

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Groton Community Calendar

### Friday, May 19

Senior Menu: Chili, cornbread, coleslaw, vanilla pudding.

### Saturday, May 20

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship at Rosewood Court, 10 a.m.

### Sunday, May 21

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

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

## Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

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



“A good friend is a connection to life – a tie to the past, a road to the future, the key to sanity in a totally insane world.”

—Lois Wyse

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.

The Pantry, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

## OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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## The Bulletin

by Newsweek

JANUARY 24, 2023

### World in Brief

can be held responsible for the content posted on their sites.

Chinese President Xi Jinping said the world needs a "stable, prosperous, harmonious, and well-connected" Central Asia during a keynote speech at the China-Central Asia Summit in Xi'an.

Hyundai and Kia have agreed to pay \$200 million to settle a consumer class-action lawsuit over a large increase in vehicle thefts in the U.S. over the past decade.

Andy Rourke, the bassist for legendary British indie band The Smiths, has died at the age of 59 after a battle with pancreatic cancer.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, the Pentagon reportedly overestimated the value of previous weapons and military equipment sent to Ukraine by about \$3 billion — an accounting error that could allow the U.S. to send more weapons to Kyiv without first seeking approval from Congress..

### WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAY AHEAD

Jack Teixeira, the man accused of leaking classified military documents, will appear in a court in Worcester, Massachusetts. A judge is set to decide whether Teixeira will remain in prison while he awaits a trial.

It's a light day for economic and corporate events. Morgan Stanley and Honeywell are among the major companies scheduled to hold their annual general meetings.

The family of Shanquella Robinson is planning to march in Washington, D.C. after the U.S. announced that they were not filing charges following her death while she was on vacation and seen on tape getting assaulted by a friend in Mexico.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad attends the Arab League Summit for the first time since the country was suspended in 2011.

The 2023 Preakness Stakes takes place Saturday at Pimlico Race Course in Baltimore. Mage, the racehorse that won the Kentucky Derby two weeks ago, is expected to win the second jewel of horse racing's Triple Crown.

Five Tik Tok users filed a lawsuit against Montana over its ban on the app, arguing that the law violated constitutional rights and outstripped Montana's legal authority over matters of national security.

A 7.7 magnitude earthquake struck southeast of the Loyalty Islands in the French territory of New Caledonia, triggering a tsunami warning. People in the coastal areas have been ordered to evacuate.

The Supreme Court sided with social media and internet companies in two cases, ruling against claims that they

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## **Guthmiller, Johnson place at Sisseton golf invitational**

Two Groton Area golfers were medalists at the Sisseton Spring Invitational held Thursday. Carly Guthmiller shot a 49 in both the front and back nine for a total score of 98 to placed fourth. Carlee Johnson shot a 58 and 46 for a total score of 104 to place seventh. Others golfing for Groton Area were Carly Gibert with scores of 56 and 64 for a total score of 120 and Mia Crank with scores of 59 and 68 for a total score of 127.

## **Groton City Notice**

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





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## Groton Area teams both take second in Region 1A Track and Field

Groton Area boys and girls teams both took second in the Region 1A Track and Field Event held Thursday in Groton. Groton Area took first place in six events, three each for boys and girls. In the boy's division, the 400m Relay team and Sprint Medley Relay team both took first and Logan Ringgenberg took first in the discus. In the girl's division, the Sprint Medley Relay team took first while Faith Traphagen in the 800m run and Aspen Johnson in the triple jump were both champions.

It comes down to the top 24 overall in the state that qualify for the state track meet. Coach Shaun Wanner said that two regions did not compete yesterday due to the smoke conditions. It said it will be Saturday before the final state qualifiers are determined.

### Boy's Division

**Team Scores:** 1. Milbank 171; 2. Groton Area 119; 3. Webster Area 118; 4. Aberdeen Roncalli 108; 5. Tri-State 72; 6. Dakota Hills 47; 7. Sisseton 43; 8. Redfield 31; 9. Tiospa Zina 17

**110m Hurdles:** 5. Caden McInerney, 19.51

**300m Hurdles:** 8. Caden McInerney, 49.15

**100 Meters:** 5. Korbin Kucker, 12.38; 6. Jacob Zak, 12.43

**100 Meters Varsity - Prelims:** 5. Korbin Kucker, 12.16; 6. Jacob Zak, 12.27; 26. Logan Warrington, 13.98

**200 Meters:** 6. Lane Tietz, 25.66; 10. Korbin Kucker, 26.19; 19. Gage Sippel, 27.53

**400 Meters:** 7. Gage Sippel, 57.80; 18. Logan Warrington, 1:04.29

**800 Meters:** 6. Jayden Schwan, 2:18.79; 12. Tristin McGannon, 2:28.46; 13. Jacob Lewandowski, 2:28.a75

**1600 Meters:** 10. Jacob Lewandowski, 5:32.57; 15. Nicolas Fernandez, 6:15.04

**3200 Meters:** 5. Jayden Schwan, 12:26.65

**4x100 Relay:** 1. (Andrew Marzahn, Ryder Johnson, Korbin Kucker, Keegen Tracy), 45.46

**4x200 Relay:** 2. (Keegen Tracy, Ryder Johnson, Andrew Marzahn, Teylor Diegel), 1:34.30

**4x400 Relay:** 2. (Keegen Tracy, Ryder Johnson, Andrew Marzahn, Cole Simon), 3:37.82

**4x800 Relay:** 2. (Blake Pauli, Colby Dunker, Cole Simon, Lane Tietz), 8:50.06

**SMR 1600m:** 1. (Korbin Kucker, Lane Tietz, Keegen Tracy, Blake Pauli), 3:52.76

**Long Jump:** 4. Jacob Zak, 19-01.00; 12. Tristin McGannon, 15-10.00; 13. Gage Sippel, 15-06.00

**Triple Jump:** 3. Jacob Zak, 38-03.25; 7. Tristin McGannon, 35-00.25

**Discus:** 1. Logan Ringgenberg, 121-04; 2. Holden Sippel, 118-05; 6. Kaleb Antonsen, 101-05

**Shot Put:** 2. Logan Ringgenberg, 42-03.50; 3. Holden Sippel, 42-02.00; 6. Caleb Hanten, 39-09.00

### Girl's Division

**Team Scores:** 1. Milbank 224; 2. Groton Area 121; 3. Redfield 88; 4. Aberdeen Roncalli 74; 5. Webster Area 68; 6. Dakota Hills 58; 7. Sisseton 55; 8. Tri-State 29.

**100m Hurdles Varsity - Prelims:** 6. Talli Wright, 19.54; 11. Hannah Sandness, 21.43

**100m Hurdles:** 7. Talli Wright, 19.01

**300m Hurdles:** 2. Talli Wright, 54.56; 3. Mckenna Tietz, 54.70; 10. Hannah Sandness, 59.93

**100 Meters:** 2. Rylee Dunker, 13.63

**100 Meters Varsity - Prelims:** 1. Rylee Dunker, 13.37

**200 Meters:** 6. Rylee Dunker, 30.47; 8. Mckenna Tietz, 30.62; 12. Talli Wright, 31.52

**400 Meters:** 4. Ashlynn Warrington, 1:06.77; 7. Elizabeth Fliehs, 1:09.44

**800 Meters:** 1. Faith Traphagen, 2:37.08; 2. Ashlynn Warrington, 2:43.44; 11. Elizabeth Fliehs, 2:59.88

**4x100 Relay:** 2. (Laila Roberts, Kennedy Hansen, Rylee Dunker, Kella Tracy), 53.34

**4x200 Relay:** 2. (Jerica Locke, Kennedy Hansen, Laila Roberts, Kella Tracy), 1:51.39

**4x400 Relay:** 2. (Laila Roberts, Jerica Locke, Kennedy Hansen, Kella Tracy), 4:28.51

**SMR 1600m:** 1. (Jerica Locke, Rylee Dunker, Kella Tracy, Taryn Traphagen), 4:37.41

**High Jump:** 5. Anna Fjeldheim, 4-04.00; 7. Emerlee Jones, 4-04.00

**Long Jump:** 2. Aspen Johnson, 14-08.50; 7. Anna Fjeldheim, 13-08.00; 10. Sydney Leicht, 12-11.50

**Triple Jump:** 1. Aspen Johnson, 33-01.25; 10. Emerlee Jones, 28-04.00

**Discus:** 10. Emma Kutter, 79-06; 13. Faith Fliehs, 75-07PR; 15. Ashley Johnson, 68-04

**Shot Put:** 2. Emma Kutter, 34-05.75; 12. Faith Fliehs, 28-01.25; 21. Ashley Johnson, 22-10.00



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**Groton Pool Co-Manager Tricia Keith is putting Comet on the loungers to try and get the stains off. Work had started in getting the swimming pool ready for the season.**



## DANR and DOH Announce Air Quality Alert for South Dakota

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR) issued an air quality alert for areas of South Dakota where smoke from wildfires in Canada has settled. The smoke is causing low visibility and increased fine particulate matter (PM2.5) pollution. The South Dakota Department of Health (DOH) advises that these levels may be a concern to public health and provides additional resources to make an informed decision on personal healthcare choices.

The current pollution levels are greater than the National Ambient Air Quality Standard.

Elderly citizens, young children, and individuals with respiratory problems are the most susceptible to the smoke. All people should avoid excessive physical exertion and minimize outdoor activities during periods of low visibility caused by the wildfire smoke. People are also encouraged to keep indoor air clean by closing windows and doors.

Air pollution can aggravate heart and cardiovascular disease as well as lung diseases like asthma and COPD. When the air quality is unhealthy, people with these conditions may experience symptoms like chest pain, shortness of breath, wheezing, coughing, or fatigue. Anyone concerned about health effects related to poor air quality should contact their health care provider.

DANR maintains air quality data on the department's website for several locations in South Dakota. Hourly PM2.5 values greater than 35 microgram per cubic meter (ug/m<sup>3</sup>) are a concern to public health.



**The Canadian fires have put out a lot of smoke that has moved its way into South Dakota. The sun had a red glow to it from the smoke.**



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## Weber Landscaping Greenhouse Now Open!

620 West Third Ave., Groton

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





## Social Security Delivers the Most Popular Baby Names in South Dakota for 2022

The Social Security Administration today announced the most popular baby names in South Dakota for 2022. Oliver and Evelyn topped the list.

The top five boys' and girls' names for 2022 in South Dakota were:

Boys:

- 1) Oliver
- 2) Hudson
- 3) William
- 4) Liam
- 5) Henry

Girls:

- 1) Evelyn
- 2) Harper
- 3) Amelia
- 4) Emma
- 5) Olivia

The agency announced last week that Olivia and Liam were the most popular baby names in the U.S. How does South Dakota compare to the rest of the country? Check out Social Security's website -- [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov) -- to see the top national baby names for 2022 and see where your name ranks now and over the past 100 years.

Social Security began compiling the baby names list in 1997, with names dating back to 1880. Each year, the list reveals the effect of pop-culture on naming trends. In addition to each state's top baby names (and names for U.S. territories), Social Security's website has a list of the 1,000 most popular boys' and girls' names for 2022 and the fastest rising girls' and boys' names.

"Just like your name, Social Security is with you from day one. One of the first things parents do for their newborn is get them a Social Security number. That makes Social Security the ultimate source for the most popular baby names each year!" said Kilolo Kijakazi, Acting Commissioner of Social Security. "And just like a name, Social Security is with you through life's journey. See what else you can do at [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov) while you're online."

Visitors will experience a fresh homepage and new design to help them find what they need more easily, with clear paths to the tasks customers need to accomplish. This is part of ongoing efforts to improve how the public can do business with the agency.

While online, users can create my Social Security accounts. my Social Security is a personalized online account that people can use beginning in their working years and continuing into retirement. Nearly 80 million people have signed up at [www.ssa.gov/myaccount](http://www.ssa.gov/myaccount) and benefited from the many secure and convenient self-service options. They can request a replacement Social Security card online if they meet certain requirements. If they already receive Social Security benefits, they can start or change direct deposit online, request a replacement SSA-1099, and if they need proof of their benefits, they can print or download a current Benefit Verification Letter from their account.

People not yet receiving benefits can use their my Social Security account to get personalized Social Security Statements, which provide their earnings information as well as estimates of their future benefits. The portal also includes links to information about other online services, such as applications for retirement, disability, and Medicare benefits.

## OPEN HOUSE



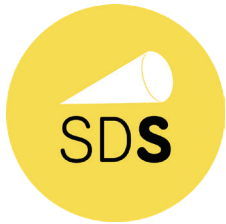
**403 15th Ave E  
Groton, SD**

**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)



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **Thousands face Medicaid whiplash in South Dakota** **North Carolina also removing participants, only to add some back later through expansion**

**BY: ARIELLE ZIONTS - MAY 18, 2023 5:15 PM**

Until recently, Jonathon Murray relied on Medicaid to pay for treatments for multiple health conditions, including chronic insomnia. Murray, a 20-year-old restaurant worker from the college town of Brookings, said that without his medication, he would stay awake for several nights in a row.

"I'd probably not be able to work that much because I'd be tired but couldn't fall asleep," he said.

Murray's mother is paying \$1,548 more than usual in health insurance premiums over three months to make sure he can afford his sleeping pills, other medication, lab work, and doctors' appointments.

Murray had to scramble to find an insurance option after he was surprised to lose his Medicaid coverage on April 1 — even though he will likely requalify July 1.

