely early in the pandemic. Her mother, Ashley Martin, could see the toll on her daughter's drive to learn. So when Ke'Arrah was assigned to a new elementary school for this year, her mother re-enrolled her in third grade.

The pandemic cut first grade short for Ke'Arrah. To keep the family safe, Martin kept Ke'Arrah home in second grade, too, even when she had the option to return to school in person two days a week. She has four children younger than Ke'Arrah, including a son born just three days before COVID-19 shut down schools and businesses in March 2020.

"It was good for me, but not great for her because she's on a computer," said Martin,

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whose employer, a restaurant, temporarily closed.

Ke'Arrah, who likes math and wants to be a police officer, remembers the pull of her nearby toys as she tried to stay focused on her on-screen teacher.

"She was talking about boring stuff," Ke'Arrah says. Last year's transition back to in-person school was rocky, her mother said. She finished behind in math and reluctant to read.

Midway through her second stint in third grade, Ke'Arrah shows progress. Martin has passed her love of the Junie B. Jones series of books to Ke'Arrah, and the pair read them together at bedtime. Small moments become reading lessons, too.

"She's on the phone, I'm like: 'Read that to me. Tell me, what does that say?' We're out somewhere: 'Read this to me. What does it say?'" Martin says.

## DOUBLING UP ON KIDS WHO NEED IT MOST

While many students are behind, Evans also referred more candidates than ever — five — for the school's honors program because of their advanced scores on early assessments.

He pulled aside students who were reading well above grade level as the year began and explained they might not get as much one-on-one time with him, something he had never done before. That has allowed him to double up on the time he could spend helping other students to catch up, working with some groups twice or three times a week. The advanced readers spend that time reading and working together.

The range highlights the varied experiences during the pandemic, where some had more support at home than others.

"Were they read to? Was there someone to support them to do assignments and homework when they were not physically with the certified teacher and having direct instruction?" says Marcia Capone, assessment administrator in the district, which provided devices and internet hotspots to families.

In Niagara Falls, about one in four people live in poverty, and 80% of the district's students are economically disadvantaged, state data shows. Despite swarms of tourists to its namesake falls, the Rust Belt city has been scarred by an exodus of heavy industry and population that began in the 1960s.

Districts like Atlanta have sought to address learning losses by adding time to the school day. Others, like Washington, D.C., have pursued "high-impact" tutoring. Niagara Falls City Schools have doubled down on remedial work and differentiated learning, customizing students' lessons to keep each student moving forward. The district has used federal pandemic relief money to put 12 reading specialists to work with first graders in its eight elementary schools, Superintendent Mark Laurrie said.

Using assessments to identify students' individual needs is the top strategy American schools are using to help kids catch up from the pandemic, followed closely by remedial instruction, according to a federal survey.

## WITH THIS STUDENT, IT WORKED — FOR A WHILE

Evans invested his own time in one of his neediest students, a boy who is repeating third grade at Evans' urging. He started keeping him after school once a week for an hour of intensive reading intervention.

"He's like my little experiment," Evans said after one tutoring session in November. "With intense intervention, can you turn this around?"

The two had just slowly worked through a phonics worksheet that had the student circle words that began with the same letter as pictures. In one problem, "candy," "open" and "after" followed a picture of an ant. "Open?" guessed the fidgeting student.

Evans had him close his eyes and say the words, thinking about the first sound of each.

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The trick eventually led him to the correct word, "after."

In other lessons, the student struggled to identify rhyming words and consonant blends. Each problem revealed another concept not yet mastered.

"Very good!" Evans said after the boy correctly added the missing "rd" to the end of lizard. He responded with a satisfied smile.

In a matter of weeks, the boy went from knowing just 11 sight words — common words like "because" and "about" that students should instantly recognize — to 66 of the 75 on the district's third grade list.

"I want to be able to read chapter books, and I want to read big old dictionaries!" the boy said after a one-on-one tutoring session that had him working on what sounds letters make when together, like "sp," and "sn."

Then, midway through the school year, the child stopped staying after school. Evans said his student lost interest; without a parent's nudging, there is only so much he can do.

Earlier in the year, the child's mother had described pandemic remote learning as fraught. The family had internet connection issues, and it was difficult to schedule school sessions around her work as a nursing home aide.

"I have a younger daughter at home and it was just a mess. She's screaming. It was just a whole thing," she said by phone.

When the tutoring stopped, she did not respond to follow-up calls or texts.

## SHOWING LEARNERS 'THERE'S A CONCERN FOR YOU'

Halfway through the school year, a new set of assessments suggests Evans' strategy is, overall, working. He loads results into an Excel spreadsheet which, combined with his own running charts, lets him evaluate growth from September to January and regroup students based on where they need help most.

"Thank God for paper and sticky notes," Evans says.

What he saw in the charts arrayed in front of him was encouraging. Fifteen of his students had met or exceeded their scoring goals for this round of tests. Several who are receiving targeted help showed the biggest gains.

Ke'Arrah leapfrogged from a bottom level to the upper middle — to the relief of her mother, whose decision to have her daughter repeat third grade appears to be paying off.

"I know it's going to be embarrassing when she gets older: 'Oh, you're a grade behind,'" Martin said. "But she's going to have that knowledge."

Despite the students' progress, even some who see another big jump by the final assessments in May could finish behind typical third-graders. Evans has arranged for extra services for next year for three of his neediest students, including the boy he was tutoring after hours. But they will be far enough along to move on to fourth grade.

For the first time in his seven years teaching third grade, everyone improved, Evans says. "I don't know if it's the programs we're using or if it's the fact that everybody is more invested in it right now."

Maybe, he said, having so many students behind has made everyone in the building more invested in catching them up — "making them aware, 'You know what? There's a concern for you.'"

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## Oil drilling project near mouth of Amazon River rejected by Brazil's environmental regulator

By DAVID BILLER Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Brazil's environmental regulator has rejected a license for a controversial offshore oil drilling project near the mouth of the Amazon River that drew strong opposition from activists who warned of its potential for damaging the area.

The agency's president, Rodrigo Agostinho, highlighted environmental concerns in announcing the decision Wednesday evening to turn down the state-run oil company Petrobras' request to drill the FZA-M-59 block. He cited "a group of technical inconsistencies" in the company's application.

With Brazil's existing production set to peak in coming years, Petrobras has sought to secure more reserves off Brazil's northern coast. The company earmarked almost half its five-year, \$6 billion exploration budget for the area.

CEO Jean Paul Prates had said that the first well would be temporary and that the company has never recorded a leak in offshore drilling. The company failed to convince the environmental agency.

"There is no doubt that Petrobras was offered every opportunity to remedy critical points of its project, but that it still presents worrisome inconsistencies for the safe operation in a new exploratory frontier with high socioenvironmental vulnerability," Agostinho wrote in his decision.

The unique and biodiverse area is home to little-studied swaths of mangroves and a coral reef, and activists and experts had said the project risked leaks that could imperil the sensitive environment.

Eighty civil society and environmental organizations, including WWF Brasil and Greenpeace, had called for the license to be rejected pending an in-depth study.

Caetano Scannavino, coordinator of Health and Happiness, an Amazon non-profit group that supports sustainable projects in the Tapajos basin, congratulated Agostinho on Twitter "for not succumbing to pressure, asking for more studies, and prioritizing science in the service of the collective."

"It is a sensitive, little-studied region, and there's no way back for any mistake there," Scannavino added. "Not to mention the government's promise of a decarbonized future."

The Climate Observatory, a network of environmental non-profits, also cheered the decision, saying in a statement that "Agostinho is protecting a virtually unknown ecosystem and maintains the coherence of the Lula government, which has promised in its discourse to be guided by the fight against the climate crisis."

During the first presidential terms of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, from 2003 to 2010, huge offshore discoveries became a means of financing health, education and welfare programs. Some members of his Workers' Party continue to see oil as a means to ensure social progress.

Energy Minister Alexandre Silveira said in March that the area is the "passport to the future" for development in Brazil's northern region. In his prior terms, Lula used the same phrase to describe the offshore oil discoveries in an area known as pre-salt.

But Lula has strived to demonstrate the environmental awakening he has undergone in the years since, with protection of the Amazon a fixture in his campaign last year to unseat Jair Bolsonaro and return to the presidency.

Activists and experts had warned that approval for the offshore oil project could threaten the natural world, but also dent Lula's newfound image as an environmental defender.

The process to obtain an environmental license for the FZA-M-59 block began in 2014, at the request of BP Energy do Brasil. Exploration rights were transferred to Petrobras in 2020.

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Suely Araújo, a former head of the environment agency and now a public policy specialist with the Climate Observatory, said Agostinho made the right call not just for the specific project, but also for the nation.

"The decision in this case gives cause for a broader debate about the role of oil in the country's future. It is time to establish a calendar to eliminate fossil fuels and accelerate the just transition for oil exporting countries, such as Brazil, and not open a new exploration frontier," Araújo said in a statement. "Those who sleep today dreaming of oil wealth tend to wake up tomorrow with a stranded asset, or an ecological disaster, or both."

Other controversial megaprojects in the Amazon that remain on the table include repaving a highway that would slice through preserved rainforest, construction of a major railway for grain transport and renewal of a giant hydroelectric dam's license.

Associated Press writer Eléonore Hughes in Rio de Janeiro contributed to this report.

## Philadelphia's likely next mayor could offer model for how Democrats talk about crime

By SARA BURNETT and BROOKE SCHULTZ Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — The Democrat who will almost certainly become Philadelphia's next mayor wants to hire hundreds of additional police officers to walk their beats and get to know residents. She wants to devote resources to recruiting more police and says officers should be able to stop and search pedestrians if they have a legitimate reason to do so.

Those positions, particularly the search policies that have been criticized for wrongly targeting people of color, would seem out of step in a progressive bastion like Philadelphia. But Cherelle Parker trounced her rivals in this week's mayoral primary with a message that centered on tougher law enforcement to combat rising crime and violence.

While local politics don't always align with the ideological divides that guide the national debate, Parker's victory offers a fresh case study for Democrats as they wrestle with how to approach the issue of violent crime, which increased in many U.S. cities during the pandemic and continues to be top of mind for voters across the country. The issue has divided Democrats from city halls to the White House, particularly over how much to rely on policing and incarceration to solve what many see as social problems, such as drug abuse and homelessness.

Parker, a former state legislator and city council member, argued that it's a false choice to decide between investing in policing and addressing broader societal problems.

"It is not either/or," the 50-year-old Parker said during the campaign.

That approach helped her defeat progressive rival Helen Gym by more than 25,000 votes. Gym, who advocated for measures including stronger police training and faster 911 response times, was backed by Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders and New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and appeared with the lawmakers at a rally on the eve of the election. Gym and her supporters blamed her loss, in part, on late attacks funded by wealthy donors who opposed her progressive policies.

The debate over policing intensified in 2020 after the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police prompted worldwide protests about policing and calls to defund police — a push that the GOP used against Democrats in 2020 elections. While Democrat Joe Biden won that year, some moderate Democrats said the party wasn't quick enough to denounce it.

In major U.S. cities that are Democratic strongholds, voters also have been divided in recent years.

New York elected Mayor Eric Adams, a former police captain who vowed to invest more in



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public safety, and San Francisco voters recalled a progressive prosecutor amid frustration about public safety. In Chicago, progressive Brandon Johnson — who favored investing in areas like housing and youth jobs — topped a more moderate rival who had support from the police union. And progressive prosecutor Kim Foxx, who prioritized violent crimes over lower-level offenses and faced blowback for dropping charges against actor Jussie Smollett, said she will not seek reelection.

In Philadelphia, Parker was the only Black candidate among the top tier of hopefuls on Tuesday and she was backed by majority Black precincts across the city in both early and Election Day ballots. In addition to 300 more officers, her public safety plan also called for fixing broken streetlights, removing graffiti and investing in programs for at-risk youth.

Parker also defended her support for “Terry stops,” or for officers to use “just and reasonable suspicion” to stop pedestrians. She and other candidates faced criticism including a protest at City Hall last month from those opposed to “stop and frisk.”

The policy has riled the city in the past, with critics saying it was used disproportionately against Black and Brown pedestrians. According to ACLU Pennsylvania, Philadelphia police nearly doubled the number of pedestrian stops during Mayor Michael Nutter’s administration in the 2000s. Civil rights lawyers said at least half of the more than 250,000 such stops in 2009 didn’t meet the legal standard, and almost none resulted in arrest. The ACLU sued to stop the practice, and monitors police use of stop and frisk under a settlement with the city.

“We want to build that relationship and we also want folks to know that there will be zero tolerance for any misuse and or abuse of authority,” Parker said in response to questions about her position. “But a proactive law enforcement presence is a key part of that plan, and I am unapologetic about it.”

Tuesday’s result suggests the salience of police reform may be subsiding from the days when people were protesting in overwhelming numbers, said Michael Sances, a political science professor at Temple University.

“(Crime) has crowded out concerns about overpolicing,” he said. “It doesn’t mean that people have become anti-reform, that can easily be surfaced. It’s just a sign of where the public’s attention is, and where political leaders have moved, and that’s really toward the center.”

Philadelphia saw a record number of homicides in 2021, most of them gun-related. That number fell from 562 to 516 in 2022, but was still significantly higher than pre-pandemic levels. On Wednesday, an 18-year-old was rearrested in Philadelphia after he escaped from a prison in the city along with another inmate. The man was being held on charges in four slayings.

But in a reminder that there’s no easy trend line on the political dynamics related to crime, voters in Pittsburgh made a turn to the left in Tuesday’s Democratic primary for county prosecutor. Allegheny County District Attorney Stephen Zappala, in office for nearly a quarter century, is trailing challenger Matt Dugan by double digits in unofficial returns, although Republicans launched a write-in campaign for him so the two could face off again in November.

Dugan, the county’s chief public defender, ran on a range of progressive policies, including eliminating cash bail, diverting low-level and nonviolent crimes, and emphasizing mental health and substance abuse treatment.

What happens in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh could have national implications as Pennsylvania will again be a prime battleground in 2024.

Biden has walked a difficult line on crime, policing and the communities that have been disproportionately impacted by both. The president has said it’s possible to bring down crime and also reform criminal justice and policing at the same time, though Republicans

claim crime is up because of those reforms.

Biden often says he believes police need better tools and training, calling them heroes who do a difficult job. He's also been vocal about the need to reform how policing has worked in Black and other nonwhite communities in the wake of the deaths of Floyd and other Black people killed by police.

This week, the Senate voted to overturn a local Washington, D.C. law enacted to improve police accountability that was backed by the district's Democratic mayor. It was the second time this year that Democrats joined with Republicans to reject a D.C. measure amid high rates of crime. Earlier, Biden agreed with the GOP that some of the measures — such as lowering penalties for carjackings — went too far.

Biden was expected to veto this week's vote, which would mean upholding the D.C. law, saying that while he doesn't back all provisions in the D.C. law he does support "common-sense police reforms" that are part of it, such as banning chokeholds, limiting the use of deadly force and improving access to body cameras and requiring additional training.

Burnett reported from Chicago. Associated Press writers Colleen Long in Washington and Mark Scoloro in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, contributed to this report.

Brooke Schultz 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.

## Here are the restrictions on transgender people that are moving forward in US states

By ANDREW DeMILLO Associated Press

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has highlighted efforts by Republican governors and statehouses across the country to embrace proposals limiting the rights of transgender people, signing new restrictions as he moves closer to a presidential bid.

The restrictions are spreading quickly despite criticism from medical groups and advocates who say they're further marginalizing transgender youth and threatening their health.