Due to a convoluted situation in South Dakota and North Carolina, Murray isn't the only person who will experience this whiplash in Medicaid coverage.

Medicaid is the joint federal and state health insurance program for people with low incomes or disabilities. During the national COVID-19 public health emergency, states were barred from removing people from the program even if they no longer qualified.

This rule has now ended, and states can redetermine whether Medicaid participants still qualify. The federal government estimates 15 million Americans will lose coverage under Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program because they no longer qualify or because of paperwork issues.

But as South Dakota and North Carolina remove participants from Medicaid, the states also plan to add people to the program. That's because South Dakota voters and North Carolina lawmakers recently approved Medicaid expansion, which will increase the number of people eligible for the program.

"It would have been great if they would have kept people on until the expansion, so you're not kicking so many people off," said Kathy Murray, Jonathon's mother.

South Dakota could have tried to prevent participants from temporarily losing Medicaid coverage, according to several health policy experts.

State officials are "saying federal regulations mean that they have to kick people off before expansion, and that's just not right," said Joan Alker, executive director of the Center for Children and Families at Georgetown University. "They absolutely could be structuring this in a way that those people didn't experience a loss in coverage."

Lucy Dagneau, head of Medicaid campaigns for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, agreed. South Dakota and North Carolina "can't actually stop the process of the unwinding. However, they have flexibility in terms of how they batch the enrollees," she said.

Alker and Dagneau said states don't have to start the unwinding process right away, and when they do, they could delay reviewing enrollees who are likely to requalify under expansion.

South Dakotans and North Carolinians who want to avoid a gap in health care coverage can apply for private insurance, which could be subsidized under the Affordable Care Act. They could then reapply for Medicaid once applications for expansion coverage begin. But if they wind up uninsured during the gap period, they might avoid seeking treatment or face expensive bills.

South Dakota is one of five states that began culling April 1, the earliest date possible. Its Medicaid



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expansion goes into effect July 1. About 16,000 South Dakotans were disenrolled in April, but more than 1,700 of them will requalify under expansion, according to state data.

North Carolina will begin disenrolling people who are no longer eligible for Medicaid on July 1. The state has not set a timeline for Medicaid expansion, but it's expected to occur within the unwinding period, which lasts through May 2024.

Jay Ludlam, deputy secretary of North Carolina's Medicaid program, said the uncertain timing makes it difficult to avoid temporarily disenrolling people. Ludlam said about 300,000 North Carolinians are expected to be removed from Medicaid during the unwinding. He estimated one-third of them will requalify after expansion.

Kathy Murray added Jonathon to her workplace insurance plan, which will more than double her premiums over the intervening months. She said she won't be able to pay some other bills during this time, but her son can't go without health care.

She said South Dakota's approach seems inefficient, since state workers will have to disenroll and reenroll some people within a short period. "It's creating a lot of work for the state workers because they're going to send out paperwork and requalify everybody," she said.

Matt Althoff, secretary of the South Dakota Department of Social Services, said that the agency's unwinding plan is "based on compliance with CMS rules, limitations of the technology used to support South Dakota Medicaid, and the overall impact to customers."

The agency wrote in a March document that it was working closely with the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services "to explore waivers and flexibilities during the period of the unwinding prior to expansion and will continue to do so."

Althoff did not respond when asked by KFF Health News whether the state had discussions with the federal agency about avoiding temporary disenrollments. Sara Lonardo, press secretary for CMS, said the agency could not comment on whether it had any related conversations with South Dakota or North Carolina officials.

Although South Dakota won't prevent people likely to requalify for Medicaid from temporarily losing coverage, it is taking steps to make sure they know to reapply.

The state is screening people who no longer qualify for Medicaid under the current rules to see if they would requalify after Medicaid expansion. If so, they should be sent letters encouraging them to reapply.

Since 2014, the Affordable Care Act has allowed states to offer Medicaid coverage to more people, with the federal government paying 90% of the costs. All but 10 states have opted into Medicaid expansion.

South Dakota adults currently qualify for Medicaid if they have a certified disability or have children and incomes up to 46% of the federal poverty level. That translates to \$13,800 for a family of four.

Jonathon Murray qualified for Medicaid as a child. But he became an adult during the public health emergency and thus no longer qualifies.

Medicaid expansion will allow adults, with or without children, to enroll in the program if they earn up to 138% of the federal poverty level, or \$20,120 for a single adult. Murray's income as a part-time restaurant cook and dishwasher should allow him to requalify and begin receiving Medicaid coverage on July 1.

Get Covered South Dakota helps people understand and apply for health care insurance. So far, everyone the organization has assisted after being disenrolled from Medicaid has qualified for subsidized private plans under the Affordable Care Act's marketplace, according to program manager Penny Kelley. For people with low incomes, the subsidies can cover most or all of their premiums.

South Dakota Voices for Peace, a nonprofit agency, is assisting people with the Medicaid unwinding and expansion process. Carla Graciano, its outreach coordinator, said many people are confused about the unwinding process after not having to worry about health coverage for more than three years during the public health emergency.

"We have heard concerns about people potentially losing their medical coverage," Graciano said. "It puts a lot of people under stress."

*This story is from KFF Health News, a national newsroom that produces in-depth journalism about health issues and is one of the core operating programs at KFF—an independent source of health policy research, polling, and journalism. Learn more about KFF.*

*Arielle Zionts, rural health care correspondent for KFF Health News, is based in South Dakota. She primarily covers South Dakota and its neighboring states and tribal nations. Arielle previously worked at South Dakota Public Broadcasting, where she reported on business and economic development. Before that, she was the criminal justice reporter at the Rapid City Journal and a general assignment reporter at the Nogales International, on the border of Arizona and Mexico. She graduated from Pitzer College in Claremont, California. Arielle lives in Rapid City with her cat, Sully.*

## Death penalty dispute could go to state Supreme Court

**Lincoln County prosecutors want clarity on legal definition of intellectual disability**

**BY: JOHN HULT - MAY 18, 2023 1:18 PM**

Prosecutors in Lincoln County want the state Supreme Court to decide if it's constitutional to seek the death penalty for a man defense attorneys say is intellectually disabled.

Second Circuit Presiding Judge Robin Houwman ruled in late April that the state's standards for intellectual disability do not comport closely enough with medical standards to pass constitutional muster.

The decision may take the death penalty off the table for Amir Beaudion Jr., who's accused of kidnapping, raping and killing Pasqalina Badi in January of 2020. A hearing is set for late July, at which Beaudion's lawyers intend to argue that their client is intellectually disabled.

Earlier this month, Judge Houwman denied a motion to reconsider her April ruling. This week, Lincoln County State's Attorney Tom Wollman filed a petition to put her ruling under review by the state's high court.

The issue hinges on a handful of details in South Dakota law that defense lawyers say bar people like Beaudion Jr. from claiming immunity from capital punishment due to intellectual disability. Those with such a disability have been exempt from a death sentence since 2002, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that such a sentence would violate the Eighth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution's prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment.

Beaudion Jr.'s lawyers say the state's standards are too restrictive. The law not only requires a person to have an I.Q. score below 70, but also that the I.Q. score and its relation to a person's "subaverage" adaptive skills be documented before a defendant reaches 18 years old.

Beaudion Jr. was 19 at the time of the homicide, and has no such documentation. He does, however, have an I.Q. score of 60, according to court documents.

Houwman's April ruling sided with defense attorneys, who referenced case law showing that courts are typically bound by guidance of the medical community in determinations of intellectual disability.

In 2021 and 2022, after Beaudion Jr.'s alleged crime, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) updated its guidance on intellectual disability in a manner the defense said qualifies their client for immunity from execution. The DSM no longer ties together I.Q. and adaptive function as a requirement for a diagnosis of intellectual disability.

Defense lawyers had also tried to bar the death penalty for their client because of his young age at the time of the crime, but Judge Houwman rejected those arguments.

In this week's appeal on the question of intellectual disability, Wollman wrote that Beaudion Jr. cannot legally challenge state laws on the death penalty, as he has yet to be convicted of a crime for which the death penalty is a possibility.

Houwman ruled that the individual laws in question aren't unconstitutional on their face, but become so when taken together to create a legal definition of intellectual disability. They are "inseparably connected," Houwman wrote.

Wollman's petition makes the case that courts need to meet a higher standard before upending laws passed by the legislative branch.

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It's also relevant, Wollman wrote, that the state's high court has yet to clearly define the bounds of an intellectual disability claim in South Dakota death penalty cases.

"As it stands today," the petition says, "There is currently no standard or statutory allowance for a defendant to claim an intellectual disability as a bar to the death penalty."

Going forward with a hearing on Beaudion Jr.'s intellectual disability this July without such a standard in place, the petition says, would make Houwman "step into the shoes of the legislature to determine proper procedure, determine which party bears the burden, what that burden is, and ultimately what the standard is to define intellectual disability."

The South Dakota Supreme Court has yet to decide whether to hear Wollman's appeal.

*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.*

## With summer coming fast, regulator issues electric reliability warning

BY: ROBERT ZULLO - MAY 19, 2023 6:00 AM

As much as two thirds of North America could face shortages of electricity this summer in the event of severe and protracted heat, according to the regulator in charge of setting and enforcing standards for the electric grid.

"Increased, rapid deployment of wind, solar and batteries have made a positive impact," said Mark Olson, manager of reliability assessments for the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), in a news release. "However, generator retirements continue to increase the risks associated with extreme summer temperatures, which factors into potential supply shortages in the western two-thirds of North America if summer temperatures spike."

NERC's 2023 Summer Reliability Assessment says the amount of electric generation capacity across the country is adequate for normal summer weather, though spiking temperatures, coupled with potential high outage rates from fossil plants and low output from renewables, could force emergency actions like interrupting power service. NERC says the areas that face elevated risk are the U.S. West, the Midwestern states that are part of SPP and MISO — a pair of regional transmission organizations that each coordinate the flow of electricity for a huge swathe of the central U.S. — Texas, New England and parts of the upper South.

"Weather officials are expecting above normal temperatures for much of the United States," the report says. "In addition, drought conditions continue across much of the western half of North America, resulting in unique challenges to area electricity supplies and potential impacts on demand. ... Above average seasonal temperatures can contribute to high peak demand as well as an increase in forced outages for generation and some (bulk power system) equipment."

A MISO spokesman said the organization had no comment on the report but said it was holding a meeting Thursday on its summer power outlook. SPP did not respond Wednesday to a request for comment.

Robert Zullo is a national energy reporter based in southern Illinois focusing on renewable power and the electric grid. Robert joined States Newsroom in 2018 as the founding editor of the Virginia Mercury. Before that, he spent 13 years as a reporter and editor at newspapers in Virginia, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Louisiana. He has a bachelor's degree from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Va. He grew up in Miami, Fla., and central New Jersey.



## Overhaul federal permitting as part of the debt limit deal? Not as easy as it sounds.

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - MAY 18, 2023 5:10 PM

Congressional leaders negotiating a deal to avoid a catastrophic default on the nation's debt are talking about including an overhaul of how the federal government reviews projects for their environmental impact.

There is bipartisan support for changes to the lengthy environmental approval process among climate-minded Democrats eager to speed construction of renewable energy projects, as well as Republicans who have complained for years that the burdens of federal permitting restrict development.

But with a handful of competing and conflicting proposals floating through Congress and the clock ticking toward default as soon as early June, time is running out for a deal on permitting legislation to be included in a debt limit bill.

"It's probably not likely that you're going to get substantive permitting reform in the debt limit bill," said Frank Maisano, a Republican media strategist and partner with Bracewell LLP, a firm whose clients include energy companies.

"There just isn't enough time to get through some of the thorny details and the complexities ... It's going to require a lot of back and forth, and it's going to require a lot of willingness to compromise from all parties."

The shape of such a compromise had not emerged by Thursday, roughly two weeks before the federal government could run out of funding to pay its bills without a debt limit law. Instead, lawmakers may agree on a "framework to a framework," and work out the details later, Maisano said.

Two weeks is not enough time to work through negotiations this challenging, said Lisa Frank, the executive director of the Washington legislative office for advocacy group Environment America.

"These are really complicated and difficult issues to address," Lisa Frank said. "So throwing something slapdash into the debt ceiling deal, I think, would wind up being a pretty bad idea."

### Competing proposals

The Republican-controlled U.S. House included major overhauls to environmental reviews in a comprehensive energy bill that the chamber approved — with little support from Democrats — in March.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat, has said he has no plans to bring the measure up there.

Four key senators, the top Democrats and Republicans on the Environment and Public Works Committee and Energy and Natural Resources Committee, have all introduced bills to update the permitting process.

But none has emerged as a clear favorite.

The latest Senate bill, led by Democrats Tom Carper, a Delaware senator who chairs the Environment and Public Works Committee, and Hawaii's Brian Schatz, was introduced only Thursday. Sens. Tina Smith of Minnesota, Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island, Chris Murphy of Connecticut and Alex Padilla of California cosponsored the measure.

That bill includes guidelines for time limits, but those would not be enforceable.

That creates a conflict with Wyoming Republican John Barrasso, the ranking member on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, who said at a hearing last week that "enforceable timelines" were among his dealbreakers for a bill.

A bill led by West Virginia's Shelley Moore Capito, the ranking Republican on Carper's committee, also includes a strict two-year timeline.

Barrasso, the third-ranking Senate Republican, also said he would demand a bill treats all forms of energy equally. That would appear at odds with the Carper bill that is focused on renewable energy and requires that environmental reviews consider cumulative effects, including climate change.

And while President Joe Biden is in support of changing the approvals process, a framework the White House released last week also said renewable energy projects should be prioritized.

Centrist West Virginia Democrat Joe Manchin III authored another measure, the only one with dem-

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onstrated bipartisan support through a failed Senate floor vote last year. Manchin, the chairman of the Senate Energy panel, urged compromise at the hearing last week.

"We need to take our names off the bill and go back to a bipartisan permitting reform bill," he said. "That's the only way we can take politics out of this. ... Make no mistake: Actually getting something done will require a lot of compromise and prioritization."

## Environmental objections

Even with some Democratic climate hawks in the Senate pursuing a deal for its renewable energy potential, environmental groups are still largely wary of changes to bedrock environmental laws like the National Environmental Policy Act that requires the lengthy reviews at issue.

Complaints about permitting delays are overblown, said Aaron Weiss, the deputy director of conservation group Center for Western Priorities.

"It is a tiny portion of NEPA reviews that ever run past two years," he said. "And when they do, it's for good reason, it's because either it's incredibly controversial or there's something deficient about the initial proposal that needs to be addressed."

The federal government could speed reviews without undermining environmental protections, by adding staff to the Bureau of Land Management, he said.

Some environmental groups concede the process could be hastened, especially for renewable energy projects, but are loath to support anything that would ease approvals for fossil fuel approvals.

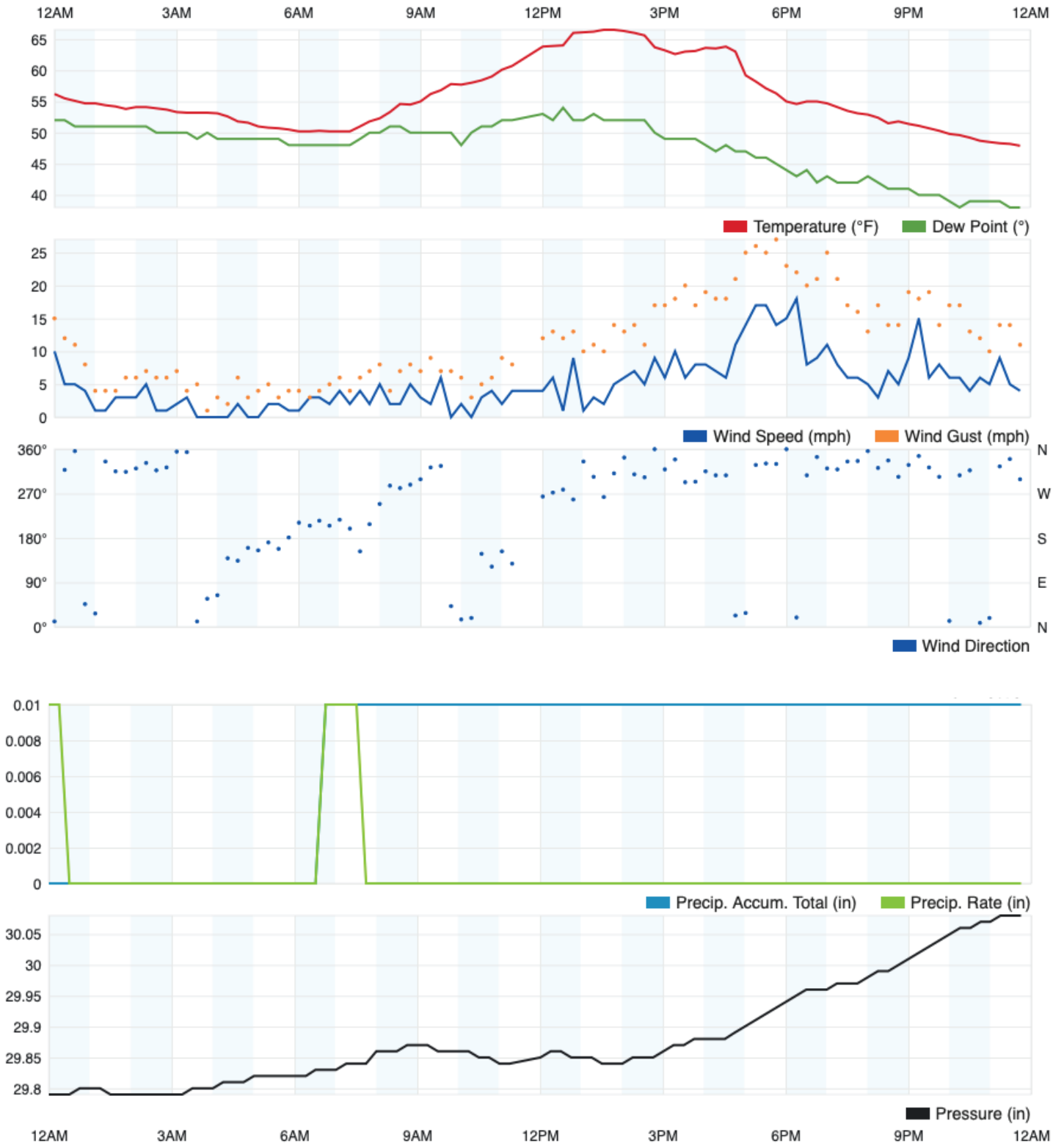
"Some of these problems we think are worth solving," Frank said. "And some we think are not, in fact, problems."

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

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs






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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
						
Partly Sunny and Breezy	Clear	Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny
High: 64 °F	Low: 39 °F	High: 75 °F	Low: 48 °F	High: 81 °F	Low: 55 °F	High: 85 °F

## Today, Friday

May 19th, 2023

 **58-68°**

Cooler across the Prairie Coteau, warmest across central SD

High temperatures 5-15 degrees below normal. Lows tonight in the low 40s to upper 30s.

## The Weekend

May 20-21st, 2023

 **70-84°**

Cooler across the Prairie Coteau Saturday, warmest across central SD Sunday

Warming trend begins. A return of lofted and perhaps some low-level smoke from Canadian wildfires on Saturday.



weather.gov/aberndeen May 19, 2023 5:43 AM

Cool temperatures are expected today, along with northerly wind gusts generally between 20 and 30 mph. After one more chilly night with lows potentially into the 30s tonight into Saturday morning, temperatures rebound into the 70s and 80s across the area this weekend and continue to warm into the new work-week. Dry meanwhile, with additional rounds of smoke from Canadian wildfires possible.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 67 °F at 1:26 PM

Low Temp: 48 °F at 11:06 PM

Wind: 27 mph at 5:38 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 06 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 97 in 1932

Record Low: 28 in 2002

Average High: 72

Average Low: 46

Average Precip in May.: 2.11

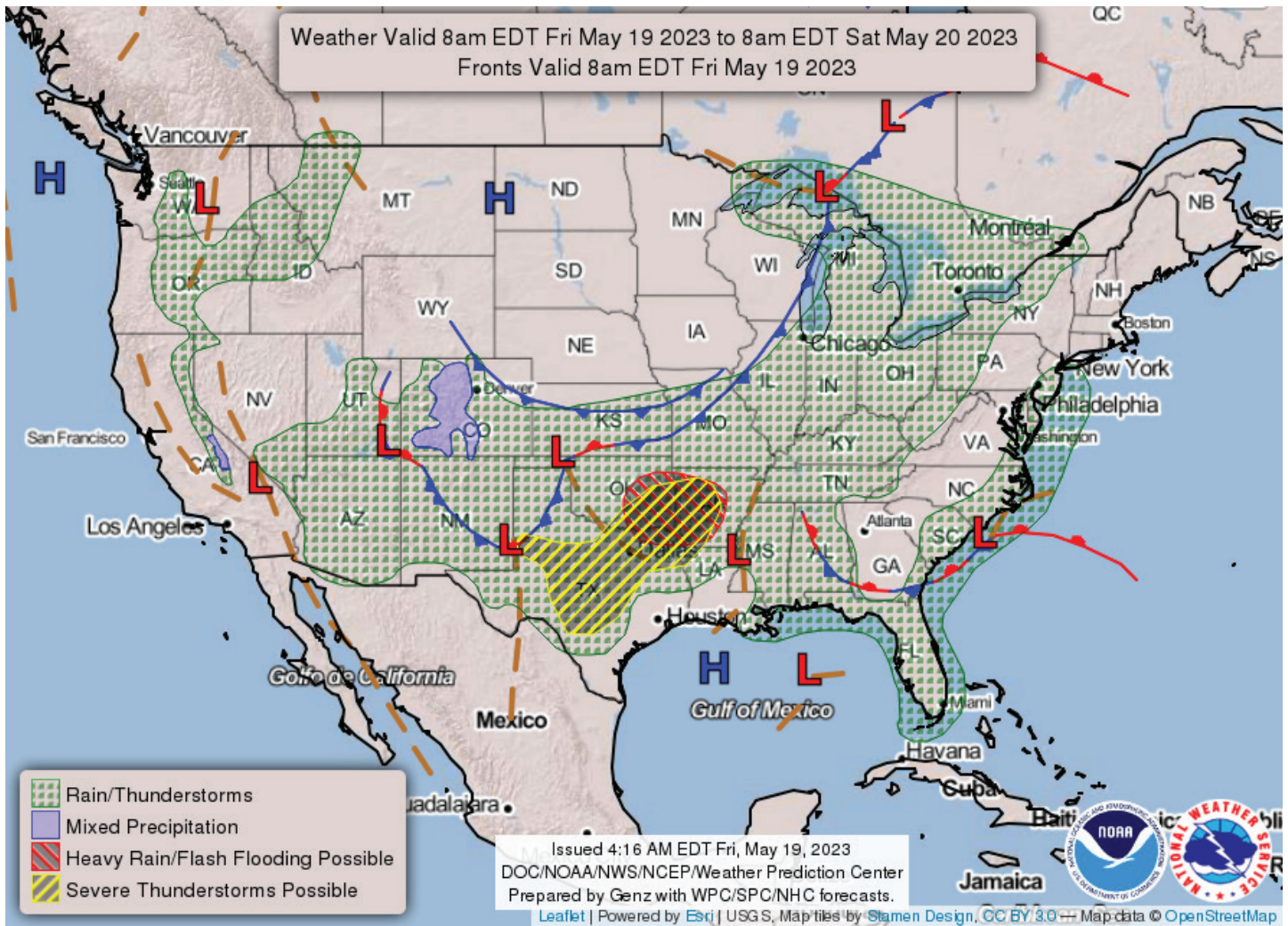
Precip to date in May.: 2.15

Average Precip to date: 6.08

Precip Year to Date: 7.87

Sunset Tonight: 9:02:01 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:54:44 AM



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## Today in Weather History

May 19, 1982: With the ground in the Black Hills already saturated from heavy rains the previous week, developing thunderstorms were not a welcome sight. The thunderstorms produced additional heavy rains including 3.58 inches at Spearfish, 3.32 inches at Cheyenne Crossing, and 0.82 of an inch in twelve minutes at Hot Springs. With Flash Flood Warnings in effect for much of the area water came out of the banks of many streams causing widespread damage in the Hills. A diversion Dam broke at Spearfish causing a mudslide to cover some roads. In Deadwood, the main water line broke leaving the city temporarily without water. Homes were evacuated at Nisland, Hot Springs, and Bridger. Damage throughout the Black Hills included washed out bridges, flooded basements, several breached dams, and roads completely washed away.

1780: The infamous "dark day" in New England tradition. At noon, it was nearly as dark as night. Chickens went to roost, and many persons were fearful of divine wrath. The "dark day" was caused by forest fires to the west of New England.

1915: A spring storm came to an end after producing widespread snow. Total snowfall from the storm included: 17.6 inches in Scottsbluff, Nebraska, 8 inches at Cheyenne, Wyoming, 7 inches at Chadron and 3.9 inches in North Platte, Nebraska.

1955 - Lake Maloya NM received 11.28 inches of rain in 24 hours to establish a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1975 - Thunderstorms produced golf ball size hail and wind gusts to 110 mph in Minnesota, between Fridley and Hugo. Fifty persons were injured. The hail and high winds destroyed fifty mobile homes, and a dozen aircraft, and also destroyed a third of the Brighton Elementary School. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms in Texas produced thirteen inches of rain northwest of Lavernia. The heavy rain, along with golf ball size hail, destroyed eighty percent of the crops in the area, while high winds toppled trees. Golf ball size hail was also reported south of Dallas and around San Antonio. Up to eight inches of rain drenched Guadalupe County. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Severe thunderstorms in southwest Texas produced hail as large as tennis balls around Midland, with the hail accumulating up to a foot deep. Showers and thunderstorms in the Middle Atlantic Coast Region produced 3.5 inches of rain near Schuylkill PA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front spawned ten tornadoes from Illinois to Tennessee during the afternoon and night. Snow, wind and cold prevailed in the Northern Plateau Region and the Northern Rockies. Dixie, ID, was blanketed with nine inches of snow, winds gusted to 87 mph at Choteau MT, and the temperature at Crater Lake, OR, dipped to 11 degrees. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Thunderstorms deluged Hot Springs AR with thirteen inches of rain in nine hours resulting in a devastating flood. Two waves of water, four to six feet deep, swept down Central Avenue flooding stores and the famous bathhouses on Bathhouse Row. Water released from Lake Hamilton devastated the area between it and Rammel Dam. The 500 foot Carpenter Dam Bridge across Lake Catherine was completely washed away, as were cabins and mobile homes near the lake, many of which flowed right over the top of Rammel Dam. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### WHO GETS THE CREDIT?