Here's what's happening:

### FLORIDA'S RESTRICTIONS

DeSantis on Wednesday signed bills that ban gender affirming care for minors, restrict pronoun use in schools and force people to use the bathroom corresponding with their sex assigned at birth in some cases.

DeSantis also signed new restrictions on drag shows that would allow the state to revoke the food and beverage licenses of businesses that admit children to adult performances. The DeSantis administration has moved to pull the liquor licenses of businesses that held drag shows, alleging children were present during lewd displays.

The rules on gender affirming care also ban the use of state money for the care and place new restrictions on adults seeking treatment. They take effect immediately, along with the drag show restrictions. The bathroom and pronoun restrictions take effect July 1.

DeSantis has been an outspoken advocate for such restrictions, and championed a Florida law that restricts the teaching of sexual orientation and gender identity in public schools. Florida has expanded that prohibition, which critics have dubbed the "Don't Say Gay" law, to all grades.

### WHERE BANS STAND NATIONALLY

Hundreds of bills have been proposed this year restricting the rights of transgender people,

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and LGBTQ+ advocates say they've seen a record number of such measures in statehouses.

At least 17 states have now enacted laws restricting or banning gender-affirming care for minors: Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Mississippi, Montana, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Utah, South Dakota and West Virginia. Federal judges have blocked enforcement of laws in Alabama and Arkansas, and several other states are considering bills this year to restrict or ban care. Proposed bans are also pending before Texas and Missouri's governors.

These bans have spread quickly, with only three states enacting such laws before this year.

Before DeSantis signed the latest ban, Florida was one of two states that had restricted the care via regulations or administrative action. Texas's governor has ordered child welfare officials to investigate reports of children receiving such care as child abuse, though a judge has blocked those investigations.

Three transgender youth and their parents who are suing to block Florida's earlier ban on the care for minors expanded their challenge on Wednesday to include the prohibition DeSantis signed into law.

Every major medical organization, including the American Medical Association, has opposed the bans and supported the medical care for youth when administered appropriately. Lawsuits have been filed in several of the states where the bans have been enacted this year.

## STATES POISED TO ACT

A proposed ban on gender affirming care for minors is awaiting action before Republican Gov. Mike Parson in Missouri. The state's Republican attorney general, Andrew Bailey, this week withdrew a rule he had proposed that would have gone further by also restricting access to the care for adults.

Bailey cited the bill pending before Parson as a reason for eliminating the rule, which had been blocked by a state judge.

Nebraska Republicans on Tuesday folded a 12-week abortion ban into a bill that would ban gender affirming care for minors, potentially clearing the way for a final vote on the combined measure as early as this week.

Not all states are adopting restrictions, and some Democrat-led states are enacting measures aimed at protecting the rights of LGBTQ+ youth.

Michigan Democrats plan to introduce legislation Thursday that would ban conversion therapy for minors, a discredited practice of trying to "convert" people to heterosexuality.

The legislation is expected to move quickly with Democrats in control of all levels of state government. Democratic state Rep. Jason Hoskins, a sponsor of the bill, told The Associated Press that he hopes the legislation passes by the end of June, which is Pride Month.

Associated Press writers Brendan Farrington in Tallahassee, Florida; Margery Beck in Lincoln, Nebraska; Margaret Stafford in Kansas City, Missouri; and Joey Cappelletti in Lansing, Michigan, contributed to this report.

## South Carolina moves closer to abortion ban, a Southern trend that puts pressure on Virginia

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI, SARAH RANKIN and DENISE LAVOIE Associated Press  
RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — South Carolina became the latest state to move toward a near total abortion ban Wednesday with legislation that if enacted would leave Virginia an outlier in the South as a place where women have unrestricted access to abortions amid a rapid rise in restrictions in the year since Roe v. Wade was overturned.

South Carolina is among the last bastions in the region for those seeking legal abortions,

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but that status could end soon. Access would be almost entirely banned after about six weeks of pregnancy — often before women know they're pregnant — under the bill that now must pass the state Senate, which previously rejected a proposal to nearly outlaw abortions but could give final passage to the new legislation next week.

And most abortions after 12 weeks of pregnancy will be banned in North Carolina beginning July 1 after the state's Republican-controlled Legislature successfully overrode the Democratic governor's veto late Tuesday.

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.

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.

"It would be just devastating for abortion access in the South," Jamie Lockhart, executive director of Planned Parenthood Advocates of Virginia, said of the proposed six-week ban in South Carolina, the 12-week ban in North Carolina, and a six-week ban in Florida that will take effect only if the state's current 15-week ban is upheld by the state Supreme Court.

But North Carolina Rep. Sarah Stevens, a Republican, said she sees the 12-week ban and other restrictions in North Carolina's new law as "safeguards," not obstacles to abortion.

"We seek to balance protecting unborn babies while ensuring the safety of mothers," she said Tuesday.

Stricter bans across the South would heighten Virginia's role as an access point and create a "ripple effect" as people travel from out of state to seek care, Lockhart said.

"Despite abortion providers' efforts to increase available appointments and expand access for patients through telemedicine, the dramatic influx in out-of-state patients will lead to longer wait times for people in those access states," Lockhart said.

Virginia currently allows abortions in the first and second trimesters. An abortion is allowed in the third trimester only if three doctors certify the mother's mental or physical health is at serious risk.

Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin, a Republican, pushed for a 15-week ban during this year's legislative session, but that was defeated by the narrow Democratic majority in the state Senate.

Victoria Cobb, president of the conservative Family Foundation of Virginia, said Wednesday that the state's laws became out of step with its neighbors' during years of "liberal influence."

Virginians "are going to have to work to protect our Commonwealth from being exploited by the abortion industry," Cobb said.

The costs of travel for women who need to go outside their home states for abortions can quickly pile up, said Ashlyn Preaux, who helps run an abortion fund in South Carolina. Her organization helps patients pay for abortion care as well as gas cards and sometimes plane tickets.

If South Carolina enacts new restrictions, she expects to help send more patients to Virginia and Washington, D.C.

"All of these things add up and it's just not anything that people are prepared for," Preaux said. "It's not really treated at all like it's a health care issue."

The South Carolina House vote capped nearly 24 hours of grueling debate split across two days as the Republican supermajority tossed or defeated over 900 Democratic amendments. Lawmakers paused for roughly eight hours early Wednesday only after a computer glitch.

Democrats repeatedly spoke for all three minutes allotted per amendment. One would have required that residents read "The Handmaid's Tale." Another sought to make the state cover funeral costs for anyone who dies upon being denied an abortion.

Republican Rep. John McCravy urged colleagues to support "the only path forward to

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prevent our state from becoming an abortion destination state in the Southeast.”

Attention now turns to the Senate. Lawmakers could accept the House changes and send the measure to the governor who has indicated he would sign it. Or they could put the bill to a conference committee, where members from each chamber would have to work out their differences.

Until then, abortion remains legal through 22 weeks in South Carolina, and the state had already seen an increasing number of out-of-state patients before Florida and North Carolina enacted new restrictions. Farther west, women often travel to Illinois, Kansas, New Mexico or Colorado.

Provisional state health department data show South Carolina reported nearly 1,000 abortions in each of the first three months this year, after totaling just over 200 in the one full month that a previous six-week ban took effect last year. Nearly half of the patients reportedly came from other states.

Until Tuesday, North Carolina had been considered a safe space, said Dr. Erica Pettigrew, a family medicine doctor in Hillsborough. But now, “North Carolinians will be health care refugees to other states,” she said, also criticizing provisions of the law for potentially creating more paperwork, along with additional medical and licensing requirements.

Another challenge to abortion access was considered Wednesday when a federal appeals court heard 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 is reviewing a ruling 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.

Lawyers seeking to preserve access to the drug used in the most common method of abortion got pushback Wednesday from the appellate judges, who each have a history of supporting restrictions on abortion. A ruling is not expected immediately.

In Michigan, one of the leading states in protecting abortion rights since Roe v. Wade was overturned, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer signed legislation Wednesday that will prohibit companies from firing or otherwise retaliating against workers for having an abortion.

The legislation amends the state’s civil rights law, which had previously only outlawed employment discrimination if an abortion was to “save the life of the mother.” It will ensure that workers cannot be treated differently for receiving an abortion regardless of reasoning.

Kruesi reported from Nashville, Tennessee. Contributing to this report were Associated Press writers Joey Cappelletti in Lansing, Michigan; James Pollard and Jeffrey Collins in Columbia, South Carolina, and Gary Robertson and Hannah Schoenbaum in Raleigh, North Carolina. 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.

## **Oil project near Amazon River mouth blocked by Brazil’s environment agency**

By DAVID BILLER Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Brazil’s environmental regulator refused on Wednesday to grant a license for a controversial offshore oil drilling project near the mouth of the Amazon River, prompting celebration from environmentalists who had warned of its potential impact.

The decision to reject the state-run oil company Petrobras’ request to drill the FZA-M-59 block was made “as a function of a group of technical inconsistencies,” said the agency’s

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president, Rodrigo Agostinho, who highlighted environmental concerns.

With Brazil's existing production set to peak in coming years, Petrobras has sought to secure more reserves off Brazil's northern coast. The company earmarked almost half its five-year, \$6 billion exploration budget for the area.

CEO Jean Paul Prates had said that the first well would be temporary and that the company has never recorded a leak in offshore drilling. The company failed to convince the environmental agency.

"There is no doubt that Petrobras was offered every opportunity to remedy critical points of its project, but that it still presents worrisome inconsistencies for the safe operation in a new exploratory frontier with high socioenvironmental vulnerability," Agostinho wrote in his decision.

The unique and biodiverse area is home to little-studied swaths of mangroves and a coral reef, and activists and experts had said the project risked leaks that could imperil the sensitive environment.

Eighty civil society and environmental organizations, including WWF Brasil and Greenpeace, had called for the license to be rejected pending an in-depth study.

"Agostinho is protecting a virtually unknown ecosystem and maintains the coherence of the Lula government, which has promised in its discourse to be guided by the fight against the climate crisis," the Climate Observatory, a network of environmental non-profits, said in a statement.

During the first presidential terms of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, from 2003 to 2010, huge offshore discoveries became a means of financing health, education and welfare programs. Some members of his Workers' Party continue to see oil as a means to ensure social progress.

Energy Minister Alexandre Silveira said in March that the area is the "passport to the future" for development in Brazil's northern region. In his prior terms, Lula used the same phrase to describe the offshore oil discoveries in an area known as pre-salt.

But Lula has strived to demonstrate the environmental awakening he has undergone in the years since, with protection of the Amazon a fixture in his campaign last year to unseat Jair Bolsonaro and return to the presidency.

Activists and experts had warned that approval for the offshore oil project could threaten the natural world, but also dent Lula's newfound image as an environmental defender.

The process to obtain an environmental license for the FZA-M-59 block began in 2014, at the request of BP Energy do Brasil. Exploration rights were transferred to Petrobras in 2020.

Suely Araújo, a former head of the environment agency and now a public policy specialist with the Climate Observatory, said Agostinho made the right call not just for the specific project, but also for the nation.

"The decision in this case gives cause for a broader debate about the role of oil in the country's future. It is time to establish a calendar to eliminate fossil fuels and accelerate the just transition for oil exporting countries, such as Brazil, and not open a new exploration frontier," Araújo said in a statement. "Those who sleep today dreaming of oil wealth tend to wake up tomorrow with a stranded asset, or an ecological disaster, or both."

Other controversial megaprojects in the Amazon that remain on the table include repaving a highway that would slice through preserved rainforest, construction of a major railway for grain transport and renewal of a giant hydroelectric dam's license.

Associated Press writer Eléonore Hughes in Rio de Janeiro contributed to this report.

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## **G-7 Hiroshima summit: Who's attending, what will be discussed?**

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Leaders of seven of the world's most powerful democracies will gather this weekend for the Group of Seven summit in Hiroshima, the location of the world's first atomic attack at the end of World War II.

From the emergence of crucial developing countries to security worries, including growing aggression from China, North Korea and Russia, here's a look at the G-7, who will attend and some of the key issues:

### WHAT IS THE G-7 SUMMIT?

The Group of Seven is an informal group of leading industrialized nations. It consists of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.

This year is Japan's turn to host, but the presidency of G-7 summits revolves among the seven members. Two representatives of the European Union also join.

As is customary in recent years, leaders from some non-G-7 countries and international organizations will also participate in some sessions.

The leaders discuss a wide range of issues, including economic policy, security, climate change, energy and gender.

The first summit was in 1975, when France hosted what was then a Group of Six meeting to discuss tackling a recession that followed an Arab oil embargo. Canada became the seventh member a year later. Russia joined to form the G-8 in 1998 but was expelled after Moscow's 2014 annexation of Crimea.

### WHO ELSE IS COMING?

This year, the leaders of Australia, Brazil, Comoros, Cook Islands, India, Indonesia, South Korea and Vietnam are invited, as Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida stresses the importance of reaching out to developing countries in the so-called Global South and U.S. allies and partners.

The invitations to leaders outside the G-7 are meant to extend cooperation to a broader range of countries.

The G-7 countries' share of global economic activity has shrunk to about 30% from roughly 50% four decades ago. Developing economies such as China, India and Brazil have made huge gains, raising questions about the G-7's relevance and its role in leading a world economy that's increasingly reliant on growth in less wealthy nations.

Leaders of the United Nations, the International Energy Agency, the International Monetary Fund, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the World Bank, the World Health Organization and the World Trade Organization are also invited.

### WHY HIROSHIMA?

Hiroshima is Kishida's hometown. His choice of venue underscores a determination to put nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation at the top of the agenda of this year's summit.

A path to nuclear disarmament has appeared more difficult with Russia's recent nuclear weapon threats in Ukraine, as well as nuclear and missile development by China and North Korea.

Japan, which is protected by the U.S. nuclear umbrella, has also faced criticism that its nuclear disarmament pledge is an empty promise. Kishida is trying to forge a realistic roadmap between the current harsh reality and the ideal of a world without nuclear weapons.

Kishida on Friday will welcome arriving leaders at the Hiroshima Peace Park. He also plans to escort the leaders to the A-bomb museum, in the first group visit by heads of nuclear states. There might also be a meeting with atomic bomb survivors.

"I believe the first step toward any nuclear disarmament effort is to provide a first-hand

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experience of the consequences of the atomic bombing and to firmly convey the reality," Kishida said Saturday during a visit to Hiroshima to observe summit preparations.

## WHAT ARE THE TOP ISSUES?

G-7 leaders are expected to strongly condemn Russia's war on Ukraine while pledging their continuing support for Ukraine. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will join the session via the internet.

There will also be a focus on Beijing's escalating threats against Taiwan, the self-governing democratic island Beijing claims as its own, and ways to reduce Western democracies' economic and supply chain dependency on China.

To address the rise of Global South nations, including many former colonies of Western powers with varied views on and ties to Russia and China, the G-7 will offer these countries more support in health, food security and infrastructure to develop closer ties.

## WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING?

In a closely watched event on the sidelines of the summit, Kishida will meet together with President Joe Biden and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol to discuss closer security cooperation, possibly including stronger nuclear deterrence.

Kishida and Yoon will pay their respects together at a Hiroshima memorial for Korean atomic bomb victims in a trust-building gesture as the two countries repair ties strained by disputes stemming from Japan's 1910-1945 colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula.

## Montana says 1st-in-nation TikTok ban protects people. TikTok says it violates their rights

By AMY BETH HANSON and HALELUYA HADERO Associated Press  
HELENA, Mont. (AP) — Montana became the first state in the U.S. to enact a complete ban on TikTok on Wednesday when Republican Gov. Greg Gianforte signed a measure that's more sweeping than any other state's attempts to curtail the social media app, which is owned by a Chinese tech company.