A Chinese farmer had only one son and one horse. Nothing else in life mattered to him. One night his horse ran away. His neighbors came to console him and said, "What bad luck!"

Later the horse returned and brought twelve wild horses with him. The neighbors, hearing the news, gathered at his home and rejoiced with him saying, "What good luck!"

While taming one of the wild horses, the son fell and severely broke his leg. The neighbors gathered once again and with remorse said, "What bad luck!"

Soon after this, their warlord was engaged in a battle and took all of the able-bodied men to war - except his son. None of the men returned. But the son, who was excused from going to war and was left behind, led a long and productive life.

Was it the Lord or was it luck?

Every event that occurs in our lives is open for our personal interpretation. When the mind of Christ is at work within us, we will see God at work in everything.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to realize Your presence and power in our lives and see Your hand at work. Open our eyes, minds, and hearts to see You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. Romans 8:26



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 15 Hrs 36 Mins 42  
DRAW: 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 1 Days 15 Hrs 36  
DRAW: Mins 42 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.18.23

10 16 23 36 38 1

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

NEXT 15 Hrs 6 Mins 41  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.17.23

14 18 22 28 32

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

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 36  
DRAW: Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.17.23

21 26 37 52 53 26

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

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 35  
DRAW: Mins 42 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 1 Days 15 Hrs 35  
DRAW: Mins 42 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)



## News from the Associated Press

### At graduations, Native American students seek acceptance of tribal regalia

By CHEYANNE MUMPHREY AP Education Writer

When Kamryn Yanchick graduated, she hoped to decorate her cap with a beaded pattern in honor of her Indigenous heritage. Whether she could was up to her Oklahoma high school. Administrators told her no.

Yanchick settled for beaded earrings to represent her Native American identity at her 2018 graduation.

A bill vetoed earlier this month by Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt, a Republican, would have allowed public school students to wear feathers, beaded caps, stoles or other objects of cultural and religious significance. Yanchick, a citizen of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma and descendent of the Muscogee Nation, said she hopes the legislature tries again.

Being able to “unapologetically express yourself and take pride in your culture at a celebration without having to ask a non-Native person for permission to do so is really significant,” said Yanchick, who now works for the American Civil Liberties Union of Oklahoma.

For Native American students, tribal regalia is often passed down through generations and worn at graduations to signify connection with the community. Disputes over such attire have spurred laws making it illegal to prevent Indigenous students from wearing regalia in nearly a dozen states including Arizona, Oregon, South Dakota, North Dakota and Washington.

High schools, which often favor uniformity at commencement ceremonies, take a range of approaches toward policing sashes, flower leis and other forms of self-expression. Advocates argue the laws are needed to avoid leaving it up to individual administrators.

Groups like the Native American Rights Fund hear regularly from students blocked from wearing eagle feathers or other regalia. This week in Oklahoma, a Native American high school graduate sued a school district, claiming she was forced her to remove a feather from her cap at a ceremony last spring.

When Jade Roberson graduated from Edmond Santa Fe High School, the same school attended by Yanchick, she would have liked to wear a beaded cap and a large turquoise necklace above her gown. But it didn’t seem worth asking. She said a friend was only able to wear an eagle feather because he spoke with several counselors, consulted the principal and received a letter from the Cherokee Nation on the feather’s significance.

“It was such a hassle for him that my friends and I decided to just wear things under our gown,” said Roberson, who is of Navajo descent. “I think it is such a metaphor for what it is like to be Native.”

When Adriana Redbird graduates this week from Sovereign Community School, a charter school in Oklahoma City that allows regalia, she plans to wear a beaded cap and feather given by her father to signify her achievements.

“To pay tribute and take a small part of our culture and bring that with us on graduation day is meaningful,” she said.

In his veto message, Stitt said allowing students to wear tribal regalia should be up to individual districts. He said the proposal could also lead other groups to “demand special favor to wear whatever they please” at graduations.

The bill’s author, Republican state Rep. Trey Caldwell, represents a district in southwest Oklahoma that includes lands once controlled by Kiowa, Apache and Comanche tribes.

“It’s just the right thing to do, especially with so much of Native American culture so centered around right of passage, becoming a man, becoming an adult,” he said.

Several tribal nations have called for an override of the veto. Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin said the bill would have helped foster a sense of pride among Native American students. Muscogee Nation Principal Chief David Hill said students who “choose to express the culture and heritage of their respective Nations” are honoring their identity.

It means a lot that the bill was able to garner support and make it to the governor, Yanchick said, but she wishes it wasn't so controversial.

"Native American students shouldn't have to be forced to be activists to express themselves or feel celebrated," she said.

Mumphrey reported from Phoenix. AP reporter Sean Murphy contributed to this story from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

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

## **Saving the farm: Heartland clergy train to prevent agriculture workers' suicides**

By GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO Associated Press

LAKE BENTON, Minn. (AP) — With traces of winter's unusually heavy snow still lingering but a warm sun finally shining, farmers were out dawn to dusk in early May on their tractors, planting corn and soybeans across southwestern Minnesota fields many have owned for generations.

The threat of losing these beloved family farms has become a constant worry, affecting many farmers' mental health and raising concerns of another uptick in suicides like during the 1980s farm crisis. Much of the stress stems from being dependent on factors largely outside their control – from the increasingly unpredictable weather to growing costs of equipment to global market swings that can wipe out profits.

"You'd be surprised how many people are suffering with depression. Farmers have been a group of people who keep problems to themselves, proud and private," said Bob Worth, a third-generation crop farmer who with his son works 2,100 acres of rich, black soil near the hamlet of Lake Benton.

"The more you talk about this, the more you realize it can be fixed," added Worth, who credits his wife with saving his life in the 1980s when he got so depressed that he wouldn't budge from bed even for the harvest. At least three neighbors and fellow farmers killed themselves, Worth said.

Increasingly aware of agricultural workers' struggles with mental health, states such as Minnesota and South Dakota, a few miles west of Worth's farm, are offering suicide prevention training to clergy – who are a crucial, trusted presence in rural America.

In Pipestone, the bigger town down the dirt road from Worth's farm – with 4,200 residents and a dozen churches – pastors from three Lutheran parishes are taking the four-week suicide prevention program for clergy that Minnesota's departments of agriculture and health launched this spring.

"I want to learn to help. This could be anybody," said the Rev. Robert Moeller, recalling his first realization of the scourge of suicide among farmers, when a customer in the feed business he worked at before being ordained killed himself.

Moeller plans to introduce suicide prevention in his 5th through 8th grade catechism class at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, and is eager to learn about supporting surviving family members and those who attempted suicide without the stigma and shame often attached to it.

EDITOR'S NOTE — This story includes discussion of suicide. The national suicide and crisis lifeline is available by calling or texting 988. There is also an online chat at [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org).

While rising levels of stress and anxiety are affecting Americans from students to service members, the dynamics are different in the farmland – and so is the strength of the clergy's role in rural communities, where churches are essential social gathering points.

"Every farm family I know has a relationship with a house of worship," said Meg Moynihan, a dairy farmer in southern Minnesota who's been developing the clergy-focused training programs as a senior advisor to the state's agriculture department. "There's a huge sense of pride."

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The evident satisfaction that farmers take in growing crops and raising livestock to feed the country – and beyond, as corn for example is also often sold to China – makes the fear of being unable to keep going a key factor in mental health distress.

“It’s not losing a job or a place. There’s a sense of threat to one’s identity and generational legacy across time,” said Sean Brotherson, professor and extension family science specialist at North Dakota State University. “People treat the farm as a member of the family – and the longest-living member of the family.”

The question, he said, becomes who is going to be the one to decide it’s time to let the farm go.

With financing tapped out and feeling they might not be able to pay off more equity in their middle age, Keith and Theresia Gillie started talking about finding jobs away from his homestead in northwestern Minnesota.

“I never realized that in the midst of us quitting farming, that was his identity,” said Gillie, who found her husband of more than 30 years dead on a gravel road. Six years later, she’s still farming wheat, soybean and sunflowers with two neighbors’ help, and has spoken out about Keith’s suicide to get more farmers to open up about their struggles.

Male agricultural workers’ suicide rates are more than two times higher than the national average, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. There are several issues that play a role, including increased isolation and exacerbated family tensions during the pandemic, the difficulty in rural communities to find in-person mental health counseling or to access broadband for tele-health, as well as the disruptions brought by climate change-driven unpredictable weather patterns, inflation and international trade disputes.

As the average age for farmers inches toward 60, the pressure of passing on a life-defining legacy to new generations is a growing problem, said Monica McConkey, a rural mental health specialist contracted by Minnesota’s agriculture department to provide counseling at no cost.

Driving his tractor and planter, some \$750,000 in machinery, Todd Sanderson reflected on how farming has changed in the 42 seasons he’s been planting corn outside Flandreau, South Dakota. An eye to the sky is still foremost – Sanderson decided to get the seeds in the ground the first week of May even though frost still covered the tractor’s windshield in the morning, because later planting means meager yields.

The physical demands have diminished, with technology in his tractor resembling a cockpit more than an agrarian tool, but the uncertainty of making enough to keep the land only grows as the capital investments rise. Sanderson, 61, hopes a nephew will take over from him eventually.

“That’s what’s keeping me up at night, the transition,” he said. “We out here in ag are pretty solitary. If your mind is going in the wrong direction, it’s pretty easy to end up in a bad place. The more I get stressed, the more I get quiet.”

Breaking farmers out of that proud reserve is a big challenge, even for clergy, said the Rev. Alan Blankenfeld. He is the rural ministry liaison for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s South Dakota synod and Sanderson’s former pastor in Flandreau, where they started a suicide prevention program that includes Spanish information, since many dairy workers there are immigrants.

“As a pastor, you don’t always have to have something profound to say. It’s just, show up,” said Blankenfeld, who likes to visit farmers and ranchers so they don’t have to come to a church, where their parked vehicle might be recognized by everyone in town and start a rumor mill. “They’ll share on their terms. Our place is not counseling, but we can walk with them.”

Back across the state line in Pipestone, the Rev. Ann Zastrow of First Lutheran Church, who’s taking the Minnesota online prevention course, hopes to build up her confidence to remind those struggling with mental health that “God is still in the picture.”

In many farm families, faith and struggle have long coexisted. First Lutheran’s council president, a retired hog farmer who now raises lambs from 500 ewes outside town, said he still remembers when his mother asked him to take guns out of the house because she was worried about his father.

“Stress and depression and suicide in a farmer is part of it. You just hope that it isn’t your part,” Craig Thies said as newborn lambs tottered around him. “I remember the look on (my father’s) face when they



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sold his cows. Realistically, they're like your children. But somebody is eating tonight because of you."

Seeing themselves as part of a crucial creation plan cements farmers' faith and involvement in church activities, which have historically forged bonds in otherwise isolated homesteads.

That in turn makes the clergy potential lifesavers when given the right tools to help with compassion and without the moral judgment that many still fear about suicide.

"One place we struggle within the church is if we treat suicide as shameful, then they won't share they're not okay," said the Rev. Kelly Ahola, a Lutheran pastor in the Red River Valley, where springtime flooding can wreak havoc on farmland in Minnesota and North Dakota. "We need to say the words. We need to learn to ask, are you thinking of suicide? We need to train the congregation too to know when and how to intervene."

How to tackle suicide from the pulpit and how to approach it theologically when many consider it a sin was one of the first questions raised in the four-week training course that Minnesota is running. Most of the 80 clergy from across the state who enrolled in it had encountered suicides in their ministry.

For one of them, the Rev. Jillene Gallatin, the call to prevention is excruciatingly personal. It was her pastor who drove her to the hospital when, at 15, she tried to kill herself a year after her mother took her own life. And it was in her church that she met comfort instead of the deafening silence and averted eyes elsewhere in her community.

"People need to tell their stories and struggles that are not so visible. That's a gift we can bring as church, being a safe spot," Gallatin said in the sanctuary of Grace Lutheran Church in Waseca, about an hour south of Minneapolis.

Later that spring day, she visited the dairy farm of a church member. Two brothers, along with their wives, children, and father, run the farm that their German immigrant ancestors founded in the 1870s.

There wasn't a dry eye in the room when the relatives discussed the option of stopping the milking operation, Jason Eldeen recalled.

But they persevered, which makes them among the 1.3% of U.S. workers with direct on-farm employment, according to a podcast he likes to listen to when out in the fields – and to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's 2023 data.

"How lucky we are that we get to farm," he said, as some of the cows reached out to lick his and Gallatin's hands in the spring sunshine.

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## **Bass guitarist Andy Rourke of The Smiths, one of Britain's most influential bands, dies at 59**

By PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Andy Rourke, bass guitarist of The Smiths, one of the most influential British bands of the 1980s, has died after a lengthy illness with pancreatic cancer, his former bandmate Johnny Marr said Friday. He was 59.

In a lengthy post on Instagram, guitarist and songwriter Marr paid tribute to Rourke, who he first met when both were schoolboys in 1975.

"Throughout our teens we played in various bands around south Manchester before making our reputations with The Smiths from 1982 to 1987, and it was on those Smiths records that Andy reinvented what it is to be a bass guitar player," Marr said.

During their short time together as a four-piece band, The Smiths deliberately stayed away from the mainstream of popular music, garnering a cult following on the independent music scene.

Though much of the attention focused on the song-writing partnership of Marr and frontman Steven Patrick Morrissey, better known as Morrissey, the sound of The Smiths owed much to Rourke's bass and his rhythm section partner, drummer Mike Joyce.

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As their popularity swelled, the band released some of the most enduring British music of the 1980s, including "Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now" and "Girlfriend In A Coma."

The Smiths songs garnered a reputation of being depressing, but were in fact darkly humorous and accompanied by stirring and uplifting guitars. Their albums, including "The Queen is Dead" and "Meat is Murder," remain a staple of any self-respecting music fan and are at the forefront of the revival of vinyl records.

"I was present at every one of Andy's bass takes on every Smiths session," Marr said. "Sometimes I was there as the producer and sometimes just as his proud mate and cheerleader. Watching him play those dazzling baselines was an absolute privilege and genuinely something to behold."

Marr said he and Rourke maintained their friendship in the years after the band split up, recalling that Rourke played in his band at Madison Square Garden as recently as September 2022.

"It was a special moment that we shared with my family and his wife and soul mate Francesca," Marr said. "Andy will always be remembered, as a kind and beautiful soul by everyone who knew him, and as a supremely gifted musician by people who love music. Well done Andy. We'll miss you brother."

After The Smiths, Rourke played alongside The Pretenders and Sinead O'Connor, as well as with the supergroup Freebass, which included Gary Mounfield from the Stone Roses and Peter Hook from New Order.

## Zelenskyy to attend G7 summit Sunday as world leaders tighten sanctions against Russia over Ukraine

By ZEKE MILLER, FOSTER KLUG and ELAINE KURTENBACH Associated Press

HIROSHIMA, Japan (AP) — Leaders of the world's most powerful democracies vowed Friday to tighten punishments on Russia for its 15-month invasion of Ukraine, days before President Volodymyr Zelenskyy joins the Group of Seven summit in person on Sunday.

"Our support for Ukraine will not waver," the G7 leaders said in a statement released after closed-door meetings, vowing "to stand together against Russia's illegal, unjustifiable, and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine."

"Russia started this war and can end this war," they said.

Oleksiy Danilov, secretary of Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council, confirmed on national television that Zelenskyy would attend the summit.

"We were sure that our president would be where Ukraine needed him, in any part of the world, to solve the issue of stability of our country," Danilov said Friday. "There will be very important matters decided there, so physical presence is a crucial thing to defend our interests."

Zelenskyy announced Friday that he had opened a visit to Saudi Arabia, where Arab leaders were holding a summit.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's nuclear threats against Ukraine, along with North Korea's months-long barrage of missile tests and China's rapidly expanding nuclear arsenal, have resonated with Japan's push to make nuclear disarmament a major part of the G7 summit. World leaders Friday visited a peace park dedicated to the tens of thousands who died in the world's first wartime atomic bomb detonation.

After group photos near the city's iconic bombed-out dome, a wreath-laying and a symbolic cherry tree planting, a new round of sanctions were unveiled against Moscow, with a focus on redoubling efforts to enforce existing sanctions meant to stifle Russia's war effort and hold accountable those behind it, a U.S. official said. Russia is now the most-sanctioned country in the world, but there are questions about the effectiveness of the financial penalties.

The U.S. component of the actions would blacklist about 70 Russian and third-country entities involved in Russia's defense production, and sanction more than 300 individuals, entities, aircraft and vessels, said a U.S. official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to preview the announcement.

The official said the other G7 nations would undertake similar steps to further isolate Russia and to undermine its ability to wage war in Ukraine. Details were to emerge throughout the weekend summit.

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The G7 nations said in Friday's statement that they would work to keep Russia from using the international financial system to prosecute its war, would "further restrict Russia's access to our economies" and would prevent sanctions evasion by Moscow.

They urged other nations to stop providing Russia with support and weapons "or face severe costs."

The European Union was focused on closing loopholes and plans to restrict trade in Russian diamonds, Charles Michel, president of the European Council, told reporters Friday.

The UK also announced new sanctions that freeze the assets of 86 people and organizations connected to Russia's energy, metals, defense, transport and financial sectors.

"We need to give Ukraine the tools now to successfully defend itself and regain full sovereignty and territorial integrity. We should provide Ukraine the necessary military and financial support. And we have to do this as long as it takes," EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who represents Hiroshima in parliament, wants nuclear disarmament to be a major focus of discussions, and he formally started the summit at Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park. The visit by world leaders to a park dedicated to preserving reminders of Aug. 6, 1945, when a U.S. B-29 dropped an atomic bomb over Hiroshima, provided a striking backdrop to the start the summit. An estimated 140,000 people were killed in the attack, and a fast-dwindling number of now-elderly survivors have ensured that Hiroshima has become synonymous with anti-nuclear peace efforts.

"Honestly, I have big doubts if Mr. Kishida, who is pursuing a military buildup and seeking to revise the pacifist constitution, can really discuss nuclear disarmament," Sueichi Kido, a 83-year-old "hibakusha" or survivor of the Nagasaki explosion, told The Associated Press. "But because they are meeting in Hiroshima I do have a sliver of hope that they will have positive talks and make a tiny step toward nuclear disarmament."

On Thursday night, Kishida opened the global diplomacy by sitting down with President Joe Biden. Kishida also held talks with British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.

The Japan-U.S. alliance is the "very foundation of peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region," Kishida told Biden. Japan, facing threats from authoritarian China, Russia and North Korea, has been expanding its military but also relies on 50,000 U.S. troops stationed in Japan and U.S. military might.

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

Biden, who greeted U.S. and Japanese troops at nearby Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni before meeting with Kishida, said: "When our countries stand together, we stand stronger, and I believe the whole world is safer when we do."

As G7 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 United States has frozen Russian Central Bank funds, restricted banks' access to SWIFT -- the dominant system for global financial transactions -- and sanctioned thousands of Russian firms, government officials, oligarchs and their families.

The Group of Seven nations collectively imposed a \$60 per-barrel price cap on Russian oil and diesel last year, which the U.S. Treasury Department on Thursday defended in a new progress report, stating that the cap has been successful in suppressing Russian oil revenues. Treasury cites Russian Ministry of Finance data showing that the Kremlin's oil revenues from January to March this year were more than 40% lower than last year.

The economic impact of sanctions depends largely on the extent to which a targeted country is able to circumvent them, according to a recent Congressional Research Service report. So for the past month, U.S. Treasury officials have traveled across Europe and Central Asia to press countries that still do business with the Kremlin to cut their financial ties.

"The challenge is to make sure the sanctions are painful against Russia, not against ourselves," said Michel. "It's very clear that each package is more difficult than the previous one and requires more political effort to make a decision."

G7 leaders and invited guests from several other countries are also expected to discuss how to deal with



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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.

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.

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 G7 talks. Biden planned to hurry back to Washington after the summit for debt negotiations, scrapping planned meetings in Papua New Guinea and Australia.

The G7 includes Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Canada and Italy, as well as the European Union.

Associated Press writers Josh Boak, Adam Schreck and Mari Yamaguchi in Hiroshima, Raf Casert in Brussels, Hanna Arhirova in Kyiv, and Fatima Hussein in Washington contributed to this report.

## **Arab leaders, joined by Syria's Assad and Ukraine's Zelenskyy, convene summit in Saudi Arabia**

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — Arab leaders, joined by Syrian President Bashar Assad for the first time in more than a decade, were holding an annual summit Friday in Saudi Arabia, with a focus on Sudan and other conflicts — and a surprise visit by Ukraine's president.

The meeting comes as Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman pursues regional diplomacy with the same vigor he previously brought to the oil-rich kingdom's confrontation with its archrival Iran and regional proxies.

In recent months, Saudi Arabia has restored diplomatic ties with Iran, is ending the kingdom's yearslong war against Iran-backed rebels in Yemen and has led the push for Syria's return to the Arab League, 12 years after its membership was suspended over Assad's bloody crackdown on pro-democracy protests inspired by the Arab Spring.

The Saudis have even offered to mediate between Ukraine and Russia, following a prisoner exchange deal they brokered last year.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced Friday he has kicked off a visit to Saudi Arabia, aiming to "enhance bilateral relations and Ukraine's ties with the Arab world." Among other topics he mentioned were Russia's annexation of Crimea, a peace "formula," and energy cooperation.

Saudi state TV broadcast footage showing Zelenskyy arriving at the airport in his trademark brown fatigues and being greeted on the tarmac by Saudi officials.

The Ukrainian leader said he would address the summit in Jeddah and discuss the treatment of Muslim Tatars living under Russian occupation in the Crimean peninsula. The visit comes amid a whirlwind of international travel by the Ukrainian leader, but until now he has mostly visited allied countries.

Arab states have remained largely neutral over Russia's war on Ukraine, with many maintaining close ties to Moscow. Saudi Arabia pledged \$400 million in aid to Ukraine earlier this year and has voted in favor of U.N. resolutions calling on Russia to end its invasion and refrain from annexing Ukrainian territory.

As leaders from the 22-member league meet in the Red Sea city of Jeddah, attention is expected to shift to Sudan. The East African country's top generals — both of whom have been backed by Saudi Arabia and other Arab states — have been battling each other across the country for over a month, killing hundreds and sparking an exodus from the capital, Khartoum, and elsewhere.

Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, leader of the armed forces, and Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo of the para-

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military Rapid Support Forces, agreed to a pact in Jeddah last week that promised safe passage for civilians fleeing the fighting and protection for aid groups. Saudi Arabia and the United States have meanwhile been leading international efforts to broker a lasting truce.

The fighting has killed over 600 people and caused tens of thousands to flee their homes.

The Arab League is also expected to reiterate its perennial support for the Palestinians at a time of soaring Mideast tensions.

In recent years, Assad's forces have recaptured much of Syria's territory from insurgents with help from Russia and Iran. Saudi Arabia had been a leading sponsor of the opposition at the height of the war but pulled back as the insurgents were eventually cornered in a small pocket of northwestern Syria.

"Saudi Arabia's push to bring Syria back into the fold is part of a broader shift in the kingdom's approach to regional politics," says Torbjorn Soltvedt, a leading Mideast analyst at the risk intelligence company Verisk Maplecroft.

"The previously adventurist foreign policy defined by the Yemen intervention and efforts to confront Iran are now being abandoned in favor of a more cautious approach," he said.

Assad's first official meeting on Friday was with his Tunisian counterpart, Kais Saied, who is waging his own crackdown on dissent in the birthplace of the Arab Spring protests that in 2011 swept the region.

"We stand together against the movement of darkness," Assad said, apparently referring to extremist groups that came to dominate the Syrian opposition as his country's civil war ground on, and which drew a large number of recruits from Tunisia.

There are some Arab holdouts to Damascus' rehabilitation, including gas-rich Qatar, which still supports Syria's opposition. Qatar has said it won't stand in the way of the Arab consensus on readmitting Syria but would also not normalize bilateral relations without a political solution to the conflict.

Western countries, which still view Assad as a pariah over his forces' aerial bombardment and gas attacks against civilians during the 12-year civil war, have criticized his return to the Arab fold and vowed to maintain crippling sanctions.

That will likely continue to hamper any reconstruction. Years of heavy fighting involving Assad's forces, the opposition and jihadi groups like the Islamic State group left entire villages and neighborhoods in ruins.

U.S. lawmakers are rallying to block the Arab effort to bring Assad back into the international community. House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul, a Texas Republican, declared the U.S. "must use all of our leverage to stop normalization" with Assad.

Democrats and Republicans on McCaul's committee advanced legislation this week that would bar any U.S. federal agency from recognizing or carrying out normal relations with Syria's government as long as it's led by Assad, who came to power in 2000, following the death of his father.

The legislation would also plug holes in existing U.S. sanctions targeting Assad, and mandate the U.S. create a formal strategy to counter efforts by countries that do normalize relations with his government.

Lawmakers are taking a somewhat harder line than the U.S. administration has so far.

"We do not believe that Syria merits readmission to the Arab League," the State Department's deputy spokesman Vedant Patel told reporters in Washington on Wednesday. He added that U.S. officials have raised this point "with our regional partners and with our partners in the Arab world."

"Our position is clear. We are not going to normalize relations with the Assad regime and we certainly don't support others doing that," Patel said.

Patel said the administration is still committed to a U.N. Security Council resolution adopted in 2015 that endorsed a roadmap to peace drafted three years earlier. But several rounds of talks held over the years between Assad's government and the opposition went nowhere, and he has had little incentive to compromise with the beleaguered insurgents since Russia entered the war on his side eight years ago.

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Associated Press writers Ellen Knickmeyer and Matthew Lee in Washington contributed to this report.

**Videos show gunman saying 'kill me' to onrushing officers in New**

## Mexico rampage that killed 3

By MORGAN LEE, SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN and ANITA SNOW Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — Videos released Thursday of this week's deadly rampage in northwest New Mexico recorded a voice said to be the shooter urging police to "kill me" and officers rushing toward the 18-year-old gunman before fatally shooting him outside a church.

"He is yelling on the Ring footage, 'Come kill me,'" Farmington Police Chief Steve Hebbe said of Beau Wilson, the high school senior who authorities say killed three older women during the attack.

"He's making a stand, he has opportunities to run off, he does not use those opportunities," Hebbe said. "So yes it's my belief that ultimately in his head, he has made the decision that he is going to stand and fight it out until he is killed."

Three older woman were killed Monday by the shooter, including a mother and daughter who happened to be driving through the neighborhood. The victims were identified as longtime Farmington residents Gwendolyn Dean Schofield, 97, her 73-year-old daughter, Melody Ivie, and 79-year-old Shirley Voita.

At least six other people were wounded in the shootings, which sent waves of grief rippling through the community of 50,000 people. They included two police officers, who have been released from medical care as they recover.