The measure, scheduled to take effect on Jan. 1, 2024, is expected to be challenged legally and will serve as a testing ground for the TikTok-free America that many national lawmakers have envisioned. Cybersecurity experts say it could be difficult to enforce the ban.

"Today, Montana takes the most decisive action of any state to protect Montanans' private data and sensitive personal information from being harvested by the Chinese Communist Party," Gianforte said in a statement.

TikTok spokesperson Brooke Oberwetter argued that the law infringes on people's First Amendment rights and is unlawful. She declined to say whether the company will file a lawsuit.

"We want to reassure Montanans that they can continue using TikTok to express themselves, earn a living, and find community as we continue working to defend the rights of our users inside and outside of Montana," Oberwetter said in a statement.

The American Civil Liberties of Montana and NetChoice, a trade group that counts Google and TikTok as its members, also called the law unconstitutional. Keegan Medrano, policy director for the ACLU of Montana, said the Legislature "trampled on the free speech of hundreds of thousands of Montanans who use the app to express themselves, gather information and run their small business, in the name of anti-Chinese sentiment."

Some lawmakers, the FBI and officials at other agencies are concerned the video-sharing app, owned by ByteDance, could be used to allow the Chinese government to access infor-



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mation on U.S. citizens or push pro-Beijing misinformation that could influence the public. TikTok says none of this has ever happened.

A former executive at ByteDance alleges the tech giant has served as a "propaganda tool" for the Chinese government, a claim ByteDance says is baseless.

When Montana banned the app on government-owned devices in late December, Gianforte said TikTok posed a "significant risk" to sensitive state data. More than half of U.S. states and the federal government have a similar ban.

On Wednesday, Gianforte also announced he was prohibiting the use of all social media applications tied to foreign adversaries on state equipment and for state businesses in Montana effective on June 1. Among the apps he listed are WeChat, whose parent company is headquartered in China; and Telegram Messenger, which was founded in Russia.

The legislation, drafted by the attorney general's office, easily passed through Montana's GOP-controlled Legislature.

Gianforte had wanted to expand the TikTok bill to include apps tied to foreign adversaries, but lawmakers did not send him the bill until after the session ended this month, preventing him from offering any amendments.

Montana's new law prohibits downloads of TikTok in the state and would fine any "entity" — an app store or TikTok — \$10,000 per day for each time someone "is offered the ability" to access the social media platform or download the app. The penalties would not apply to users.

Opponents say Montana residents could easily circumvent the ban by using a virtual private network, a service that shields internet users by encrypting their data traffic, preventing others from observing their web browsing. Montana state officials say geofencing technology is used with online sports gambling apps, which are deactivated in states where online gambling is illegal.

Though many lawmakers in Montana have been enthusiastic about a ban, experts who followed the bill closely said the state will likely have to defend the legislation in court.

Officials are also bound to receive criticism from advocacy groups and TikTok users who don't want their favorite app to be taken away. The app's fun, goofy videos and ease of use has made it immensely popular, and U.S. tech giants like Snapchat and Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, see it as a competitive threat.

TikTok has been recruiting so-called influencers and small businesses who use the platform to push back on a ban. But others who haven't been part of an official campaign coordinated by the company are also worried about what lawmakers are doing.

Adam Botkin, a former football player and recent graduate at the University of Montana, said it was a scary time for him as a content creator in Montana. The 22-year-old has nearly 170,000 followers on TikTok, where he mostly posts short videos of himself performing football kicks.

He says he sometimes makes "tens of thousands" of dollars per month from brands looking to market their products on his social media accounts, including Instagram, where he has roughly 44,000 followers.

Botkin says most of his income comes from Instagram, which is believed to be more lucrative for content creators. But he has to grow his following on that platform — and others — to have the same level of popularity that he does on TikTok. He says he's trying to do that and won't try to circumvent the TikTok ban by using a VPN.

"You got to adapt and evolve with how things move," Botkin said. "So, if I have to adapt and move, I'll adapt."

Chatter about a TikTok ban has been around since 2020, when then-President Donald Trump attempted to bar the company from operating in the U.S. through an executive or-

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der that was halted in federal courts. President Joe Biden's administration initially shelved those plans, but more recently threatened to ban the app if the company's Chinese owners don't sell their stakes.

TikTok doesn't want either option and has been clamoring to prove it's free of any Chinese government interference. It's also touting a data safety plan it calls "Project Texas" to assuage bipartisan concerns in Washington.

At the same time, some lawmakers have emerged as allies, arguing efforts to restrict data harvesting practices need to include all social media companies, not just one. Republican Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky blocked a bill in March that would ban TikTok nationally, saying such a move would violate the Constitution and anger the millions of voters who use the app.

Montana's TikTok ban also comes amid a growing movement to limit social media use among kids and teens and, in some cases, impose bans. Several bills circulating in Congress aim to get at the issue, including one that would prohibit all children under the age of 13 from using social media and require permission from a guardian for users under 18 to create an account.

Some states, including Utah and Arkansas, have already enacted laws that would hinge social media use on parental consent. Similar bills are in the works in other states. Last year, California enacted a law requiring companies to beef up data protection practices for children and offer them the highest privacy settings.

Hadero reported from New York.

## **Documents leak suspect had been warned about handling of classified information, prosecutors say**

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Superiors of the Massachusetts Air National Guard member charged with leaking highly classified military documents had raised concerns internally on multiple occasions about his handling or viewing of classified information, according to a court filing Wednesday.

Justice Department lawyers made the disclosure in a court papers urging a magistrate judge to keep Jack Teixeira behind bars while he awaits trial in the case stemming from the most consequential intelligence leak in years. The judge is expected to hear more arguments Friday on prosecutors' detention request and issue a ruling.

Teixeira is accused of sharing highly classified documents about top national security issues in a chatroom on Discord, a social media platform that started as a hangout for gamers. He has not yet entered a plea.

Prosecutors told the judge in their filing that Teixeira continued leaking documents even after he was admonished by superiors on two separate occasions last year over "concerning actions" he took related to classified information.

A September memo from the Air National Guard 102nd Intelligence Wing that prosecutors filed in court says Teixeira had been observed taking notes on classified intelligence information and putting the notes in his pocket. Teixeira was instructed at the time to no longer take notes in any form on classified intelligence information, the memo says.

Another memo from late October says a superior had been made aware that Teixeira was "potentially ignoring the cease-and-desist order on deep diving into intelligence information" given to him the month before. The memo says Teixeira attended a meeting and proceeded to ask "very specific questions." He was told again to focus on his job, not any "deep dives" into classified intelligence information.

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Still, a third memo from February says Teixeira was again observed viewing information "that was not related to his primary duty and was related to the intelligence field." Teixeira "had previously been notified to focus on his own career duties and to not seek out intelligence products," the memo said.

"The Defendant even continued to share information with his online associates, defying these admonishments and taking further efforts to conceal his unlawful conduct," prosecutors wrote.

Lawyers for Teixeira, who was arrested last month on charges under the Espionage Act, are urging the judge to release Teixeira to his father's home, noting that the man didn't flee when media outlets began publishing his name shortly before his April 13 arrest. His lawyer told the judge last month that Teixeira "will answer the charges" and "will be judged by his fellow citizens."

In their own court filing Wednesday, Teixeira's lawyers noted there have been many Espionage Act cases in which courts have approved release or the government did not seek to keep the person behind bars pretrial. They have also said there is no allegation that Teixeira ever intended for documents to be distributed widely.

But prosecutors said in their filing Wednesday that one of the servers on the social media platform he posted classified information to had at least 150 users at the time the information was shared and "now may have many more users that are actively seeking access to information."

"Among the individuals with whom the Defendant shared government information are a number of individuals who represented that they resided in other countries and who logged on to the social media platform using foreign IP addresses," prosecutors wrote.

In messages, Teixeira bragged about the scope of information he had access to, writing, "The information I give here is less than half of what's available," prosecutors said. He also acknowledged he wasn't supposed to be sharing the information, prosecutors said, writing in another message, "All of the s--- I've told you guys I'm not supposed to," according to the Justice Department's filing.

Magistrate Judge David Hennessy heard arguments from lawyers over detention late last month, but has yet to issue a ruling and scheduled a second hearing on the matter for Friday. In earlier court records, prosecutors revealed that Teixeira kept an arsenal of weapons before his arrest and has a history of violent and disturbing remarks.

The leaked documents appear to detail U.S. and NATO aid to Ukraine and U.S. intelligence assessments regarding U.S. allies that could strain ties with those nations. Some show real-time details from February and March of Ukraine's and Russia's battlefield positions and precise numbers of battlefield gear lost and newly flowing into Ukraine from its allies.

## **New Mexico gunman who killed 3 wore bulletproof vest, left note**

By MORGAN LEE and RIO YAMAT Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — A high school student who killed three women in northwestern New Mexico with an indiscriminate spray of gunfire left a cryptic note presaging "the end of the chapter" and wore a bulletproof vest that he discarded before being shot to death by police, authorities said Wednesday.

Police added new details to the profile of the lone gunman and the weaponry he used as he walked through his residential neighborhood before being confronted by officers and fatally shot outside a church. The shooter discharged more than 190 rounds during the rampage, according to authorities, most of them from the home he shared with his father.

Farmington Police Chief Steve Hebbe said in a news conference that 18-year-old Beau Wilson was wearing what appeared to be a modified vest with steel plates and that the

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note was found in his pocket. Handwritten in green lettering, the message said in part, "if your reading this im the end of the chapter."

Wilson began shooting with an AR-15 rifle just outside his home, from the front porch area, but quickly dropped that into some bushes even though it still held more live ammunition, police said.

The gunman continued firing with two pistols, discarding a .22-caliber gun and then depleting rounds from a 9-mm handgun in the final shootout with police, during which he let off at least 18 rounds.

Slain by the shooter were longtime Farmington residents Gwendolyn Schofield, 97, her 73-year-old daughter, Melody Ivie, and 79-year-old Shirley Voita, police said.

The women were well known in the community, in part through participation in faith-based groups. Ivie ran a preschool for four decades that was attended by several generations of residents.

Those wounded in the attack include Farmington police Sgt. Rachel Discenza and New Mexico State Police Officer Andreas Stamatiadas. The officers were treated at a local hospital and released.

Police are probing Wilson's access to weapons and concerns about his prior mental health, and efforts are underway to subpoena medical and school records that might shed light on any issues.

"We have been talking with family members and trying to do more investigation into his mental health that appears to — early on — to be a factor," Hebbe said.

At the same time, Hebbe said, "there did not appear to be significant indications that ... something was going to happen that day."

New Mexico enacted a so-called red flag law in 2020 that can be used to seize guns from people who pose a danger to themselves or others. Judicial records show the Farmington Police Department has petitioned successfully for the removal of guns in other instances, most recently in February.

In November, after he turned 18, Wilson legally purchased the assault-style weapon used Monday, according to police. They believe two of the three weapons he carried were owned by relatives.

Two days before the attack, Wilson purchased additional ammunition magazines, police said.

Authorities said it appears he shot indiscriminately at vehicles, and bullets struck 11 of them along with seven homes.

Additional weapons and ammunition were found at the home Wilson shared with his father, but Hebbe said he did not appear to have organized those before he left the house. The suspect had access to over 1,400 rounds of ammunition and 10 other weapons at the time of the attack.

"He planned to use the three weapons he had," Hebbe said, "and he went outside and he did just that."

Police say evidence shows that at least 176 rounds were fired by Wilson from an assault rifle near his house at the outset of the rampage.

A community vigil was planned for Wednesday night at the Farmington Museum, the latest in a series of gatherings to remember and mourn victims of the shooting.

Wilson was a senior at Farmington High School and had been scheduled to graduate the next day.

At the school's commencement ceremony Tuesday, speakers talked of resilience and hope.

A chair was left empty with a bouquet of white roses "in memory of those we lost throughout the years," school district spokesperson Roberto Taboada said.

Yamat reported from Las Vegas, Nevada. Associated Press writer Robert Jablon in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

## Prince Harry and Meghan made getaway in NYC taxi after being trailed by paparazzi

By MICHAEL R. SISAK, BOBBY CAINA CALVAN and DANICA KIRKA Associated Press  
NEW YORK (AP) — Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, were trailed in their car by photographers as they left a New York City charity event Tuesday night, briefly taking refuge at a police station before being whisked away in a yellow taxicab.

The pursuit and media frenzy evoked memories of the 1997 car chase through Paris that killed Harry's mother, Princess Diana — though in this case, police said, no one was hurt.

The royal couple set off alarms when their spokesperson claimed Wednesday that they had been dangerously pursued by paparazzi in a "near catastrophic car chase" through the streets of Manhattan. That account led New York City Mayor Eric Adams to condemn the paparazzi chasing them as "reckless and irresponsible."

Later, though, police said the pursuit was relatively short and led to no injuries, collisions or arrests, and warranted no further investigation. Still, it drove home real security concerns surrounding the royal couple and the trauma brought on by the death of Harry's mother when he was just 12 years old.

The cab driver who drove them from the police station said he instantly recognized his passengers and that paparazzi "were following us the whole time," though he said wouldn't call it a chase.

"They had this look on their faces," the driver, Sukhcharn Singh, said. "All of a sudden paparazzi came out and started taking pictures."

Police issued a short statement confirming an incident Tuesday night involving photographers and the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, who were accompanied by Meghan's mother.

Meanwhile, police in California were called this week about an episode near the couple's property in Montecito. A man was arrested shortly after 2 a.m. Monday on suspicion of prowling near the property, the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office said in a statement.

It wasn't immediately clear whether the man actually entered the property. He was released on \$2,500 bail after the misdemeanor arrest.

A message seeking comment on the arrest was sent Wednesday evening to a representative for the couple.

In New York on Tuesday night, the couple left Manhattan's Ziegfeld Ballroom — where Meghan had just accepted the Ms. Foundation's Woman of Vision Awards with Black Voters Matter co-founder LaTosha Brown — and got into an SUV as crowds of pedestrians and photographers gawked, according to video posted to social media.

Harry and Meghan's vehicle was then followed by photographers in a scene that their office said "resulted in multiple near collisions involving other drivers on the road, pedestrians and two NYPD officers." The couple's office called the incident "near catastrophic."

Police intervened and, assisting the couple's private security detail, led them to a police station about 18 blocks from the ballroom, a law enforcement official told the AP.

The couple spent several minutes at the police station, waiting for the situation to de-escalate. Once it was safe, they left in a taxi, according to the official, who was not authorized to speak publicly about the matter and did so on condition of anonymity.

"While being a public figure comes with a level of interest from the public, it should never come at the cost of anyone's safety," the couple's office said in a statement.

Bruce Cotler, the president of the New York Press Photographers Association, said the way

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photographers allegedly acted Tuesday night violated the basic photojournalism principle of covering news "as documentarians and observers" and the code of ethics to which his members and "any press photographer with respect for themselves and the profession" are expected to adhere.

The award presentation was Meghan's first public appearance since she skipped the coronation of her father-in-law King Charles III earlier this month in order to stay at home in California for her son Prince Archie's fourth birthday. Harry attended the coronation.

The gala kicked off the Ms. Foundation's largest fundraising campaign ever — \$100 million over the next 12 months — that will be used to further the organization's equity-centered initiatives and its mission of advancing women's collective power.

With her mother, Doria Ragland, in the audience, Meghan recounted how Ms. Magazine was always in their house and how it affected her world view.