Hebbe's comments mirrored an account from witness Candi Brammell, who lives next to the church and told The Associated Press in an interview Tuesday that the gunman seemed to be egging police on, saying: "Come on!"

Brammell said she couldn't believe what she was seeing as Wilson opened fire. Within an instant, he was exchanging shots with the police and then was down in the grass.

Wilson lived with his father in a home that contained an arsenal of weapons and ammunition, apparently legally owned, according to law enforcement authorities. He bought an assault-style rifle last year after he turned 18.

On Monday, police say, he began shooting indiscriminately with the rifle from the front porch area of the home.

The first person hit was Voita, a retired school nurse who was driving by. Video released by police showed her car rolling down the street with the door open after she managed to get out.

Video also showed the path of a vehicle carrying Schofield and Ivie, who stopped to help. Schofield was a teacher her entire career, and Melody followed in her footsteps by running a preschool for 40 years.

"They see something in the road, which turns out to be (Voita), and they're in the process of pulling over" when another hail of gunfire erupts, Hebbe said, narrating the images. "At that time we believe all those rounds are fired from (the rifle)."

Police say Wilson soon dropped the weapon into some bushes even though it still held more live ammunition.

Wilson then walked down the street for about a quarter mile, spraying bullets indiscriminately using two pistols. He discharged a .22-caliber gun and then depleted rounds from a 9-mm weapon in the final shootout with police, during which he let off at least 18 rounds.

He wore what appeared to be a modified protective vest with steel plates, but authorities say he discarded the vest before the shootout with police.

Police body camera video showed the perspective of one officer walking and running down the middle of the residential street, readying an assault rifle in one hand while barking commands into a radio in the other. On the run, he takes cues from a local resident and a dog runs beside them.

That video is later partially obscured, but a shadow on the ground shows the officer bracing in firing position for the final confrontation.

"I have eyes on the suspect. He's walking south. He's wearing all black," an officer tells dispatchers in another video segment.

He then yells, "Farmington police! Let's see your hands!"

A police car speeds by with flashing lights and sirens.



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Video from the body camera of Sgt. Rachel Discenza showed her pointing her handgun toward where the suspect was standing. Amid an exchange of gunfire, she falls to the ground, and says: "I'm shot."

She struggles unsuccessfully to get up, and a fellow officer uses her belt as a tourniquet.

"We got one hit. Get me a medic here for sarge," he yells.

In the grass in front of the church, officers rush to the suspect after the gunfire subsides, telling him not to move. One officer cuffs him, while another says, "Subject is down. He is secured."

A note was later found in the pocket of the discarded vest that said, "If your reading this in the end of the chapter.

The gunman's body was left in the grass for a time as investigators worked the scene, and it was unclear then how many times he was shot.

Police said earlier this week that they couldn't say how many gunshot wounds the victims had suffered and were waiting on the medical investigator's report, which had not been made public as of Thursday.

Neighbor Bryan Brown, who was among those who ran to render first aid, told AP that Voita had gunshot wounds to the leg and the head.

Relatives of the three slain women said each left an indelible mark that will continue to shape the lives of others.

"In immeasurable ways, this heart-wrenching incident has impacted not only our family, but those of the Voita and Wilson families," the Schofield and Ivie family said Thursday in a statement. "We have a shared grief and ask for continued prayers and privacy as we embody the faith, grace and love of our mother and grandmother and embark on a path of healing and forgiveness."

Police have been probing for motivations behind Monday's rampage, which took place the day before Wilson was due to graduate from high school, amid some indications from relatives of prior mental health issues.

Efforts were underway by authorities to access medical and school records that might shed light on his mental history.

Montoya Bryan reported from Albuquerque and Snow reported from Phoenix.

## On US Bike to Work Day, here's how COVID, eco-thinking made cycling better in cities worldwide

By CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

MONTREAL (AP) — In the agonies of the virus that upended most of the world, millions of people from Bogota to Berlin saw what life could be like on two wheels instead of four.

Even as commuting to the office and going to school plunged at the height of COVID lockdowns, outdoor recreation, and cycling in particular, surged in country after country as people looked to escape isolation in a relatively safe way. In response, cities worldwide have developed bikeways with new urgency since 2020.

The question is whether people stick with their new cycling habit in these closer-to-normal times.

On Friday, Bike to Work Day in the U.S., the automatic counters that record each passing cyclist in many cities will get the latest numbers.

So far the evidence is incomplete and varies by place. But the numbers suggest that if they build it, people will come.

Case studies led by global urban planning researchers Ralph Buehler of Virginia Tech and John Bucher of Rutgers University track what more than a dozen cities have done in recent decades, and specifically during the pandemic, to improve pedal-powered commutes and recreation.

Already a world leader in bicycle friendliness, Montreal did more than any other North American city studied to expand safe cycling in the pandemic. London, Paris and Brussels did the most in Europe. But many more cities worldwide also seized opportunity in the crisis.

"A big paradigm shift in thinking is going on," Buehler said in an interview. "In transport planning and policy and engineering, we have promoted driving for nearly 100 years. We have made driving fast, we've

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made it convenient.

"Now all of these cities and places are taking some of the space back. And giving it to bikes."

Some steps have phased out as the virus has faded, like many of the temporary "pop-up" bike lanes that appeared as if overnight. But many have stuck, thanks to an increase in lanes with permanent barriers against traffic, central arteries where cars can't go, and other concessions to a pent-up demand to get around without gas.

Environmental concerns have also been a motivation for many people to ditch cars for bikes, a choice that researchers say has clear benefits in reducing the carbon emissions that drive global warming and in curbing pollution broadly.

Here are snapshots of what some of the most ambitious pro-cycling cities on three continents have done for cycling before and during the pandemic. The findings are drawn principally from the MIT-published book "Cycling through the COVID-19 Pandemic to a More Sustainable Transport Future," by Buehler, chair of urban affairs at Virginia Tech, and Pucher, professor emeritus at Rutgers' School of Planning and Public Policy:

## WASHINGTON

In 2001, the U.S. capital offered cyclists a meager 3 miles (5 kilometers) of bicycle lanes, unprotected. By 2019, the network topped 100 miles, and bicycling as a share of all travel in the city increased fivefold. In 2020 and 2021, the city picked up the pace even more, building nearly 20 miles (32 km) of protected lanes, much safer than merely marked lanes on streets shared with cars.

## MONTREAL

An innovator in urban biking since the late 1980s, Montreal was the first large North American city to develop an extensive network of physically separated on-street bicycle lanes, the book says. It was also first to introduce a large-scale bike-sharing system, with its BIXI bikes in 2009.

In the five years before the pandemic, Montreal's cycling network grew by 34%, topping 1,000 km (600 miles). Almost a third of that is made up of off-street paths and much of the rest is safely separated on shared roads.

The city's pro-biking mayor, Valérie Plante, easily won reelection in 2021 on a platform of green initiatives. Underway is a major expansion of a new express bikeway network, Réseau Express Vélo or REV, that would double the city's already sweeping cycling network in four years.

## AUSTIN, Texas

Considered the most pro-cycling large city in the U.S. South, Austin doubled its network of protected on-street bike lanes to around 60 miles (97 km) in the first two years of COVID. From 2010 to 2019, the city had tripled its network of conventional on-street bicycle lanes, to nearly 300 miles (480 km).

## BOGOTA, Colombia

Bogota is a breakout success. By some measures, over 9% of trips in the capital are by bicycle, putting it in the top tier globally and a model that other cities in Latin America are trying to emulate.

That's according to a study published before the onset of COVID-19 by Bogota civil engineers Daniel Rosas-Satizábal and Alvaro Rodriguez-Valencia. They attribute a "remarkable increase in bike ridership" to mayoral leadership, advocacy groups and a "latent bicycle culture" that emerged when officials put money into making streets safer.

When the pandemic broke out, Mayor Claudia Lopez turned traffic lanes over to bicycles, among other steps, adding 85 km (53 miles) to the city's network of bike paths.

## WESTERN EUROPE

Paris saw cycling spike 60% in 2020-2021. Seen a quarter century ago as bicycle-unfriendly, the city has since taken striking measures to get people on wheels, even subsidizing one third of the cost for people

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buildings and crumpled cellphone towers.

"Millions of people live in the path of the cyclone and a massive effort is now underway to clear debris and provide shelter to those whose homes have been damaged or destroyed," the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said Thursday. "Coastal Rakhine took the heaviest hit from the cyclone with severe impacts across the northwest and some damage in Kachin (state) also reported."

Friday's report on MRTV state television said four soldiers and 24 local residents in Rakhine, in addition to the 117 Rohingya, had been killed, blaming the deaths on people refusing to evacuate their homes despite warnings from the authorities before the storm hit.

The authorities evacuated 63,302 of the 125,789 Rohingya sheltering in 17 camps in 17 townships including Sittwe, starting last Friday, MRTV said.

Its reports identified the Rohingya as "Bengali," the official designation used for the minority group to suggest they immigrated to Myanmar illegally.

Rohingya have lived in Myanmar for generations, but they are not recognized as an official minority there and are denied citizenship and other basic rights.

The Rohingyas caught in the storm lived mostly in crowded displacement camps, to which they were moved after losing their homes in a brutal 2017 counterinsurgency campaign led by Myanmar security forces. Their ramshackle housing on low-lying land was battered Sunday by a storm surge.

More than 700,000 other Rohingya fled in 2017 to refugee camps in neighboring Bangladesh, which also had damage from the cyclone but reported no deaths.

OCHA's report did not give a death toll for the storm, but said casualties and missing people were still being documented, including internal displaced people.

Theinn Shwe, a teacher from Headway Education Center for the Rohingya community in the camps, said Friday that the bodies of at least 116 people from 15 camps and villages, including 32 children and 46 women, had been given burial rites. He said reports that some had declined to evacuate were correct.

Although the authorities have provided some food and shelter assistance, there is still the need for more, he said, adding that aid from international organizations and private donors have not yet arrived.

"If the authorities give travel authorization to international organizations as soon as possible, the Rohingyas here will get help quickly. If the travel authorization is limited, the people here are likely to suffer more," Theinn Shwe said.

OCHA said there is an urgent need for fuel to ensure key public services, notably health care and water treatment.

"Clean water supplies are a concern. Other critical needs include shelter, food aid, medical supplies, and healthcare services. In flooded areas, concerns persist about the spread of waterborne disease and the movement of landmines," a legacy of decades of civil conflict in Myanmar.

"Unimpeded humanitarian access to affected populations in the impacted areas is critical," it said.

Rakhine state spokesperson and attorney-general Hla Thein said Thursday that there were no restrictions on local or international organizations sending aid, an assertion that could not be independently confirmed.

A previous military government was harshly discredited when it delayed the acceptance of outside aid in 2008, when Cyclone Nargis hit Myanmar with a storm surge that devastated populated areas around the Irrawaddy River delta. At least 138,000 people died and tens of thousands of homes and other buildings were washed away.

State media carried extensive coverage this week of domestic efforts to provide disaster relief by the current military government, which seized power in 2021 from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. It is engaged over much of the country in warfare against armed resistance forces opposed to military rule.

Several nations, including India, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States, have already earmarked monetary or material assistance to help in recovering from Sunday's cyclone.

On Thursday, three Indian navy ships carrying relief material reached Yangon, Myanmar's largest city, and a fourth ship was to arrive Friday, said India's External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar. Yangon is southeast of the cyclone-hit area and has a major international port.



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"The ships are carrying emergency food items, tents, essential medicines, water pumps, portable generators, clothes, sanitary and hygiene items," Jaishankar said in a message posted on Twitter.

## 7.7 magnitude earthquake causes small tsunami on South Pacific islands

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — A 7.7 magnitude earthquake caused a small tsunami to wash ashore on South Pacific islands Friday. No damage has been reported, and the threat passed in a few hours.

Waves 60 centimeters (2 feet) above tide level were measured off Lenakel, a port town in Vanuatu, the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center said. Smaller waves were measured by coastal or deep-ocean gauges elsewhere off Vanuatu and off New Caledonia and New Zealand.

Vanuatu's National Disaster Management Office advised people to evacuate from coastal areas to higher grounds. The office said people should listen to their radios for updates and take other precautions.

New Zealand's National Emergency Management Agency said it expected coastal areas would experience strong and unusual currents, with unpredictable surges at the shoreline. The PTWC said small waves of 20 centimeters (8 inches) above tides were measured at North Cape, New Zealand.

The tsunami danger passed within a few hours, though the center said small sea level changes may continue.

The U.S. Geological Survey said the quake's epicenter was near the Loyalty Islands, a province in the French territory of New Caledonia. The quake was 37 kilometers (23 miles) deep.

The area is southwest of Fiji, north of New Zealand and east of Australia where the Coral Sea meets the Pacific.

The region is part of the "Ring of Fire," an arc of seismic faults around the Pacific Ocean where most of the world's earthquakes occur.

## Tkachuk ends 6th-longest game in NHL history, Panthers outlast Hurricanes 3-2 in 4th OT

By AARON BEARD AP Sports Writer

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Back and forth they went, the Florida Panthers and Carolina Hurricanes playing a game that seemed destined to have no end while leaving legs growing wobbly with each passing minute.

Then, just as the teams appeared headed for yet another extra period, Matthew Tkachuk pounced on his chance to finish off yet another overtime and road victory for the Panthers in these playoffs.

Tkachuk beat Frederik Andersen in the final seconds of the fourth overtime to give the Panthers a 3-2 victory over the Hurricanes early Friday in Game 1 of the Eastern Conference final.