"It allowed me to recognize that part of my greater value and purpose in life was to advocate for those who felt unheard, to stand up to injustice, and to not be afraid of saying what is true and what is just and what is right," she said, looking over at Ms. Foundation co-founder Gloria Steinem.

In a statement, the Ms. Foundation said it was "absolutely horrified" about what happened and that "Everyone, especially the media, must do better."

Harry, the younger son of King Charles III, and the former actress Meghan Markle married at Windsor Castle in 2018. They stepped down as working royals in 2020, citing what they described as the unbearable intrusions and racist attitudes of the British media.

Harry's fury at the media has been building for years. He blames an overly aggressive press for the death of his mother, and also accuses the media of hounding Meghan.

"My deepest fear is history repeating itself," Harry said in a 2019 statement when Meghan filed suit against the publisher of the Mail on Sunday.

Harry has made it his mission to reform the press and is currently suing three British tabloid publishers over alleged phone hacking and other unlawful snooping. Meghan won an invasion of privacy case in 2021 against the publisher of the Daily Mail.

Security for Harry and Meghan has been an issue since the British government stripped them of protection when they moved to California in 2020 and it figures in three of his legal cases against the government and tabloid press.

The pursuit in New York occurred the same day a lawyer for Harry argued in a London court that he should be able to challenge a government decision denying him the right to pay police for his own security in the U.K.

Harry has argued his safety was "compromised due to the absence of police protection" during a short visit to the U.K. in July 2021, when his car was chased by photographers as he left a charity event.

The couple have said they funded their own security after former President Donald Trump said the U.S. government wouldn't pay to protect them.

Singh, the cab driver, said it was one of the couple's private security guards who flagged him down as he drove on 67th Street near the police station. Singh pulled the yellow taxi to the curb and in came Harry, Meghan and her mother.

The royals were about to give their destination when a garbage truck blocked their path, Singh said. Instead, one of them told him to circle back to the precinct.

A video posted by TMZ showed the couple in a yellow cab stuck in traffic several blocks away from the ballroom, as photographers recorded them through the windows. The cab was being escorted by NYPD vehicles with flashing lights.

"They didn't say much," Singh said. "They just asked my name and then after that Harry said thanks and have a good day."

They paid \$17 in fare — and left a generous tip.

"It was pretty good, man," Singh told The Associated Press. "They gave me a \$50."

"I mean, when I'm going around the block that's more than enough."

Kirka reported from London. Associated Press reporters Jill Lawless and Brian Melley in London; Julie Walker in New York; and researcher Rhonda Shafner in New York contributed to this report.

## **DeSantis signs bills targeting drag shows, transgender kids and the use of bathrooms and pronouns**

By BRENDAN FARRINGTON Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis signed bills Wednesday that ban gender-affirming care for minors, target drag shows, restrict discussion of personal pronouns in schools and force people to use certain bathrooms.

DeSantis has made anti-LGBTQ+ legislation a large part of his agenda as he prepares to seek the Republican presidential nomination. He signed the bills in front of a cheering crowd at the evangelical Cambridge Christian School in Tampa. The ceremony had a campaign-like feel, with DeSantis tossing Sharpies to a crowd, as opposed to when he privately signed measures on abortion and gun rights.

Democrats opposed the bills, and LGBTQ+ rallies were held at the Capitol during the session that ended two weeks ago. But Republicans have a super-majority in both chambers and easily approved the bills for DeSantis' signature.

"It's kind of sad that we even have some of these discussions," DeSantis told the crowd, standing behind a lectern with a sign reading "Let Kids Be Kids."

DeSantis presented a narrative that expert panels in the nation's major medical associations have said is false, such as the idea that children are routinely being "mutilated." While he said he is protecting parents' rights, his opponents say he is denying the rights of parents with transgender kids.

"They have cloaked themselves in being the party of less government and parental rights, and what we're seeing now is the total opposite," said Democratic state Sen. Shevrin Jones, who is gay. "Every other parent has the right to raise their child the way that they want to as long as your child is not gay, trans, bisexual. That's freedom for some parents, but not for all parents."

The gender care law also bans the use of state money for gender-affirming care and places new restrictions on adults seeking treatment.

Three Florida parents have asked a federal court to issue a temporary restraining order immediately blocking the new law's enforcement. Attorneys for the families, who have a pending challenge to the state Boards of Medicine and Osteopathic Medicine, will be in court on Friday to argue that their children should be able to receive medical care as the case continues. The families are represented by Southern Legal Counsel, GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders, the National Center for Lesbian Rights and the Human Rights Campaign.

Planned Parenthood immediately started canceling gender-affirming care appointments after the bill was signed as the organization assesses the law's implications.

Transgender medical treatment for children and teenagers is increasingly under attack in many states and it has lately been subject to restrictions or outright bans. But it has been available in the United States for more than a decade and is endorsed by major medical associations as appropriate care for people diagnosed with gender dysphoria. Their guidelines generally prevent surgery for minors.

Treatment typically begins with an evaluation for the distress caused when gender identity

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doesn't match a person's assigned sex. With parental consent, persistent dysphoria can be treated with hormones, but typically not until age 16. The guidelines also say surgery should be reserved for people 18 and older.

But DeSantis spoke to applause at the bill-signing.

"We never did this through all of human history until like, what, two weeks ago? Now this is something? They're having third-graders declare pronouns? We're not doing the pronoun Olympics in Florida," DeSantis said.

The gender-affirming care ban and the law targeting drag shows go into effect immediately. The bathroom restrictions and the law banning schools from forcing children to "provide his or her preferred personal title or pronouns" take effect July 1.

Jones said the governor's choice of venue displayed the unpopularity of his campaign platform.

"If he's so confident in his policies, don't go hiding behind signing the bills at a Christian school or place where you're more prone to get praise for your bigotry," Jones said. "Do it out in the community."

Republican Rep. Randy Fine, who sponsored the ban on gender-affirming care for minors, invoked his religion to defend the state's actions.

"God does not make mistakes with our children," Fine said.

Jones called Fine's take on the Bible disingenuous.

"For anyone to use Scripture in the same breath as you are being discriminatory and hateful towards a community of people, it don't work like that," Jones said. "You can't take a book that was built on love and turn it around and fit your narrative."

## **FACT FOCUS: Videos of empty store aisles are unrelated to Florida's immigration bill**

By KARENA PHAN Associated Press

A sweeping immigration bill recently signed into law by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis is sparking fears of deserted workplaces – and barren grocery shelves.

The new law, set to take effect in July, will require businesses with more than 25 staffers to verify that their employees can legally work in the U.S. through a federal system, among other restrictions. Critics have said the change could lead to a shortage of workers on farms and construction sites.

Amid outcry, a pair of videos circulating widely on social media are claiming to show empty supermarkets in the Sunshine State, purportedly due to truck drivers boycotting deliveries to the state in protest of the immigration overhaul.

But the footage is unrelated. And while some truckers have posted on social media calling on drivers to curb deliveries to Florida, immigration advocates say it's too soon to tell if there will be any widespread action.

Here are the facts.

**CLAIM:** Videos show empty grocery store shelves in Florida because truckers are boycotting the state over a new immigration law.

**THE FACTS:** While both clips show Florida stores, neither has anything to do with the new law or a boycott. One is from October and shows shortages during Hurricane Ian, while another shows a recent refrigeration issue at a single Walmart Supercenter.

The first video shows a shopper panning their camera around the refrigerators and freezers at a Winn-Dixie, while saying "Supermarkets are empty in Florida. There's nothing, nothing, look."

"Undocumented workers are leaving Florida in droves. It's affecting farmers, hotels, restaurants, construction, lawn companies, & especially grocery stores w perishables," reads



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one Twitter post of the footage, which had received more than 6,000 likes as of Wednesday. "Understandably many Hispanic truck drivers are refusing to enter the state. Nicely done DeSantis!"

However, the video was originally posted on TikTok in Oct. 2, 2022, after Hurricane Ian made landfall. The caption on the original post includes the hashtag "hurricaneian" and says, "no food in the Winn-Dixie in Florida on 17 and 92," referring to a store in Fern Park, a suburb of Orlando.

The second video shared on social media platforms shows a large sign that reads "Packaged Deli" and above a partially empty refrigerated aisle. "No groceries smh sad these truckers weren't playing when they said they were not delivering anything to Florida !!!" reads the caption on a TikTok post tagging the location as Palmetto, Florida, with more than 800,000 likes.

The signage in the video matches a Walmart store in Palmetto, but the grocery chain said the lack of groceries in the clip was unrelated to any supply issues.

Charles Crowson, a spokesperson for Walmart, said in an email that it was a result of a refrigerator malfunction and should be repaired within the next few days.

While the videos are unrelated to the recent legislation, there have been posts on social media from Latino truck drivers responding to the new laws by threatening to boycott deliveries to the state and calling on others to do so.

In addition to the new rules around E-Verify, the law would provide \$12 million for DeSantis' migrant relocation initiative, require hospitals that accept Medicaid to include a citizenship question on its intake forms and prohibit local governments from providing money to organizations that issue identification cards to immigrants lacking permanent legal status in the country. It would also invalidate out-of-state driver's licenses for that same group.

Immigration advocacy groups tell the AP it's too early to have data on the impacts of the law since it was only signed last week and does not go into effect until July 1.

Thomas Kennedy, a spokesperson with the Florida Immigrant Coalition, said he was aware of the truckers' boycott threats, but said it is too soon to say if there will be large-scale actions.

"It remains to be seen, I mean, you know, boycotts and strikes and work stoppages take a lot of time, a lot of a lot of organization. And this is bubbling up. But again, the law hasn't even gone into effect," said Kennedy. "There's definitely the ingredients and some energy there."

Kennedy said the coalition has heard anecdotal reports that many migrants are afraid to show up to work since the law was signed and there was apprehension in the community.

The new legislation will impact construction and factory workers, according to Bethzaida Olivera Vazquez, who is the national director of policy and legislation for The League of United Latin American Citizens, which is the oldest Latino civil rights group in the U.S.

"This law would have a very harmful effect for businesses," said Vazquez. "If there were to be a boycott among truckers the impacts could be significant."

This is part of AP's effort to address widely shared misinformation, including work with outside companies and organizations to add factual context to misleading content that is circulating online. Learn more about fact-checking at AP.

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

By KEVIN MCGILL Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Lawyers seeking to preserve pregnant women's access to a drug used in the most common method of abortion got pushback Wednesday from appellate judges with a history of supporting abortion restrictions.

A three-judge panel of the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals heard arguments over whether the Food and Drug Administration approval of mifepristone should be revoked more than two decades after it was granted. The case is likely to wind up at the Supreme Court, which already intervened to keep the drug available while the legal fight winds through the courts. The high court's decision came after a Texas-based judge revoked the drug's approval.

Biden administration attorney Sarah Harrington opened by calling U.S. District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk's April 7 ruling an "unprecedented and unjustified attack on the FDA's scientific expertise."

"I hate to cut you off so early, but you said, 'unprecedented,'" Judge James Ho said, referring to an unrelated case that was argued Tuesday. "We had a challenge to the FDA just yesterday."

"Yes, but I don't think there's ever been a court that has vacated the FDA's determination that a drug is safe to be on the market. ... It's not a court's role to come in and second-guess that expertise," Harrington told Ho, who was appointed to the court by former President Donald Trump.

There is no precedent for a U.S. court overturning the approval of a drug that the FDA has deemed safe and effective. While new drug safety issues often emerge after FDA approval, the agency is required to monitor medicines on the market, evaluate emerging issues and take action to protect U.S. patients. Congress delegated that responsibility to the FDA — not the courts— more than a century ago.

Arguments Wednesday went on for two hours, with Harrington and Jessica Ellsworth, an attorney for Danco Laboratories, telling the panel that the doctors and groups who brought the lawsuit did not have a right to sue because they failed to prove they have been or would be harmed by the approval of mifepristone. Their claims that they would be forced to treat people who suffer complications from mifepristone — perhaps even completing abortions when the drug fails — are "speculative," Harrington said.

All three judges seemed skeptical of that argument.

"It just strikes me that what the FDA has done in making this more available ... is you've made it much more likely that patients are going to go to emergency care or a medical clinic where one of these doctors is a member," said Judge Cory Wilson, another Trump appointee.

Harrington disputed that, saying mifepristone is extremely safe, rarely results in complications, and that doctors could cite their conscience and refuse to participate in procedures.

But Erin Hawley, an attorney arguing for the anti-mifepristone plaintiffs, insisted that doctors opposed to abortion can be forced to violate their consciences if they are called upon to remove fetuses from the wombs of women who have had an incomplete medical abortion.

"They allege that they feel complicit in an elective abortion by being forced to complete that procedure," she said in answer to questions from Judge Jennifer Walker Elrod, an appointee of President George W. Bush.

The case comes to the appeals court 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.

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Ho twice referred an "FDA can do no wrong" theme in the pro-mifepristone arguments. "We are allowed to look at the FDA just like we're allowed to look at any agency. That's the role of the courts," Ho told Ellsworth, who went on to say that the FDA has approved drugs later found to have safety problems.

The third judge hearing the case was Jennifer Walker Elrod, a George W. Bush nominee. Abortion opponents sued in November in federal court in Amarillo, Texas, where Kacsmaryk, a Trump nominee, presides. An appellate panel voted 2-1 to narrow, but not completely block, Kacsmaryk's ruling.

The panel's April 13 decision said the abortion opponents appeared to be barred by time limits from challenging the initial 2000 approval. But the panel said adjustments made in later years — among them allowing the drug to be sent via mail and administered without a physician present — could still be revoked.

Wednesday's hearing also dealt with the time limit issue, and whether the FDA's later-year changes reset the clock and made full approval ripe for review.

"Is every time the FDA going to relax some prior restriction, requirement or safeguard based on a history of performance, does that mean we're here on a reopening issue? I mean, how do you draw that line?" Wilson asked Hawley.

"Absolutely not, your honor," she replied.

Other mifepristone rules that have changed since the drug's initial approval include extending the time it can be used from seven to 10 weeks of pregnancy, and reducing the dosage needed to safely end a pregnancy.

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.

Associated Press reporters Jessica Gresko and Matthew Perrone contributed to this report from Washington.

## **Biden declares 'America will not default,' says he's confident of budget deal with GOP lawmakers**

By SEUNG MIN KIM and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — An optimistic President Joe Biden declared Wednesday he is confident the U.S. will avoid an unprecedented and potentially catastrophic debt default, saying talks with congressional Republicans have been productive. He left for a G-7 summit in Japan but planned to return by the weekend in hopes of approving a solid agreement.

Biden's upbeat remarks came as a select group of negotiators began meeting to try and hammer out the final contours of a budget spending deal to unlock a path for raising the debt limit as soon June 1. That is when the Treasury Department says the U.S. could begin defaulting on its obligations and trigger financial chaos.

"I'm confident that we'll get the agreement on the budget and America will not default," Biden said from the Roosevelt Room of the White House. Later Wednesday evening, negotiations resumed behind closed doors at the Capitol.

Democrat Biden and Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy have traded blame for a debt-ceiling impasse for weeks. But Biden said of the latest White House session with congressional leaders that "everyone came to the meeting, I think, in good faith."

McCarthy was upbeat, too, though contending Biden had given ground. The president said the budget talks were still separate from the debt limit issue, but the speaker said Biden had "finally backed off" his refusal to negotiate.

"Keep working — we'll work again tonight," McCarthy told reporters later. "We're going

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to work until we can get it done.”

Biden said that every leader at Tuesday’s Oval Office meeting — Vice President Kamala Harris, McCarthy, House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. — agreed the U.S. must not default on its obligations.