Tkachuk took a feed from Sam Bennett after Florida won a battle for the puck as Carolina tried to clear it from the zone, then whipped a shot from the right circle past Andersen with 12.7 seconds left.

That sent Tkachuk racing toward center ice to celebrate with teammates in what turned into the longest game in either franchises' history, as well as the sixth-longest game in NHL history.

"Definitely, tired but I think you're less tired when you win," Tkachuk said, adding: "I hope you guys and everybody else enjoyed that game, because what I'm seeing is two really good teams fighting it out for every inch."

Florida won its seventh straight road game in these playoffs and improved to 5-0 in overtime. Game 2 is Saturday night in Raleigh, less than 48 hours after the teams played more than two full games worth of hockey.

This one ended roughly six hours after the puck drop.

"We didn't even know what overtime we were in," Panthers forward Ryan Lomberg said.

Aleksander Barkov and Carter Verhaeghe scored in regulation for the Panthers, and Sergei Bobrovsky made 63 saves in what turned into a goaltender battle as the game got more ragged and players racked up the ice time.

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Andersen finished with 57 saves for Carolina, which got power-play goals from Seth Jarvis and Stefan Noesen.

"It was a good goalie battle," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "It was unfortunate we just couldn't find one."

Tkachuk finally ended a game that had multiple wild sequences in critical late moments.

Most notably, there was Lomborg appearing to have the winning goal in his return to Florida's lineup from injury, beating Jalen Chatfield in a battle and then whipping the puck by Andersen 2 1/2 minutes into the first OT.

But Carolina successfully challenged the play for goaltender interference. Replays showed Florida's Colin White — while being bumped by Carolina's Jack Drury — making skate-to-skate contact with Andersen, then bumping him as Andersen ended up on all fours on the other side of the crease before Lomborg's shot found the net.

Later in that first OT, Jarvis — who had the game's first goal on a power-play blast from the slot — nearly ended it on a loose rebound but rang the crossbar.

It turned out, the game was nowhere near its epic finish.

Florida hadn't been to an Eastern Conference final since 1996, before a large chunk of its roster had even been born. But these Panthers had turned a late surge to qualify for the final wild-card spot into a postseason-shaking moment by taking down Boston following the Bruins' record-setting 65 wins and 135 points, followed by beating a Toronto team buzzing off its first series win in nearly two decades.

Now the Panthers have handed the Hurricanes — who had the league's second-best regular-season record — their first series deficit of the postseason.

Carolina is in the Eastern final for the second time in five years. The last time, it was a feel-good surprise for a young core that had just ended a nine-year postseason drought. They had since accomplished the goal of building a consistent winner and Cup contender, though second-round exits the past two seasons on home ice had cast a damper on some of that sustained success.

This time, Carolina beat the New York Islanders in six games and then the New Jersey Devils in five to make it back. But on a night when both teams had plenty of chances to end this one in any of the OTs, Carolina ended up losing its ninth straight game in the conference-final round dating to 2009 in brutal fashion.

"It was kind of really who was going to make the last mistake," Carolina captain Jordan Staal said. "Unfortunately, it was us."

## LONGEST GAME

The longest game in NHL history came on March 24, 1936, when the Detroit Red Wings beat the Montreal Maroons 1-0 in the sixth overtime on Mud Bruneteau's goal at 116 minutes, 30 seconds of extra play.

## FRANCHISE MARKS

Florida's previous record for longest game was 104:31 in Game 4 of the 1996 Stanley Cup final against Colorado. Carolina's previous record was 114:47 for Game 3 of the 2002 Stanley Cup final. The teams each lost those games.

## SEMIFINAL SKID

Carolina's losing streak in the NHL semifinals dates to Pittsburgh's sweep of the Hurricanes in 2009 when Maurice was in his second stint as Carolina's coach. Boston then swept the Hurricanes a decade later.

## WELCOME BACK

Both teams welcomed back forwards from lengthy injuries.

Carolina's Teuvo Teravainen hadn't played since suffering what the team described as a hand injury in Game 2 of the first-round series against the New York Islanders. The injury required surgery on April 20 and left him with a scar running the length of his left thumb.

Lomborg had missed eight straight games due to an upper-body injury.

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## Dubai's next big thing? Perhaps a \$5 billion man-made 'moon' as the city's real estate market booms

By NICK EL HAJJ Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Who says you cannot reach for the moon? A proposed \$5 billion real estate project wants to take skyscraper-studded Dubai to new heights — by bringing a symbol of the heavens down to Earth.

Canadian entrepreneur Michael Henderson envisions building a 274-meter (900-foot) replica of the moon atop a 30-meter (100-foot) building in Dubai, already home to the world's tallest building and other architectural wonders.

Henderson's project, dubbed MOON, may sound out of this world, but it could easily fit in this futuristic city-state. Dubai already has a red-hot real estate market, fueled by the wealthy who fled restrictions imposed in their home countries during the coronavirus pandemic and Russians seeking refuge amid Moscow's war on Ukraine.

And even though a previous booms-and-bust cycle saw many grand projects collapse, Henderson and others suggest his vision, funded by Moon World Resorts Inc., where he is the co-founder, might not be that far-fetched.

"We have the biggest 'brand' in the world," Henderson told The Associated Press, alluding that the moon itself — the heavenly body — was his brand. "Eight billion people know our brand, and we haven't even started yet."

The project Henderson proposes includes a destination resort inside the spherical structure, complete with a 4,000-room hotel, an arena capable of hosting 10,000 people and a "lunar colony" that would give guests the sensation of actually walking on the moon.

The MOON would sit on a pedestal-like circular building beneath it and would glow at night. Henderson discussed the project at the Arabian Travel Market earlier in May in Dubai.

Already, artist renderings commissioned by Moon World Resorts have played with the location for his MOON — including at the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building at a height of 828 meters (2,710 feet). Others have placed it at the Dubai Pearl, a long-dormant project now being destroyed near the man-made Palm Jumeirah archipelago, and on its unfinished sister, the Palm Jebel Ali.

The Pearl and the Palm Jebel Ali represent two "white elephant" projects left over from the 2009 financial crisis that rocked the sheikhdom and forced Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, to provide Dubai with a \$20 billion bailout.

Now nearly 15 years later, Dubai largely has turned around. Rents on average across Dubai are up 26.9% year-on-year, even with anti-price-gouging protections. Dubai saw 86,849 residential sales last year, beating a previous record of 80,831 from 2009.

"Dubai is in a completely different world compared to" 2009, said Lewis Allsopp, the CEO of the prominent Dubai real estate agency Allsopp & Allsopp. Launched products are "selling out on the spot."

Inflation and interest rate hikes around the world have led to fears of a global recession. The UAE's currency, the dirham, is pegged to the dollar, meaning it has followed lock-step the hikes imposed by the Federal Reserve.

But cash still remains king for Dubai buyers, with fourth-fifths of transactions paid in currency without financing in 2022, said Faisal Durrani, the head of Middle East research at real estate agency Knight Frank.

"You could argue that the interest rate hikes that are taking place, to an extent the market is a little bit shielded from that given the fact that so much of the transactional activity has been driven by cash," Durrani said.

Other major projects are moving ahead.



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Nakheel, the state-owned developer behind the Palm Jebel Ali, has relaunched development plans for it. The developer also unveiled a multibillion-dollar plan to build 80 resorts and hotels on the man-made Dubai Islands, though it remains largely empty and under the flight path of the nearby Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international travel.

The MOON project also includes space for a possible casino as well. Gambling remains illegal in the UAE, a federation of seven hereditarily ruled sheikhdoms on the Arabian Peninsula. However, major brands like Caesar's Palace already exist or hope to build in Dubai. Wynn Resorts plans to build a \$3.9 resort in Ras al-Khaimah north of Dubai with gambling to open in 2027 — meaning a change to the law is likely to come.

Like other high-profile, eye-catching marvels, the MOON could fit well into "the legitimacy formula of Dubai's ruling elite," said Christopher Davidson, a Middle East expert who wrote the recent book "From Sheikhs to Sultanism." Dubai also hosts the UAE's space center, which has sent a probe to Mars and unsuccessfully tried to put a rover on the moon.

"They can be seen as a non-democratic elite but nonetheless believe strongly in science and progress — and that's ultimately very legitimizing and a megaproject like this would seem to tick all of those boxes," Davidson said.

Henderson's plan would go a step further than other globe-shaped projects, such as the MSG Sphere, a \$2.3 billion dome blanketed by LED screens, that is set to open in Las Vegas later this year.

His structure would be fully spherical, and could be illuminated alternatively as a full, half or crescent moon.

The brightness may not go down well with potential neighbors — plans to build another MSG Sphere in London were halted after residents protested the significant light pollution and disruption the structure would cause.

"It's hard to please everybody," Henderson acknowledged. "You might need dark curtains."

Associated Press writer Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, contributed to this report.

## At graduations, Native American students seek acceptance of tribal regalia

By CHEYANNE MUMPHREY AP Education Writer

When Kamryn Yanchick graduated, she hoped to decorate her cap with a beaded pattern in honor of her Indigenous heritage. Whether she could was up to her Oklahoma high school. Administrators told her no.

Yanchick settled for beaded earrings to represent her Native American identity at her 2018 graduation.

A bill vetoed earlier this month by Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt, a Republican, would have allowed public school students to wear feathers, beaded caps, stoles or other objects of cultural and religious significance. Yanchick, a citizen of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma and descendent of the Muscogee Nation, said she hopes the legislature tries again.

Being able to "unapologetically express yourself and take pride in your culture at a celebration without having to ask a non-Native person for permission to do so is really significant," said Yanchick, who now works for the American Civil Liberties Union of Oklahoma.

For Native American students, tribal regalia is often passed down through generations and worn at graduations to signify connection with the community. Disputes over such attire have spurred laws making it illegal to prevent Indigenous students from wearing regalia in nearly a dozen states including Arizona, Oregon, South Dakota, North Dakota and Washington.

High schools, which often favor uniformity at commencement ceremonies, take a range of approaches toward policing sashes, flower leis and other forms of self-expression. Advocates argue the laws are needed to avoid leaving it up to individual administrators.

Groups like the Native American Rights Fund hear regularly from students blocked from wearing eagle feathers or other regalia. This week in Oklahoma, a Native American high school graduate sued a school district, claiming she was forced her to remove a feather from her cap at a ceremony last spring.

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to buy 85,000 electric bikes or cargo bikes from 2009 to 2022. Cars were banned or relegated to single lanes on certain roads along the Seine River through the center of Paris.

London more than doubled its protected bike lanes when the virus bore in, bringing the total to 260 km (160 miles) in a year. This, after tripling their length in the decade before. Bucher and Buehler say the pandemic brought about the most rapid transformation of the streetscape in Greater London in decades, resulting in a sharp rise in both walking and cycling.

Back in 1998, 10% of trips in Berlin were by bicycle — a share many cities can only dream about even now. By 2018, that had grown to 18%. That's in part because of Berlin's configuration as a city of many neighborhood centers, with more people living close to where they work and shop. Early in the pandemic, city officials expedited a plan creating more bicycle lanes to meet demand.

In Brussels, cycling jumped 22% in 2020, then declined in 2021 but was still 14% higher than in 2019. That suggests that some people who took up biking when COVID arrived gave it up but more stayed with it. The city plowed 74% more money into cycling in 2020-21.

Brussels seems committed to making things more difficult for cars in the core. It plans to eliminate 65,000 parking spaces for cars by 2030, and is reconfiguring central streets to reserve the most direct routes for cyclists and public transit.

## NEW YORK

The city built over 60 miles (100 km) of protected bike lanes from 2019 to 2022, usually connecting them to protected intersections, and a larger number of regular bike lanes. Docking stations for CitiBike bike-sharing exceeded 1,500 in mid-2022, up from 860 in 2019.

During COVID's peak in 2020, over 80 miles (130 km) of mostly neighborhood streets were closed to motor vehicles altogether during certain hours; that's since been pulled back to 20 miles (32 km).

## MINNEAPOLIS

From 2000 to 2017, Minneapolis bikeways more than doubled in length, cycling tripled and the share of cyclists who suffered severe injury or death plunged by nearly 80%, a not uncommon development in cities that aggressively expanded their networks. In the pandemic's first month, the city announced it would quickly add 15 miles (24 km) of bike routes, closing many roads to traffic except for neighborhood residents.

Along with Montreal, Quebec City and select other cities in northern climes, Minneapolis is also big on bicycling through brutal winters. Researchers place Minneapolis with Denver and Chicago as mid-America standouts in advancing safer cycling.

## Myanmar says official death toll from Cyclone Mocha at least 145, says aid is being provided

By GRANT PECK Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — The official death toll from the powerful cyclone that struck Myanmar has burgeoned to at least 145, including 117 members of the Muslim Rohingya minority, state television reported Friday.

It said the figure applied to the western state of Rakhine, where Cyclone Mocha did the most damage, but did not say how many storm-related deaths there have been in other parts of the country.

The accounting of casualties from the cyclone has been slow, in part due to communication difficulties in the affected areas and the military government's tight control over information. The military government has said that unofficial death tolls surpassing 400 are false, but in the absence of independent confirmation, uncertainly remains about the actual extent of casualties and destruction.