“It would be catastrophic for the American economy and the American people if we didn’t pay our bills,” Biden said. “I’m confident everyone in the room agreed ... that we’re going to come together because there’s no alternative. We have to do the right thing for the country. We have to move on.”

He said he would be in “constant contact” with White House officials while at the summit in Hiroshima. He is canceling stops in Australia and Papua New Guinea that were to follow so he can return to Washington on Sunday.

Biden and McCarthy tasked a handful of representatives to work swiftly to try and close out a final deal. They include Steve Ricchetti, counselor to the president; legislative affairs director Louisa Terrell and Office of Management and Budget Director Shalanda Young for the administration, and Rep. Garret Graves, R-La., a close McCarthy ally, for the Republicans.

McCarthy, who has said he would personally be involved, said he planned to stop by the talks later Wednesday. He said he would be in Washington for the weekend while negotiations are underway.

Agreement by the negotiators would still leave any deal needing approval by Democratic Senate and Republican House.

Democrats are upset about the possibility of new work requirements for some recipients of government aid. And Republicans want much tougher budget restraints than the Democrats support.

The positive comments by Biden and McCarthy suggest they believe they can gain the backing of their parties’ lawmakers.

McCarthy was flanked Wednesday on the Capitol steps by some of the most conservative Republicans from the House and Senate in a feisty show of support.

The national debt currently stands at \$31.4 trillion. 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.

The contours of an agreement have begun to take shape, but the details of spending cuts and policy changes will make or break whether the divided Congress can strike a bipartisan deal with the White House.

In exchange for lifting the debt limit to keep paying the bills, newly majority House Republicans are trying to extract steep budget caps of no more than 1% growth a year over the next decade, alongside bolstered work requirements.

Negotiators are preparing to claw back some \$30 billion of unspent COVID-19 aid, now that the government has lifted the pandemic emergency. And they are working on a potential agreement for permit changes that would speed the development of energy projects that both Republicans and Democrats want, though the details remain daunting.

But Democrats are not at all willing to accept the 10-year cap on spending that Republicans approved in their own House bill, and the Democrats are instead pushing for a shorter window of budget cuts.

Biden is facing fierce blowback from progressive Democrats after he opened the door to tougher work requirements. But he insisted Wednesday any new work requirements would be of “no consequence” and that he’s not willing to impact health programs, presumably referring to Medicaid.

Asked about that, the Republicans behind McCarthy — who support more work requirements on Medicaid, food stamps and cash assistance programs — broke out in laughter

at the Capitol.

The Republicans scoffed aloud as helicopters with the presumably departing Biden flew overhead.

McCarthy, who depended on Donald Trump's backing to become the new speaker, still has work to do to keep his narrow House majority in line for any final deal, particularly among the hardline Freedom Caucus conservatives who almost blocked his election earlier this year for the gavel.

Former President Trump has encouraged Republicans to "do a default" if they don't get everything they want from Biden.

"Bipartisanship is needed," Schumer said Wednesday. "It's the only way to go."

As backup on Wednesday, House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries launched a process that would force a vote on raising the debt limit.

It's a cumbersome legislative discharge procedure, but Jeffries urged House Democrats to sign on to the measure in hopes of gathering the 218 majority backers including Republicans needed to put it in motion.

"Emerging from the White House meeting, I am hopeful that a real pathway exists to find an acceptable, bipartisan resolution that prevents a default," Jeffries said in a letter to colleagues.

"However, given the impending June 1 deadline and urgency of the moment, it is important that all legislative options be pursued in the event that no agreement is reached."

## **Jacksonville elects first female mayor, giving Florida Democrats a rare win in GOP-dominated state**

By CURT ANDERSON and BRENDAN FARRINGTON Associated Press

Democrat Donna Deegan's decisive win over a Republican in the open Jacksonville mayor's race will make her the first woman to hold the job in the Florida city's history, sparking a flicker of hope for a besieged Democratic Party that has few levers of power in a state dominated by the GOP.

Deegan, 62, a former television anchor who runs a breast cancer support nonprofit, earned 52% of the vote in Tuesday's election to defeat Republican Daniel Davis, CEO of the JAX Chamber business group, according to unofficial results. About 217,000 people voted in the race, for a turnout of 33%.

Alvin Brown's victory in 2011 was the last time a Democrat won the mayor's race, and he was defeated in 2015 by Republican Lenny Curry. Brown was the only Democratic mayor in the past 30 years. Curry could not run again this year because of term limits, and Deegan will take over July 1.

"We have made history tonight, folks. It's a brand new day for Jacksonville, Florida," Deegan told cheering supporters Tuesday night. "I am so excited about creating a city that sees everybody. That brings everybody in. That gives everybody a voice."

For Florida Democrats, the victory provides something to build on in a state where Republicans hold every statewide elected office, have supermajorities in the Legislature and recently surpassed Democrats in voter registration. Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis, expected soon to announce his run for president, won re-election last year by nearly 20 percentage points.

In April, DeSantis called the Democratic Party "a hollow shell. It's like a dead carcass on the side of the road" after a decisive GOP win in 2022 that including flipping traditionally blue Miami-Dade County to the Republican side.

Democrats know they have a steep hill to climb to return to relevance. While Jacksonville

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was firmly Republican two decades ago, shifting demographics have made it more of a swing city. And the way Jacksonville votes isn't necessarily a harbinger for next year's election. Jacksonville makes up almost all of Duval County, which has supported the eventual loser in three of the last four presidential elections.

Still, any victory is enough to excite the party faithful.

"There haven't been many good days lately, so @FlaDems have every right to cheer tonight's big victory in the Jacksonville mayor's race," Palm Beach County State Attorney Dave Aronberg, a former Democratic state legislator, said Tuesday on Twitter.

Others were even more effusive: "Florida is a bright purple state!" tweeted former U.S. Rep. Debbie Mucarsel-Powell.

Republican Party of Florida Chairman Christian Ziegler said there were several factors that helped Democrats, including a voter registration advantage and a brutal primary between Republicans seeking the job. And he noted Deegan is a well-known face in the region from her television days.

"Deegan spent her entire career in the living rooms of Jacksonville families," he said.

But Ziegler said it's silly for Democrats to relate this to future success statewide and that Republicans are in good shape for 2024.

"Using some municipal race with super-low turnout in an off-year in a Democrat area and trying to use that for some sort of momentum for an on-year race statewide is pretty ridiculous. But obviously they're going to try to celebrate their win any way they can," he said. "We're going to use this as motivation that you can't get complacent in the state of Florida."

Still, former President Donald Trump tried to spin the election as a failure for DeSantis, who endorsed Davis along with Sen. Rick Scott and other Republicans.

"Wow! In a big upset, the DeSanctimonious backed Republican candidate for Mayor of Jacksonville, Florida, LOST. This is a shocker. If they would have asked me to Endorse, he would have won, easily. Too proud to do so. Fools! This is a BIG LOSS for the Republican Party," Trump said on his Truth Social media platform.

Trump has had his share of endorsement losers as well, such as 2022 failures Herschel Walker in the Georgia Senate race and Kari Lake for Arizona governor.

Deegan, who unsuccessfully ran for Congress in 2020, said she plans to focus on upgrading infrastructure, providing affordable housing, building an economy that works for everyone and improving access to healthcare. More than that, she said in her victory speech that she would "not to go with division. We would go with unity."

"I wanted love to win," Deegan added.

Jacksonville has swung between Republicans and Democrats over the years; President Joe Biden carried the city in 2020, while DeSantis easily won in 2022.

Also notable about Deegan's win is that three of Florida's largest jurisdictions — Jacksonville, Tampa and Miami-Dade County — will now be run by Democratic women.

"Everybody said it could not be done in Jacksonville, Florida," Deegan said. "We did it because we brought the people inside."

In Colorado Springs, Colorado, an independent candidate defeated a longtime Republican office holder on Tuesday to become the first elected Black mayor. Colorado Springs is the state's second-largest city and has a history of being a conservative stronghold.

The victory of Yemi Mobolade, a Nigerian immigrant and entrepreneur who has never held elected office before, is the latest political setback for Republicans in a state that was once a battleground state. But that doesn't mean a shift to the left.

Mobolade, who picked up the endorsements of some prominent Republicans, focused on issues like hiring more police officers, creating affordable housing, conserving water and

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cutting red tape for businesses.

He said people he met while campaigning are interested in solutions to everyday problems that respond to their needs, not partisanship.

Anderson reported from St. Petersburg and Farrington from Tallahassee.

## **In Cannes, 'Rust' is looking for buyers and Alec Baldwin has a new project**

By The Associated Press undefined

A year and a half after the fatal shooting of its cinematographer Halyna Hutchins, the Alec Baldwin Western "Rust" is back on the market at the Cannes Film Festival, shopping for international buyers.

Last month, "Rust" resumed shooting in Montana to finish the independently financed production that shut down following Hutchins' death in October 2021. Matthew Hutchins, her widower, is serving as an executive producer on the film as part of a settlement over a wrongful death lawsuit.

The Cannes film market, which is centered in the Palais des Festivals but has no relation to the official festival lineup, is where "Rust" was first formed as a production in 2000. Goodfellas, a sales company formerly known as Wild Bunch International, is handling sales.

"Rust" still lacks North American distribution.

New Mexico prosecutors dropped criminal charges against Baldwin in April. Involuntary manslaughter charges against Baldwin were abandoned three weeks after a new prosecutor team took over the case, though the same charge currently remains for weapons supervisor Hannah Gutierrez-Reed. Assistant director David Halls has pleaded no contest to a misdemeanor charge of negligent use of a deadly weapon.

Now, producers are seeking buyers for a film synonymous with Hutchins' on-set death. Director Joel Souza was also wounded.

"This is an unprecedented film in regards to the circumstances," producer Ryan Donnell Smith told The Hollywood Reporter. "We're trying to keep realistic expectations but shepherded this in the best way we can."

Baldwin, though, has booked another film circulating the Cannes market. The actor is to join the cast of "Kent State," a dramatization of the 1970 killing of four students by the National Guard protesting the Vietnam War on the Ohio college campus. In the film, written and to be directed by Karen Slade, Baldwin is to play Robert I. White, Kent State's then president.

## **Ecuador's president dismisses legislature as it tries to oust him, in a move that promises turmoil**

By REGINA GARCIA CANO and GONZALO SOLANO Associated Press

QUITO, Ecuador (AP) — The president of Ecuador dismissed the legislature Wednesday in a move that promised more turmoil around a conservative leader who has been unable to enact a business-friendly agenda as the South American country experiences an alarming rise in crime.

In disbanding the National Assembly, Guillermo Lasso made first use of the Ecuador presidency's nuclear option under the constitution in conflicts with the legislative branch. His first move was to push a package of tax cuts, but criticism was swift and an appeal to stop him was filed hours after he announced his decision in a televised message in which he accused lawmakers of focusing "on destabilizing the government."

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"This is the best possible decision," he said after describing his move as a way to give Ecuadorians "the power to decide their future in the next elections."

Armed soldiers then surrounded the National Assembly in the capital. Lasso had been locked in a showdown with legislators who wanted to impeach him for not stopping a deal between the state-owned oil transport company and a private tanker company, accusations he denies.

Hours later, the president of the National Electoral Council, Diana Atamaint, said that its office will set the date for the next elections in no more than seven days. She anticipated that Ecuadorians would go to the polls to elect a new president and a new Assembly in no more than 90 days.

Lasso's Wednesday decision prompted Ecuador's top military leader to warn that the armed forces would crack down on any violence.

The president appeared to have the support of the armed forces but faced opposition from Indigenous Ecuadorians. Protests by the powerful Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities have nearly paralyzed the country in recent years, and the group's leader appeared outraged.

Lasso "launched a cowardly self-coup with the help of the police and the armed forces, without citizen support," Leonidas Iza Salazar said.

Lasso can now govern for up to six months by decree under the oversight of Ecuador's Constitutional Court.

Lawmakers had accused Lasso of not having intervened to end a contract between the state-owned oil transport company and a private tanker company. They argued Lasso knew the contract was full of irregularities and would cost the state millions in losses.

During a legislative session Tuesday, Lasso noted that the contract predated his administration. He also said that the state-owned company experienced losses of \$6 million a year before he took office, and that it has seen \$180 million in profits under his watch, something he has rejected as untrue.

Called the "crossed death" because it cuts short the mandate of both the assembly and the president, the option to disband the congress and temporarily rule by decree was established in Ecuador's constitution in 2008 as a means of avoiding protracted periods of political paralysis.

His move can be appealed to the Constitutional Court, which has traditionally taken a long time to resolve any petition it receives. The Social Christian Party, which supported impeachment proceedings, filed a petition Wednesday arguing that there are no grounds for the dissolution of the Assembly.

After Lasso announced his decision, the head of the Joint Command of the Armed Forces, Gen. Nelson Proaño, called on Ecuadorians to maintain respect for the law and warned against rupturing the constitutional order through violence.

If violence erupts, the armed forces and police "will act firmly," he said.

In neighboring Peru, conflicts between the opposition-led legislature and president also led to attempts to oust each other last year. Then-President Pedro Castillo tried to dissolve Congress and head off his own impeachment in December. Lawmakers quickly voted him out of power and law enforcement arrested him, which resulted in months of deadly protests carried out for the most part by Indigenous peoples and peasants.

The National Electoral Council now has seven days to call presidential and legislative elections, which must be held within 90 days. Those elected will finish the terms of Lasso and the lawmakers he ousted, which had been set to end in May 2025. Lasso can choose to run in the election.

Lasso, a former banker, was elected in 2021 and clashed from the start with a strong



opposition in the 137-member National Assembly. He defended himself before Congress on Tuesday, insisting there was no proof or testimony of wrongdoing.

Dismissed Assemblywoman Paola Cabezas told the Ecuavisa television network that her party, which was a main force behind the impeachment process, "will abide by the decree." "We will go home ... This is an opportunity for us to get out of this crisis," she said.

Lasso's governing powers are now limited. Constitutional attorney Ismael Quintana explained that the president can only address economic and administrative matters, and the Constitutional Court will have to approve his decisions.

Shortly after dissolving the Assembly, Lasso announced that he signed his first emergency decree, reducing taxes for hundreds of thousands of families.

Ecuador has experienced an increase in drug-related violence, including several massacres in prisons over the past two years. Kidnappings, extortion and petty crime are also on the rise, angering Ecuadorians across the country who feel the government has not done enough to stop this.

Will Freeman, fellow for Latin America studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, said mass protests are likely in the coming days.

"It's also hard to imagine Lasso is making this move without the tacit support of top brass in the military," he said. "In the past, protests have tended to turn destructive quickly — and security forces have also cracked down."

The U.S. State Department in a statement said it supports "Ecuador's democratic institutions and processes" and urged "government institutions, civil society, and citizens to ensure democratic processes are carried out for the benefit" of Ecuadorians.

García Cano reported from Mexico City. Associated Press writer Gisela Salomon contributed to this report from Miami.

## Effort to expel Santos falters as Republicans vote to send measure to Ethics Committee

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A resolution to expel Rep. George Santos, R-N.Y., from Congress was referred to the House Ethics Committee on Wednesday as Republicans successfully sidestepped an effort to force them into a vote that could have narrowed their already slim four-seat majority.

The House voted along party lines, 221-204, to refer the matter to the ethics panel, with Santos himself joining his GOP colleagues in voting to do so.

The freshman 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.

Rep. Robert Garcia, D-Calif., introduced a resolution in February to expel Santos, something the House has only done twice in recent decades. He sought to force a vote on that resolution under a process that left three options for Republicans: a vote on the resolution, a move to table, or a referral to committee.

House Speaker Kevin McCarthy chose the third option, much to the chagrin of Democrats who described it as a "complete copout." They noted that the ethics panel is already investigating Santos and that it was time for Republican House members who have called for Santos to resign to back their words with action.

"It is simply an effort for the Republicans to avoid having to take an up-or-down vote on whether or not George Santos belongs here," said Rep. Dan Goldman, D-N.Y.

Santos made clear to reporters after the vote he has no intention of resigning. As he spoke on the Capitol steps, he was heckled by Democratic Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Jamaal Bowman. Bowman yelled, "Resign, save yourself, have some dignity."

"I understand that politics is complicated, but the reality is there is a procedure," Santos said. "You can't be judge, jury and executioner. I have a right, a constitutional right, to defend myself and I will do that. And I look forward to doing that. I look forward to seeing the process play out."

Democrats appealed to Republican lawmakers from New York for support. Many have been highly critical of Santos, and face the prospect of Democrats trying to link them to Santos in next year's general election.

"I say to you, if you vote for this motion to refer it to the Ethics Committee, you are complicit in George Santos' fraud and you are voting to make sure that he continues to be a member of Congress," Goldman said.

Rep. Anthony D'Esposito, R-N.Y., made the motion to refer the expulsion resolution to the ethics panel. He said he was personally in favor of Santos being expelled, but added that "regrettably," there were not enough votes to meet the two-thirds threshold necessary.

"I firmly believe this is the quickest way of ridding the House of Representatives of this scourge on government," D'Esposito said.

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.

The Department of Justice often asks the ethics panel to pause its investigations when a member of Congress has been indicted, but there has been no announcement of that kind from the committee regarding Santos.

Associated Press writer Stephen Groves contributed to this report.

## **She killed a man while he was raping her, and a court in Mexico sentenced her to 6 years in prison**

By MEGAN JANETSKY and FERNANDA PESCE Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — A Mexican woman who killed a man defending herself when he attacked and raped her in 2021 was sentenced to more than six years in prison, a decision her legal defense called "discriminatory" and vowed to appeal Tuesday.

The ruling against Roxana Ruiz spurred anger from experts and feminist groups who said it speaks to the depth of gender-based violence and Mexico's poor record of bringing perpetrators of sexual violence to justice.

"It would be a bad precedent if this sentence were to hold. It's sending the message to women that, you know what, the law says you can defend yourself, but only to a point," said Angel Carrera, her defense lawyer. "He raped you, but you don't have the right to do anything."

The Associated Press does not normally identify sexual assault victims, but Ruiz has given her permission to be identified and participates in public demonstrations led by activists who support her.

While the Mexico State court found Monday that Ruiz had been raped, it said the 23-year-old was guilty of homicide with "excessive use of legitimate defense," adding that hitting the man in the head would have been enough to defend herself. Ruiz was also ordered to

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pay more than \$16,000 in reparations to the family of the man who raped her.

In May 2021, Ruiz was working selling french fries in Nezahualcoyotl, one of the 11 municipalities in the Mexico State with an ongoing gender alert for femicides and another one for forced disappearances of women.

While having a beer with a friend, Ruiz, a Indigenous Mixteca woman and a single mother from the state of Oaxaca, met a man she had seen around the neighborhood. After hanging out, he offered to walk her home and later asked to stay the night because it was late and he was far from home.

Ruiz agreed to let him sleep on a mattress on the floor. But while she slept he climbed onto her bed, hit her, tore off her clothes and raped her, according to Carrera, Ruiz's legal defense. Ruiz fought back and hitting him in the nose, and he threatened to kill her. In the struggle to free herself she killed him in self defense, Carrera said.

In a panic, Ruiz put the man's body in a bag and dragged it out to the street where passing police arrested her.

Despite telling police she had been raped, Carrera said a forensic exam was never taken, a crucial step in prosecuting sexual violence cases. Instead, an officer responded that she probably wanted to have sex with the man at first and then changed her mind, he said.

"I regret what I did, but if I hadn't done it I would be dead today," Ruiz told the AP in an interview last year, adding, "It's evident that the state wants to shut us up, wants us to be submissive, wants us closed up inside, wants us dead."

Women's rights groups have repeatedly accused Mexican authorities of revictimizing survivors and failing to judge cases with a gender perspective.

Ruiz spent nine months in jail on charges of homicide with excess of legitimate self-defense, and was finally released to await trial.

The court responded to public outcry of the sentencing Wednesday, saying the judge did examine the case with a gender perspective. It also noted that a blow to the head during the struggle left the man unconscious at one point, saying the court found that was "enough to contain the physical aggression."

The woman's lawyer said the court's defense "is totally false." Carrera said that while there was some evidence the attacker received a blow to the head, it was never proven the man lost consciousness. He said the defense hopes to challenge the court's statement in its appeal.

Despite the sentencing, Ruiz still remains free pending further judicial steps.

Nearly half of Mexican women have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime, government data shows.

In 2022, the Mexican government registered a total of 3,754 women – an average of 10 a day – who were intentionally killed, a significant jump from the year before. Only a third were investigated as femicides.

That number is likely just a fraction of the real number due to rising disappearances and lack of reporting of violence in the country.

Angelica Ospina, gender fellow for International Crisis Group in Mexico, said she worries that the sentencing may empower victimizers while discouraging women from reporting gender-based violence or defend themselves.

The case points to just how "normalized" gender-based violence is in Mexico and other parts of Latin America, Ospina said.

"When a woman defends herself, the system is particularly efficient in processing and sentencing her without taking into consideration the conditions in which she killed the man," Ospina said.

Meanwhile, outside the courtroom, women carried signs and chanted "justice!" A tearful

Ruiz stood before the crowd, thanking feminist groups and the women who had supported her through the years-long judicial process.

Speaking to the crowd, she thought of her 4-year-old son.

"My son, I hope to see him again. I hope to stay with him, to be the one who watches him grow up," Ruiz said.

## **New rule targets college programs that leave grads with low income, high debt**

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — College programs that leave graduates underpaid or buried in loans would be cut off from federal money under a proposal issued Wednesday by the Biden administration, but the rules would apply only to for-profit colleges and a tiny fraction of programs at traditional universities.

The Education Department is calling it a significant step toward accountability for the nation's colleges. With more students questioning the value of a degree, the measure aims to weed out low-performing programs and assure students the cost of tuition will pay off in the long run.

"Investing in a college degree or career certificate is supposed to pay off — instead, too many students are getting ripped off every single year," Education Secretary Miguel Cardona said in a call with reporters.

Opponents, however, say the scope is too narrow to help most students.

Known as gainful employment, it revives an Obama-era policy that was dismantled by the Trump administration before it took full effect. It was enacted amid a federal crackdown on for-profit colleges that contributed to the closure of several chains accused of fraud, including Corinthian Colleges and ITT Technical Institute.

Like the Obama rule, the new proposal would apply to all programs at for-profit colleges, but only to certificate programs at traditional universities. Opponents say it creates a double standard, with the potential to kill off hundreds of programs at for-profit colleges while leaving other programs unscathed even if they leave students buried in debt.

"The rule unfairly targets programs at proprietary institutions and fails to account for the unique challenges facing students and communities that career-oriented programs serve," said Jason Altmire, president and CEO of Career Education Colleges and Universities, an industry trade group.

The proposal could take effect no sooner than July 2024. The federal government must first collect and review public comment. It's sure to draw outrage from Republicans in Congress, who have called the policy an attack on the entire for-profit college industry.

The proposal would put college programs through two tests to determine whether they're serving students well.

The first test would check whether a program's graduates carry heavy student debt compared to their earnings. Programs would pass if their graduates have annual loan payments averaging no more than 8% of their total income, or 20% of their discretionary income.

A second test would check whether at least half of a program's graduates earn more than working adults in their state with only a high school diploma.

Programs that fail at least one test would need to warn students that they're at risk of losing federal money. Those that fail the same test twice in any three-year period would be cut off from federal aid. That amounts to a death sentence for most programs, especially at for-profit colleges that rely heavily on students who use federal financial aid to pay for tuition.

The Education Department says the rule would help an estimated 700,000 students who

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would otherwise enroll at one of nearly 1,800 low-performing colleges.

Cardona said the agency can't keep sending taxpayer money to programs "that cost students an arm and a leg and then leave them in a ditch, unable to climb the economic ladder. It's not right and it's not sustainable."

A separate part of the proposal would release new information showing students the true cost of programs across all types of colleges. The Education Department would publish data detailing the amount students pay for individual programs — including, tuition, fees and books — along with their student debt levels and earnings after graduation.

"We need to equip students and families with the facts before they take on a mountain of debt," Cardona said.

The rule is expected to put many for-profit college programs in jeopardy. At nonprofit colleges, it would have no effect beyond certificate programs, which often focus on career training. It would not apply, for example, to bachelor's degrees or most graduate programs.

Supporters say the policy targets the riskiest programs. Students who attend for-profit colleges typically borrow more and default on their loans at higher rates. Student Defense, an advocacy group, called it a strong proposal that establishes "basic rules of the road" for colleges.

The proposal comes at a time of flagging faith in higher education. Fewer young Americans have been going to college, a shift that experts attribute to rising tuition costs, a strong job market and the shortcomings of pandemic schooling.

Hoping to restore public trust, the Education Department has been exploring how to hold colleges accountable for the outcomes of their graduates.

The agency is separately working on a list that would identify low-value programs across all colleges. It would publicize the list as a resource for students, but without the threat of a financial penalty.

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

## **Every state offers victim compensation. For the Longs and other Black families, it often isn't fair**

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 of the decision from what was known as the New York Crime Victims Board. "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.

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

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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

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

An Office of Victims Services employee approached Long after the meeting. She told Long the program had undergone an overhaul. There were no longer five board members who could make subjective decisions about claims. The program was now operating as a divi-

sion, and there had been a cultural shift within the agency in the last decade including an increased focus to reach victims of color. She convinced Long to resubmit her claim.

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.

## **Man indicted in theft of 'Wizard of Oz' ruby slippers worn by Judy Garland**

By MARGARET STAFFORD Associated Press

A man has been indicted by a grand jury on charges of stealing a pair of ruby red slippers worn by Judy Garland in "The Wizard of Oz," federal prosecutors in North Dakota say. The shoes were stolen in 2005 and recovered in a 2018 FBI sting operation, but no arrests were made at the time.

Terry Martin was indicted Tuesday with one count of theft of a major artwork, prosecutors announced Wednesday. The indictment did not provide any further information about Martin and online records do not list an attorney for him.

The Minneapolis Star-Tribune reported that Martin is 76 and lives 12 miles south of the Judy Garland Museum in Grand Rapids, Minnesota. When reached by the newspaper, he said, "I gotta go on trial. I don't want to talk to you."

Janie Heitz, executive director of the museum, told The Associated Press she was surprised the suspect lived nearby but said no one who works at the museum knows him.

Garland wore several pairs of the ruby slippers during production of the 1939 musical, but only four authentic pairs remain. When they were stolen, the slippers were insured for \$1 million but the current market value is about \$3.5 million, federal prosecutors said in a news release.

The slippers were on loan to the Judy Garland Museum in the late actor's hometown when someone climbed through a window and broke the display case, prosecutors said when they were recovered.

Heitz said she and the museum's staff were "a little bit speechless" that someone had been charged nearly two decades after the slippers were stolen.

Over the years, several enticing rewards were offered in hopes that the slippers would turn up. Law enforcement offered \$250,000 early in the case, and an anonymous donor from Arizona put up \$1 million in 2015.

The road to the missing slippers began when a man told the shoes' insurer in 2017 that he could help get them back. After a nearly year-long investigation, the FBI nabbed the shoes in Minneapolis in July 2018. At the time, the bureau said no one has been arrested or charged in the case.

On Wednesday, a summons was issued for Martin. An initial court appearance was set for June 1, and it will be via video. Terry Van Horn, spokesman for the U.S. Justice Department in North Dakota, said he could not provide any information beyond what was included in the one-paragraph-indictment.

The shoes are famously associated with one of the iconic lines in "The Wizard of Oz," as Garland's character Dorothy clicks her heels and repeats the phrase, "There's no place like home." They are made from about a dozen different materials, including wood pulp, silk



thread, gelatin, plastic and glass. Most of the ruby color comes from sequins but the bows of the shoes contain red glass beads.

The three other pairs Garland wore in the movie were held by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the Smithsonian, and a private collector.

When they were stolen, the slippers were on loan from Hollywood memorabilia collector Michael Shaw, who received an insurance payment seven years after the theft, according to the museum's director.

Heitz said the museum staff hopes the slippers will return to Garland's hometown after the legal case ends.

## **At Cannes Film Festival, Johnny Depp says he has no 'further need for Hollywood'**

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

CANNES, France (AP) — Appearing at the Cannes Film Festival the day after premiering his first film in three years, Johnny Depp said Wednesday that he has "no further need" for Hollywood.

Depp made a rare public appearance to face questions from the press following the opening-night premiere of "Jeanne du Barry," in which Depp plays King Louis XV. The French film, directed by and starring Maiwenn and featuring a French-speaking Depp, is the actor's first film since a jury last year largely sided with him in his legal battle with his ex-wife, Amber Heard.

Part of Depp's argument in that 2022 defamation trial was that he had lost work due to Heard's allegations. Heard was ordered to pay Depp \$10 million in damages, vindicating his allegations that Heard lied about Depp abusing her before and during their brief marriage. Heard was also awarded \$2 million.

"Did I feel boycotted by Hollywood? You'd have to not have a pulse to feel like, 'No. None of this is happening. It's a weird joke,'" Depp told reporters. "When you're asked to resign from a film you're doing because of something that is merely a function of vowels and consonants floating in the air, yes, you feel boycotted."

Depp was most notably asked to step down from the "Harry Potter" spin-off franchise "Fantastic Beasts." Now, though, he says he's not interested in returning to studio projects.

"I don't feel boycotted by Hollywood, because I don't think about Hollywood. I don't have much further need for Hollywood, myself," Depp said. "It's a strange, funny time where everybody would love to be able to be themselves, but they can't. They must fall in line with the person in front of them. If you want to live that life, I wish you the best."

"Jeanne du Barry" opened Tuesday in French cinemas. It doesn't have U.S. distribution as of yet.

The "Jeanne du Barry" press conference was among the most circus-like in recent years at Cannes. The press conference began unusually late and started with Maiwenn and other cast members there, but no Depp. He arrived about 20 minutes in, and quickly took the spotlight.

Depp called the majority of what's been written about him in recent years "fantastically, horrifically written fiction."

"It's like asking the question: 'How are you doing?' But the subtext is, 'God, I hate you,'" said Depp.

Some have debated whether Cannes ought to have given Depp such a prominent platform. Asked how he would respond to such critics, Depp made a comparison that suggested few people feel that way.

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"What if one day, they did not allow me to go to McDonald's for life because somewhere there'd be 39 angry people watching me eat a Big Mac on a loop?" pondered Depp. "Who are they? What do they care?"

"I've had my 17th comeback, apparently," said Depp. "I keep wondering about the word 'comeback.' I didn't go anywhere. As a matter of fact, I live about 45 minutes away. Maybe people stopped calling out of whatever their fear was at the time. But I didn't go nowhere."

Follow AP Film Writer Jake Coyle on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/jakecoyleAP>

For more coverage of this year's Cannes Film Festival, visit: <https://apnews.com/hub/cannes-film-festival>

## **Elizabeth Holmes will start 11-year prison sentence on May 30 after losing her bid to remain free**

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Disgraced Theranos CEO Elizabeth Holmes will remain free through the Memorial Day weekend before surrendering to authorities on May 30 to begin her more than 11-year prison sentence for defrauding investors in a blood-testing scam.

U.S. District Judge Edward Davila set Holmes' revised prison-reporting date after her lawyers proposed it in a Wednesday filing. It came after a federal appeals court late Tuesday rejected Holmes' bid to remain out of prison while she attempts to overturn her January 2022 conviction on four felony counts of fraud and conspiracy.

The punishment also includes a \$452 million restitution bill that Davila ordered Holmes to pay in a separate ruling issued late Tuesday.

Holmes' lawyers asked Davila to approve the May 30 prison reporting time to her two weeks to sort out several issues, including child care for her 1-year-old son William and 3-month-old daughter Invicta. Holmes had originally been ordered to begin her prison sentence on April 27, but won a reprieve with a last-minute legal maneuver that gave her more time with her children.

Holmes, 39, became pregnant with William shortly before the start of her high-profile trial in September 2021 and became pregnant with Invicta shortly after she was convicted of crimes that could have resulted in a prison sentence of up to 20 years.

The father of both children is William "Billy" Evans, whom she met after breaking up with her former romantic and business partner, Ramesh "Sunny," Balwani, who began serving a nearly 13-year prison sentence last month in Southern California. Balwani, 57, was convicted for 12 felony counts of fraud and conspiracy committed while he was Theranos' chief operating officer and living with Holmes.

In Wednesday's filing, Holmes' lawyers didn't disclose the location of the prison that she has been assigned to serve her sentence. But they noted she has to prepare to travel outside of California, where she has been living in the San Diego area while free on bail. Davila has recommended that Holmes be imprisoned in Bryan, Texas.

When Holmes is finally incarcerated, it will bring down the curtain on a saga that cast a bright light on a dark chapter in Silicon Valley that brought her fame and fortune before her scandalous downfall.

After dropping out of Stanford University in 2003 to found Theranos while still a teenager, Holmes promised to 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. The idea helped her raising nearly \$1 billion from sophisticated investors that included Oracle co-founder Larry Ellison and media mogul Rupert Murdoch, who is owed

\$125 million under the restitution order.

But Theranos' blood tests never came close to working the way Holmes had boasted with the support of Balwani, resulting in the company's collapse and a tale that has been the subject of a book, "Bad Blood," an HBO documentary, "The Inventor," and a Hulu mini-series, "The Dropout," which won Amanda Seyfried an Emmy in the starring role.

## Trust in Supreme Court fell to lowest point in 50 years after abortion decision, poll shows

By MARK SHERMAN and EMILY SWANSON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Confidence in the Supreme Court sank to its lowest point in at least 50 years in 2022 in the wake of the Dobbs decision that led to state bans and other restrictions on abortion, a major trends survey shows.

The divide between Democrats and Republicans over support for abortion rights also was the largest ever in 2022, according to the General Social Survey. The long-running and widely respected survey conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago has been measuring confidence in the court since 1973, the same year that Roe v. Wade legalized abortion nationwide.

In the 2022 survey, just 18% of Americans said they have a great deal of confidence in the court, down from 26% in 2021, and 36% said they had hardly any, up from 21%. Another 46% said they have "only some" confidence in the most recent survey.

The drastic change was concentrated among women, Democrats and those who say a woman should be able to get an abortion if she wants one "for any reason," the survey shows.

Just 12% of women said they have a great deal of confidence in the court in 2022, down from 22% a year earlier and from 32% in 2018. Confidence among Democrats fell to 8% in 2022 from 25% a year earlier. And among those who think abortion should be available to a woman who wants one for any reason, confidence in the court dropped from 25% to 12%.

Even among Republicans, though, confidence has slipped somewhat over the past several years in a court dominated by Republican-appointed conservative justices. Twenty-six percent said they have a great deal of confidence in the court, down from 31% in 2021 and from 37% in 2018.

The survey is conducted using in-person and online interviews over the course of several months. Most interviews were conducted after the court's conservative majority issued its Dobbs decision in late June that overturned Roe and all were conducted after a draft of the decision was leaked seven weeks earlier.

Support for widely available abortion did not change substantially between 2021 and 2022, but the poll shows support for widely available abortion has increased since 2016, when just 46% said that abortion should be available if a woman wants one for any reason and 54% said it should not. In the new survey, slightly more said it should be available than that it should not be, 53% to 47%.

The difference is driven by skyrocketing support for abortion rights among Democrats, while Republican levels of support are at or near a 50-year low. The 77%-28% split between Democrat and Republicans in their backing for abortion rights is the largest-ever partisan divide on the question.

Large majorities of Americans said they think a woman should be able to have an abortion if her own health is at risk, if there is a strong change of a serious defect in the baby or if the pregnancy was the result of rape.

Multiple states now ban abortion with no exception in cases of rape or incest. Mississippi's ban has an exception for rape but not incest.

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The General Social Survey has been conducted since 1972 by NORC at the University of Chicago. Sample sizes for each year's survey vary from about 1,500 to about 4,000 adults, with margins of error falling between plus or minus 2 percentage points and plus or minus 3.1 percentage points. The most recent survey was conducted May 5, 2022, through Dec. 20, 2022, and includes interviews with 3,544 American adults. Results for the full sample have a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

## **CNN names Kaitlan Collins to fill prime-time vacancy in Chris Cuomo's old slot**

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — CNN said Kaitlan Collins will host a new hourlong show at the center of the prime-time lineup, filling a slot left vacant since the firing of Chris Cuomo and as the network's ratings are at a low ebb.

Collins will begin regularly hosting the 9 p.m. Eastern show next month, the network said Wednesday, making the announcement during a Warner Discovery sales presentation to advertisers.

The ex-White House correspondent moderated CNN's town hall with former President Donald Trump last week, but was generally held blameless for criticism the event received.

"She is a smart and gifted journalist who we've all seen hold lawmakers and newsmakers accountable," CNN Chairman Chris Licht said in a memo to staff members. "She pushes politicians off their talking points, gets real answers — and as everyone who's worked with her knows — breaks a lot of news."

It's the biggest move by Licht, who became CNN's leader last year, to put his imprint on the prime-time lineup, which has lagged far behind Fox News and MSNBC in viewership.

In continuing Collins' meteoric rise at CNN, Licht has something in common with his predecessor Jeff Zucker, who noticed and hired Collins full-time based on her occasional guest appearances on CNN. Collins had been working for The Daily Caller, a conservative website launched by Tucker Carlson.

Licht had named Collins to host a revamped morning show with Poppy Harlow and Don Lemon that began last November. With Lemon fired and Collins elevated, Harlow will work with guest anchors until morning changes are announced in the months ahead, Licht said in his memo.

CNN has rotated guest hosts in the evening since December 2021, when Cuomo was fired after the network said he was not forthcoming about help offered to his brother, former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo. At the time, Cuomo hosted CNN's top-rated show.

The network has struggled to gain traction without him. On Monday, for example, CNN averaged 454,000 viewers in the time slot, compared to Rachel Maddow's 2.41 million viewers on MSNBC and Sean Hannity's 1.97 million on Fox, the Nielsen company said.

Last Friday, with Anderson Cooper on duty for a second hour at 9 p.m. and reaching an audience of 293,000, CNN slipped behind the conservative Newsmax network and host Chris Plante's "Right Squad" in viewership, Nielsen said.

CNN last month announced the pairing of Charles Barkley and Gayle King for another prime-time show starting later this year, although that will be once a week.

To the advertisers, CNN tried to increase anticipation by showing clips of King and Barkley. "She's going to be a straight shooter," Barkley said. "You know I'm going to be a straight shooter."

In his appearance, Licht emphasized CNN's newsgathering and said it was more important now than ever.

"We prioritize reporting over punditry and separate the news from the noise," he said.

## **Tiny Amerindian village in Guyana fights gold mine in key court battle over indigenous land rights**

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

CHINESE LANDING, Guyana (AP) — One of Guyana's smallest Amerindian villages is waging a monumental battle that could decide the amount of control that thousands of indigenous people have over their land in remote parts of this South American country.

The village of 225 residents is fighting in court to regain full control over ancestral land where gold miners once were invited in to boost community development but who now are considered unwelcome interlopers who carve up lands that provide food and medicine, and block access for the villagers' own, smaller-scale mining.

"It's like a part of us has been taken away," said Orin Fernandes, the village's toshao, or indigenous leader.

Called Chinese Landing for reasons residents no longer remember, the village is deep within lush forests of northern Guyana accessible primarily by riverboat.

The villagers, descendants of Caribs, have seen their land shrink as miners scrape back layers of rock and red soil that could otherwise produce pumpkin, cucumbers and cassava. The mining operation spans 3,400 acres (1,380 hectares), splitting the village in two and contaminating water in an area known as Tassawini, which means "clear water" in the Carib language.

"What's happening in Chinese Landing now is pretty emblematic of what is happening across the country in terms of mining and violation of indigenous people's rights," said Lan Mei, a Maryland-based attorney representing the village.

Guyana has some 78,500 Amerindians who represent nearly 10% of the country's population. They live in more than 240 communities on some 6 million hectares (15 million acres) that often are home to large deposits of gold.

Gold represents roughly 15% of Guyana's economic output, and even the national flag — "the golden arrowhead" — pays homage to the precious metal.

For Guyanese officials, gold mining has taken priority over efforts of indigenous communities to solidify titles over their lands and clarify their boundaries, said Michael Mc Garrell, a map specialist with Amerindian Peoples Association.

"They see indigenous title lands as not generating any sort of revenue for the country," Mc Garrell said.

Chinese Landing secured its land title in 1976, and for a couple of decades, Amerindians mined that area with basic tools, selling small pieces of gold to feed families and build homes, complimenting earnings by hunting and growing crops

But the community entered into an agreement with a Guyana businessman seeking to set up mining operations in 1998, and ever since the deal went sour in the early 2000s, there have been legal battles over who can mine there — with Chinese Landing residents currently shut out.

"It grieves me," said Emelda Fernandes, 66, who mined at age 12 but now is forced to farm peppers and cassava to survive. Meanwhile, her son uses a metal detector in the dusty surroundings of their wooden home to search for gold or scrap metal.

Tears fell down Fernandes' face as she switched to her native Carib language: "I was living here for such a long time, and now, I cannot work. ... Outsiders come and take away our rights."

The once-clear waters of the creek behind Fernandes' home now run yellowish-brown. Unable to afford bottled water, she and others drink from and bathe there, which she says

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gives her stomach aches and skin rashes.

"We are really suffering," she said.

Some students attend the village school in bare feet, and the community's lack of access to mining has pushed it deeper into poverty.

The village's vice toshao, Veron Millington, had to borrow \$1,500 from the Amerindian council to make ends meet and so that her son could graduate high school. He loves robotics and named a dog "Hawking" after the renowned British physicist.

"I don't know how I'll pay it back," said Millington, a retired teacher, adding that she hasn't been able to pay rent since January. "I never envisioned that it would come to this. We feel like we're not even part of Guyana."

In 1998, former leaders of Chinese Landing signed an agreement with businessman Wayne Vieira that awarded him the right to mine in Tassawini after he obtained mining permits from Guyana's Geology and Mines Commission.

The deal stated Vieira would employ from 20% to 50% of unskilled laborers from the village and award it 1% commission on all gold mined. In addition, Vieira would develop education and health services in the village, according to a copy of the deal obtained by The Associated Press.

While Vieira provided a bounty of books for Chinese Landing's school, Fernandes said he only employed villagers sporadically and never shared details on gold production, so the village never knew if it was truly getting its 1% in royalties.

Jamela Ali, an attorney for Vieira, disputed the Amerindian leader's account by saying that Vieira's representatives "always offered" villagers work, and added that the businessman has repaired roads, a reservoir and an airstrip there. The attorney accused villagers of illegally mining in the area with heavy machinery.

The village scrapped the deal with Vieira in August 2004 and demanded that he remove all equipment and personnel, which didn't happen.

In 2006, the country's Amerindian Act included language saying that permission is needed from an indigenous community before small and mid-scale mining can take place on their land. And in 2010, the Geology and Mines Commission issued Vieira a cease work order for his mid-scale operation because he did not have a valid agreement with the village.

Vieira filed a lawsuit in response that went all the way to the Caribbean Court of Justice, which serves as Guyana's highest court. It ruled in 2017 that the Amerindian Act did not give any authority to the mining agency to stop work on the mining permits.

The pace of mining increased after the ruling, and attorneys representing Chinese Landing say police and guards blocked villagers from mining in or entering the area.

Complicating the picture is a Canadian company, Alerio Gold Corp., which claims to have obtained rights to mine land previously controlled by Vieira. However, Vieira's attorney disputed that, saying Vieira continues to control all four permits he originally obtained in the area, and that he has no connection to the company.

Alerio, which announced in April it found "significant" untapped reserves, did not respond to phone calls or emails seeking comment. Expanding the mine to a large-scale operation could make it more difficult for the community to halt it.

Newell Dennison, commissioner for Guyana's Geology and Mines Commission, declined to comment on the Chinese Landing case, saying it was in court.

In 2021, the village filed its own lawsuit arguing that the government never should have had the authority to issue mining permits for any of its titled land. The case is being closely watched by activists and Amerindian leaders who hope it might set a precedent for other indigenous lands.

"This case really is about how much control a village has over its titled land," said Mei,

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the U.S.-based attorney. "It's also about the village's right to representation and to have its case heard in court."

Not everyone in Chinese Landing holds out hope that the community's access to mining can be restored any time soon.

Selwyn Miller, 27-year-old president of the village's Parent Teacher Association, is seeking opportunity elsewhere. He somberly broke the news on a recent weekday morning before a classroom of a dozen children from third to sixth grade.

"I'm talking to you this morning because I won't be around for a period of time," he said, as the students fell silent.

"There will be no more work," he warned. "Don't think about mining. Miss Natasha talked about that. Think about something else."

In his pocket, Miller had a lump of gold about the size of a flattened grape that he hoped would finance his trip to another region of Guyana where he planned to work as a miner to care for his four children after his wife died in childbirth.

Hours later, Miller said goodbye to family and friends and departed Chinese Landing.

\_\_\_ Associated Press videographer Juan Pablo Arráez contributed.

## Twitter is purging inactive accounts including people who have died, angering those still grieving

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Emily Reed lost her younger sister Jessica more than 10 years ago. For much of the last decade, she's visited Jessica's Twitter page to help "keep her memory alive."

Twitter became one of the places where Emily processed her grief and reconnected with a sister she describes as almost like a twin. But Jessica's account is now gone.

Last week, owner Elon Musk announced Twitter would be purging accounts that have had no activity for several years. That decision has been met by an outcry from those who have lost, or who fear losing the thoughts and words of deceased loved ones linked to now-inactive accounts.

Reed immediately returned to Jessica's page as she had done a day or two earlier after learning of the purge. In place of Jessica's page was an "account suspended" message that suggested it may be in violation Twitter rules.

Reed's tweet recounting her shock over the loss of the account has received tens of thousands of responses. Others shared similar experiences of pain upon learning that the account of a deceased loved one had vanished.

"Having these digital footprints... is super important to me," Reed, 43, told The Associated Press.

The advent of social media has come with new way in which people mourn, returning to the place where they connected with friends and family in the past. In addition to memories and physical traces left behind, snippets of lives are have are now being captured in the digital space.

It is something that social media platforms have wrestled with for recent years.

Twitter backed off an attempt to purge inactive accounts in 2019, years before Musk arrived, due to a similar backlash.

Other social media sites have found ways to allow people to mourn those they've lost.

Facebook and Instagram allow users to request an account be deactivated, or a memorialization of the account. Memorialized accounts show the word "Remembering" next to the person's name.

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"In this modern age, we have these electronic reminders of people — (including) little snippets of a thought they had on a particular day or pictures that they shared," said Shira Gabriel, professor of psychology at University at Buffalo. Looking through a late loved one's social media can be both a healthy way to process grief and gather as a community in remembrance, Gabriel said.

The prospect of that resource disappearing "can bring about a sense of mourning again," Gabriel said. "There is a real psychological cost of getting rid of this digital thumbprint that was left behind and this ability for community members to gather in one spot."

It is unknown if Musk will backtrack on the decision to purge. The billionaire CEO of Tesla has launched policies that have rattled users and advertisers alike and shown little interest in amending those policies in response.

Musk named a new CEO last week, Linda Yaccarino, a former NBCUniversal advertising executive, who will have her hands full with a platform seemingly now in a perpetual state of chaos.

Deleting inactive accounts can be seen as fulfilling a promise Musk made when he bought the company, particularly winnowing down junk accounts and bots, said Samuel Woolley, an assistant professor at the University of Texas at Austin's School of Journalism and Media.

There are good reasons to preserve inactive accounts, and also reasons to delete them, Woolley said, but he is leery of the "one-size-fits-all" approach.

Advocates of purging accounts cite skewed metrics caused by inactive accounts or bogus on social media platforms. Yet on top of emotional pain for some users mourning late loved ones, deleting inactive accounts could also mean losing tweets that documented historical events, commentary and breaking news on the app over the years.

"Twitter operates in many ways like a library of data," Woolley said. "Just because someone hasn't been active for 30 days or a few years, doesn't mean their tweets don't still have a great amount of relevance."

Musk did say the reasoning behind removing inactive accounts was to free up unused Twitter handles, or user names, and that those inactive accounts would be archived.

What exactly that means is not known — including what inactive accounts will look like when they're archived, and whether they'll be easily accessible. Other details of the plan are also unclear, such as the number of accounts to be removed and whether the policy will be evenly enforced.

While Reed and others saw the inactive accounts of loved ones disappear last week, the account belonging to the late father of controversial internet personality Andrew Tate still appears to be on the site, for example.

On Twitter, Tate said he was fine with Musk's decision, but asked that his father's account remain active as he "still (reads) his account daily."

Picking and choosing accounts for deactivation would "create precisely the kind of tiered system that Musk says he wants to avoid," Woolley said.

When contacted by The Associated Press for comment, Twitter responded with an automated email. Twitter's trust and safety lead Ella Irwin also did not respond.

According to Twitter policy, the social media platform determines an account's inactivity through log-ins. Twitter says that users should log in at least every 30 days.

Twitter users are able to download an archive of their own data through the app, but not for accounts they don't possess login credentials. Reed, for example, noted that her family wasn't able to get into Jessica's account over the last 10 years. The only traces they have now are some screenshots that Reed's other sister luckily captured before the purge.

Reed talks about the importance of Jessica's Twitter and Facebook pages during her journey with grief — from following her sister's difficult journey with cystic fibrosis, a progressive



genetic disorder that Reed also has, to cherishing tweets that showed “the joy and... the vibrancy that came out of her words.”

Over time, the image and memories of someone who has passed away can slowly change in your mind — “like a fading photograph,” Reed said. Having online resources, she added, can help keep a “person’s memory alive, in a way that just your own personal memory can’t.”

## **Pope takes cellphone call during general audience, meets with clergy abuse survivors**

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The Vatican’s Wednesday general audiences are often chances for ordinary people to get rare access to Pope Francis, and this week’s gathering was no different: A group of LGBTQ+ Catholics got a papal photo, and clergy abuse survivors from Germany who biked to Rome handed Francis a letter demanding a better response from the church to the crisis.

In between, Francis stopped the proceedings in St. Peter’s Square midway through to take a cellphone call. The Vatican didn’t provide any information on the content.

Members of the LGBTQ+ group Mosaiko said they wanted to visit Francis at the audience on Wednesday to send a message of inclusion and unity on the international day against homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

“The appeal we want to send to Pope Francis is for the church to finally, let’s say, to welcome us,” Tiziano Fani Braga, the group’s coordinator, said after the audience. “We try to be an integral part of the church, as all believers are, without discrimination and to fight all discrimination.”

Also in the square were 15 survivors of clergy sexual abuse and their companions who left Munich on May 6 on a bicycle pilgrimage to Rome. They are trying to draw attention to a campaign to change the way the Catholic Church deals with priests who rape and molest children and vulnerable adults, and how it cares for victims.

The group delivered a letter to Francis urging him to “do everything in your power to ensure that in all corners of the universal Church the issue of sexual and spiritual abuse is seen, addressed and prevented through appropriate preventive measures.”

The letter acknowledged initial steps have been taken, but that more must be done and “a clear signal must be sent to perpetrators and bishops who have not fulfilled their responsibilities and who, to a certain extent, still do not do so today.”

Francis’ weekly catechism lesson focused on the life and vocation of St. Francis Xavier, and ended with another appeal for peace in Ukraine.

## **Supreme Court lets Illinois keep ban on sale of some semiautomatic guns for now**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court said Wednesday that Illinois can, for now, keep in place a new law that bars the sale of certain semiautomatic guns and large-capacity magazines.

The high court denied an emergency request from people challenging the law, which bans so-called assault weapons. The law’s opponents had asked the court to put the law on hold while a court challenge continues. The court did not comment and no justice publicly dissented.

The high court’s action comes at a time when gun violence has been heavily in the news. Since the beginning of the year, 115 people have died in 22 mass killings — an average of one mass killing a week, according to a database maintained by The Associated Press and USA Today in a partnership with Northeastern University. The database counts killings

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involving four or more fatalities, not including the perpetrator. Just recently, on May 6, a man armed with an AR-15 style rifle and other firearms fatally shot eight people, including three children, at a Dallas-area mall.

The case before the Supreme Court involves an Illinois state law enacted in January. The legislation bans the sale of a series of guns including the AR-15 and AK-47. The law also bars the sale of magazines that have more than 15 rounds of ammunition for handguns and more than 10 rounds of ammunition for a long gun.

People who legally owned the now-barred guns and magazines ahead of the law's enactment can continue to keep them. The guns, however, must be registered with law enforcement.

Nine other states and the District of Columbia have gun bans similar to the one in Illinois, according to the gun control group Brady, which tracks the legislation. California, Connecticut, Hawaii, New Jersey and New York also require registration of guns purchased prior to the law while four other states – Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts and Washington -- do not.

The Illinois legislation was driven largely by the killing of seven people at a 4th of July parade last year in the Chicago suburb of Highland Park. The shooter was armed with an AR-15 rifle and 30-round magazines.

A federal trial court in February declined to put the law on hold. A federal appeals court also declined to put the law on hold while the case continues.

The case also involves a separate so-called assault weapon bans passed by the city of Naperville.

The Supreme Court's conservative majority just last year handed gun rights activists a major victory, ruling that Americans have a right to carry firearms in public for self-defense. But the decision left open whether various restrictions states might impose would be constitutional.

Associated Press reporter Alanna Durkin Richer contributed to this report from Boston.

## **Drug overdoses in the US slightly increased last year. But experts see hopeful signs**

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Drug overdose deaths in the U.S. went up slightly last year after two big leaps during the pandemic.

Officials with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say the numbers plateaued for most of last year. Experts aren't sure whether that means the deadliest drug overdose epidemic in U.S. history is finally reaching a peak, or whether it'll look like previous plateaus that were followed by new surges in deaths.

"The fact that it does seem to be flattening out, at least at a national level, is encouraging," said Katherine Keyes, a Columbia University epidemiology professor whose research focuses on drug use. "But these numbers are still extraordinarily high. We shouldn't suggest the crisis is in any way over."

An estimated 109,680 overdose deaths occurred last year, according to numbers posted Wednesday by the CDC. That's about 2% more than the 107,622 U.S. overdose deaths in 2021, but nothing like the 30% increase seen in 2020, and 15% increase in 2021.

While the overall national number was relatively static between 2021 and 2022, there were dramatic changes in a number of states: 23 reported fewer overdose deaths, one — Iowa — saw no change, and the rest continued to increase.

Eight states — Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia — reported sizable overdose death decreases of about 100 or more compared

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with the previous calendar year.

Some of these states had some of the highest overdose death rates during the epidemic, which Keyes said might be a sign that years of concentrated work to address the problem is paying off. State officials cited various factors for the decline, like social media and health education campaigns to warn the public about the dangers of drug use; expanded addiction treatment — including telehealth — and wider distribution of the overdose-reversing medication naloxone.

Plus, the stigma that kept drug users from seeking help — and some doctors and police officers from helping them — is waning, said Dr. Joseph Kanter, the state health officer for Louisiana, where overdose deaths fell 4% last year.

“We’re catching up and the tide’s turning — slowly,” said Kanter, whose state has one of the nation’s highest overdose death rates.

Beginning in the mid-1990s, abuse of prescription opioid painkillers was to blame for deaths before a gradual turn to heroin, which in 2015 caused more deaths than prescription painkillers or other drugs. A year later, the more lethal fentanyl and its close cousins became the biggest drug killer.

Last year, most overdose deaths continued to be linked to fentanyl and other synthetic opioids. About 75,000, up 4% from the year before. There also was a 11% increase in deaths involving cocaine and a 3% increase in deaths involving meth and other stimulants.

Overdose deaths are often attributed to more than one drug; some people take multiple drugs and officials say inexpensive fentanyl is increasingly cut into other drugs, often without the buyers’ knowledge.

Research from Dr. Daniel Ciccarone, a drug policy expert at the University of California, San Francisco, suggests “there appears to be some substitution going on,” with a number of people who use illicit drugs turning to methamphetamines or other options to try to stay away from fentanyl and fentanyl-tainted drugs.

Ciccarone said he believes overdose deaths finally will trend down. He cited improvements in innovations in counseling and addiction treatment, better availability of naloxone and legal actions that led to more than \$50 billion in proposed and finalized settlements — money that should be available to bolster overdose prevention.

“We’ve thrown a lot at this 20-year opioid overdose problem,” he said. “We should be bending the curve downward.”

But he also voiced some caution, saying “we have been here before.”

Consider 2018, when overdose deaths dropped 4% from the previous year, to about 67,000. After those numbers came out, then-President Donald Trump declared “we are curbing the opioid epidemic.”

But overdose deaths then rose to a record 71,000 in 2019, then soared during the COVID-19 pandemic to 92,000 in 2020 and 107,000 in 2021.

Lockdowns and other pandemic-era restrictions isolated people with drug addictions and made treatment harder to get, experts said.

Keyes believes that 2022’s numbers didn’t get any worse partly because isolation eased as the pandemic ebbed. But there may be issues ahead, others say, like increased detection of veterinary tranquilizer xylazine in the illicit drug supply and proposals to scale back things like prescribing addiction medications through telehealth.

“What the past 20 years of this overdose crisis has taught us is that this really is a moving target,” Keyes said. “And when you think you’ve got a handle on it, sometimes the problem can shift in new and different ways.”

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard

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## 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, 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 Tuesday in a 12-candidate field that included state Agriculture Commissioner Ryan Quarles, who finished second, and former U.N. Ambassador Kelly Craft, who finished third. Beshear easily dispatched two under-the-radar Democratic challengers in his own primary.

Cameron, the state's first Black attorney general, said in a victory speech that 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 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 the 2024 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 cited his stewardship of Kentucky's economy — pointing to record economic development successes — in setting the stage for his fall 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 considering Kentucky," Beshear told 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 Beshear-Cameron matchup 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 Republican Gov. Matt Bevin. Beshear narrowly defeated Bevin in a race that revolved around Bevin's combative personality.

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.

Trump, in a social media post Wednesday about Cameron's victory, cited the finish by Craft, who had been an ambassador during his administration and was endorsed by a lead-

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ing Trump rival, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis.

"Congratulations to a 'star' in Kentucky, Danial Cameron, who easily won the Republican Nomination for Governor," Trump wrote, misspelling the nominee's first name. "He had my Complete and Total Endorsement. The DeSanctimonious backed candidate came in a DISTANT third. Ron's magic is GONE!"

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 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.

## **JKey Trump attorney says he's departing legal team as Mar-a-Lago probe intensifies**

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A key lawyer for former President Donald Trump said Wednesday that he was leaving the legal team, a move that comes as a special counsel investigation into the retention of classified documents shows signs of being in its final stages.

Timothy Parlatore told The Associated Press that his departure had nothing to do with Trump and was not a reflection on his view of the Justice Department's investigation, which he has long called misguided and overly aggressive, or on the strength of the government's evidence. He said he believed he had served Trump well.

Other lawyers, including former Justice Department prosecutor James Trusty, are continuing to represent Trump in Washington investigations.

CNN earlier reported Parlatore's departure.

Parlatore has long been a key member of the team representing Trump in an investigation by Justice Department special counsel Jack Smith into the possession of hundreds of classified documents at the former president's Florida home, Mar-a-Lago as well as into possible efforts to obstruct that probe.

A grand jury over the last several months has heard from a broad array of witnesses close to Trump. Federal prosecutors in March questioned another of Trump's lawyers, M. Evan Corcoran, before the grand jury after successfully piercing attorney-client privilege. Parlatore testified voluntarily in December about efforts to recover classified documents in response to government demands.

Last month, Parlatore and other lawyers for Trump issued a letter to the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, Rep. Mike Turner, laying out a series of defense arguments of Trump and saying that the Justice Department should be "ordered to stand down" in its investigation.

Besides the Mar-a-Lago probe, Smith has also been investigating efforts by Trump and his allies to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election, with former Vice President Mike Pence among the grand jury witnesses in that probe. Manhattan prosecutors charged Trump in March arising from hush-money payments made to a porn star who said he had an extramarital sexual encounter with her years earlier.

In Georgia, prosecutors in Fulton County are expected to announce in coming months the results of an investigation into attempts to subvert Trump's election loss to President Joe Biden in that state.

Follow Eric Tucker on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/etuckerAP>

## The likelihood that Earth briefly hits key warming threshold grows bigger and closer, UN forecasts

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

There's a two-out-of-three chance that the world will temporarily hit a key warming limit within the next five years, the United Nations weather agency said Wednesday.

But it likely would only be a fleeting and less worrisome flirtation with the internationally agreed upon temperature threshold. Scientists expect a temporary burst of heat from El Nino — a naturally-occurring weather phenomenon — to supercharge human-caused warming from the burning of coal, oil and gas to new heights. Temperatures are expected to then slip back down a bit.

The World Meteorological Organization forecasts a 66% likelihood that between now and 2027, the globe will have a year that averages 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than the mid 19th century.

That number is critical because the 2015 Paris climate agreement set 1.5 degrees Celsius 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 1.5 C 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 1.5 C level on a temporary basis with increasing frequency," WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas said in a statement.

"We haven't been able to limit the warming so far and we are still moving in the wrong, wrong direction," Taalas said at a Wednesday press conference.

Hermanson cautioned that "a single year doesn't really mean anything." 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 — which 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 1.5 C a full decade before the long-term average," 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 1.5 C 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, during the last El Nino, a 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 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.

"I think it's important to realize that if we pass 1.5 degrees it's not a reason to give up," Hermanson said at a Wednesday news conference. "We have to continue working out how much we can reduce emissions of greenhouse gases as much as possible, even after that, because it will make a difference."

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

Follow Seth Borenstein on Twitter at @borenbears

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.

## **Abortion after 12 weeks banned in North Carolina after GOP lawmakers override governor's veto**

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



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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.

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.

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"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

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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.

## 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.

## 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

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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 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.