Mocha made landfall near Sittwe township in Rakhine state on Sunday afternoon with winds of up to 209 kilometers (130 miles) per hour before weakening inland. The cyclone, the nation's most destructive in at least a decade, brought widespread flash floods and power outages, while high winds tore roofs off

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When Jade Roberson graduated from Edmond Santa Fe High School, the same school attended by Yanchick, she would have liked to wear a beaded cap and a large turquoise necklace above her gown. But it didn't seem worth asking. She said a friend was only able to wear an eagle feather because he spoke with several counselors, consulted the principal and received a letter from the Cherokee Nation on the feather's significance.

"It was such a hassle for him that my friends and I decided to just wear things under our gown," said Roberson, who is of Navajo descent. "I think it is such a metaphor for what it is like to be Native."

When Adriana Redbird graduates this week from Sovereign Community School, a charter school in Oklahoma City that allows regalia, she plans to wear a beaded cap and feather given by her father to signify her achievements.

"To pay tribute and take a small part of our culture and bring that with us on graduation day is meaningful," she said.

In his veto message, Stitt said allowing students to wear tribal regalia should be up to individual districts. He said the proposal could also lead other groups to "demand special favor to wear whatever they please" at graduations.

The bill's author, Republican state Rep. Trey Caldwell, represents a district in southwest Oklahoma that includes lands once controlled by Kiowa, Apache and Comanche tribes.

"It's just the right thing to do, especially with so much of Native American culture so centered around right of passage, becoming a man, becoming an adult," he said.

Several tribal nations have called for an override of the veto. Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin said the bill would have helped foster a sense of pride among Native American students. Muscogee Nation Principal Chief David Hill said students who "choose to express the culture and heritage of their respective Nations" are honoring their identity.

It means a lot that the bill was able to garner support and make it to the governor, Yanchick said, but she wishes it wasn't so controversial.

"Native American students shouldn't have to be forced to be activists to express themselves or feel celebrated," she said.

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Mumphrey reported from Phoenix. AP reporter Sean Murphy contributed to this story from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

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## **Murray's big fourth quarter propels Nuggets past Lakers 108-103 for 2-0 lead in West finals**

By ARNIE STAPLETON AP Sports Writer

DENVER (AP) — After Nikola Jokic's monster game in the opener, his pick-and-roll partner Jamal Murray took the spotlight in the Western Conference finals Thursday night.

Murray scored 23 of his 37 points in the fourth quarter, propelling the Denver Nuggets to a 108-103 come-from-behind win over the Los Angeles Lakers for a 2-0 lead in the series.

"He was special," Jokic said. "He won us the game basically."

Murray missed 12 of his 17 shots through three quarters but found his touch in the fourth, going 6 for 7, including four 3-pointers, and fueling a 15-1 run that gave Denver a 96-84 lead.

"He made shots at the end of the clock," LeBron James lamented. "We guard for 24 seconds and he made two big-time shots, one over (Anthony Davis) and one over me. He had his 3-point shot going in the fourth. It's no surprise to me, he's done it before. Sometimes it's a never-miss league."

In all, Denver sank seven 3s in the fourth quarter after hitting seven all night.

"It would have been a lot easier if I had made them in the first half," said Murray, who is still playing



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through an earache he hasn't been able to shake since Round 2.

Jokic added 23 points, 17 rebounds and a dozen assists a day after ESPN sideline reporter Lisa Salters handed the Nuggets the no-respect card by acknowledging that she'd never seen the two-time MVP play before Game 1, when he had 34 points, 21 boards and 14 assists.

"For those that don't know him, he's got 13 playoff triple-doubles now," Malone sneered after Game 2. "It's just incredible what he continues to do on a nightly basis on the biggest stage in the world."

As for Jokic, he brushed off the slights on him and his teammates, saying, "It's nothing new for us."

Malone was plenty miffed by the Lakers getting all the pub.

"You win Game 1 and all everybody talked about was the Lakers," Malone said. "Let's be honest, the national narrative was, 'Hey, the Lakers are fine. They're down 1-0, but they figured something out.' No one talked about how Nikola just had an historic performance. He's got 13 (playoff) triple-doubles now, third all-time. What he's doing is just incredible.

"But their narrative wasn't about the Nuggets. The narrative wasn't about Nikola. The narrative was about the Lakers and their adjustments. So you know, you put that in your pipe and you smoke it, you come back and you know what, we're gonna go up 2-0."

The Nuggets have never been this close to reaching the NBA Finals in their history. Game 3 is Saturday night at Crypto.com Arena, where James and the Lakers are 8-0 in the playoffs.

Malone said he reminded Murray heading into the fourth quarter not to fret over his shooting woes but to focus on contributing in other ways. He heeded that advice, grabbing three big boards on defense and stealing the ball twice besides hitting 4-of-5 from deep and 7-of-8 from the stripe.

"Three-point line is what killed us in the fourth," James said.

Malone knew that when Murray finally found the net, many more buckets would follow.

"We all know ... he just has to see one go in," Malone said, and when that happened, "he kind of looked up to the heavens and that's all he needs. And after that he's shooting into a hula hoop."

Just like in Game 1, the Lakers didn't go down easily. They pulled to three points on Austin Reaves' jumper before Murray sank two free throws with 12 seconds left and Bruce Brown stole the ball from James, then dribbled out the final 8 seconds.

The Nuggets improved to 41-8 at home, best in the NBA, including 8-0 in the playoffs.

James and Reaves both scored 22 for Los Angeles. Davis scored 18 after pouring in 40 in the opener and Rui Hachimra scored 21 points off the bench.

For much of the night, it appeared as though the Lakers would wrest home-court advantage from the Nuggets, who are the top seed for the first time in their history. The Lakers won the series openers at Memphis and Golden State to reach the conference championship.

The outstanding defense Hachimura played on Jokic in the fourth quarter of the Lakers' loss in Game 1 led many to believe coach Darvin Ham would start Hachimura to try to stymie the Nuggets' star center from the start. But instead he came off the bench again, scoring 17 first-half points but just four thereafter.

"Proud of our guys," Ham said. "They bounced back. We addressed a lot of the things that we said we were going to try to do better. Still got to be better in transition D. But overall the energy was there, the effort was there, the urgency was there, we just caught a bad stretch."

And a suddenly red-hot Jamal Murray.

TIP-INS

Lakers: Los Angeles made 23 of 26 free throws. ... Davis and James were a combined 13 of 36 from the floor.

Nuggets: After watching the Lakers start the second quarter on a 9-0 run with Jokic and Murray on the bench, Malone kept Jokic in to start the fourth quarter. "Nikola's like Secretariat, man," Malone said. "That guy can run for days."

## Salman Rushdie honored at PEN America gala, first in-person appearance since stabbing

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Salman Rushdie made an emotional and unexpected return to public life Thursday night, attending the annual gala of PEN America and giving the event's final speech as he accepted a special prize, the PEN Centenary Courage Award, just nine months being after being stabbed repeatedly and hospitalized.

"It's nice to be back — as opposed to not being back, which was also a possibility. I'm glad the dice rolled this way," Rushdie, 75, told hundreds gathered at the American Museum of Natural History, where he received a standing ovation.

It was his first in-person appearance at a public event since he was attacked last August while on stage at a literary festival in Western New York.

Rushdie, whose attendance had not been announced beforehand, spoke briefly, and dedicated some of his remarks to those who came to his help at the Chautauqua Institution, a nonprofit education and retreat center. He cited a fellow attendee, Henry Reese of the City of Asylum project in Pittsburgh, for tackling the assailant and thanked audience members who also stepped in.

"I accept this award, therefore, on behalf of all those who came to my rescue. I was the target that day, but they were the heroes. The courage, that day, was all theirs, and I thank them for saving my life," he said.

"And I have one last thing to add. It's this: Terror must not terrorize us. Violence must not deter us. La lutte continue. La lotta continua. The struggle goes on."

Attacks against Rushdie have been feared since the late 1980s and the publication of his novel "The Satanic Verses," which Iran's Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini condemned as blasphemous for passages referring to the Prophet Mohammad. The Ayatollah issued a decree calling for Rushdie's death, forcing the author into hiding, although he had been traveling freely for years before the stabbing.

Since then he has since granted few interviews and otherwise communicated through his Twitter account and prepared remarks. Earlier this week, he delivered a video message to the British Book Awards, where he was given a Freedom to Publish prize.

Rushdie was clearly elated to attend the gala, but his voice sounded frailer than it once did and the right frame of his glasses was dark, concealing the eye blinded by his attacker.

PEN galas have long been a combination of literature, politics, activism and celebrity, with attendees ranging from Alec Baldwin to Sen. Angus King of Maine. Other honorees Thursday included "Saturday Night Live" producer Lorne Michaels and the imprisoned Iranian journalist and activist Narges Mohammadi, who was given the PEN/Barbey Freedom to Write Award.

"Dear writers, thinkers, and sympathizers, I implore you to help the Iranian people free themselves from the grip of the Islamic Republic, or morally speaking, please help end the suffering of the Iranian people," Mohammadi wrote from prison in a letter read aloud at the ceremony. "Let us prove the magic of global unity against authorities besotted with power and greed."

The host Thursday night was "Saturday Night Live" head writer Colin Jost, who inspired nervous laughter with jokes about the risks of being in the same room as Rushdie, likening it to sharing a balcony section with Abraham Lincoln. He also referred briefly to the Hollywood writers strike, which has left "Saturday Night Live" off the air since early May, saying it was "disorienting" to spend the afternoon on a picket line and then show up "for the museum cocktail hour."

PEN events are familiar settings for Rushdie, a former president of PEN, the literary rights organization for which freedom of speech is a core mission. He has attended many times in the past and is a co-founder of PEN's World Voices Festival, an international gathering of author panels and interviews held around the time of the PEN gala.

Rushdie's surprise appearance was the highlight of an eventful month for PEN, the literary and free

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expression organization that has been in the middle — by choice and otherwise — of various conflicts.

On Wednesday, PEN and Penguin Random House sued a Florida school district over its removal of books about race and LGBTQ+ identities. Earlier in the week, writer Masha Gessen disclosed she had resigned as vice president of the PEN board after a World Voices panel with Russian dissidents she was scheduled to moderate was called off amid objections to their presence from Ukrainians in town for a separate PEN event.

Last week, Netflix CEO Ted Sarandos announced he would not attend the gala, where he was to accept the PEN America Business Visionary Award. Sarandos cited the writers strike, during which Netflix has been a prime target of criticism among union members. But the company was cited Thursday night as a prime sponsor of the dinner ceremony.

Former SNL writer and performer John Mulaney presented Michaels with the PEN Literary Service Award, which has previously been given to Stephen King, Stephen Sondheim and Rushdie, who won in 2014 for his “unparalleled artistry and courage as a novelist and essayist.” Michaels has helped launched countless television and film stars, but on Thursday he dedicated his speech to writers and the writing room of SNL.

Writers, he explained, are associated with “paper airplanes” and “just fooling around” and the stereotypes “are not entirely wrong.” Writers are kind of like monkeys “because the monkeys are funny and you don’t really know what they’re going to do and they kind of remain us of us.” But they’re also some of the “most brilliant and sophisticated men and women I know,” he added, and the “beating heart” of “Saturday Night Live” is in the writers room.

“It’s a room you want to be in,” he said. “It has the slight whiff of freedom that you take in when you laugh.” \_\_\_\_ This story has been corrected to show that Rushdie’s novel is “The Satanic Verses,” not “The Satanic Verse.”

## **Awash in social media, how are police learning to inform the public better after shootings?**

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

Jennifer Seeley was glued to her phone, safe at home but terrified nonetheless.

There was an active shooter at the Texas mall where she works as an assistant store manager. And she was searching desperately for information, praying. Was the gunman dead? Were her coworkers dead? What was happening?

So with law enforcement in the Dallas area town of Allen releasing information slowly on that horrible May 6 afternoon, she turned to social media for answers, stumbling across videos showing the bodies of some of the eight who were slain. Desperately she texted her coworkers.

“That’s where all of my information came from was what I saw on Twitter. And, you know, nobody was really releasing any information on what actually happened,” she says now, nearly two weeks later.

The shooting at the Allen Premium Outlets this month has law information public information officers from around the country talking. Social media, they say, has accelerated everything. Now everyone can post images from their phone. That means if police don’t talk, reporters and the public will simply go online, as happened in Allen.

And that presents a major problem, says Katie Nelson, social media and public relations coordinator for the Mountain View Police Department in northern California. Nelson teaches about crisis management and social media best practices. And these days, she says, when it comes to responding, “The luxury of time does not exist.”

### **POLICE APPROACHES HAVE EVOLVED**

Police began to harness social media a decade ago, most famously after the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013. The four-day manhunt ended with police tweeting: “CAPTURED!!! The hunt is over. The search is done. The terror is over. And justice has won. Suspect in custody.”

It was groundbreaking at the time, says Yael Bar Tur, a police communication consultant and former



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director of social media for the New York City police department. Now, she says, that it is the basic level expected of law enforcement.

"It's not enough just to be on social media, you have to be good at it," she says. "At the end of the day, you know, we have to use this tool because if you don't, it is going to be used against you."

In Allen, the mall shooting happened around 3:30 p.m. Allen police sent their first tweet around 4:20 p.m., announcing simply that police were at the mall and that an active investigation was underway. Seeley continued to fear that her coworkers at the Crocs store were hiding and the gunman was still on the loose.

At nearly 7 p.m., police in Allen said an officer had "neutralized the threat." That meant he was dead. But the often-used term can be confusing to the public, says Julie Parker, a former broadcast journalist and law enforcement public information officer who now advises government agencies on how to respond to critical incidents.

"Normal people who don't work in law enforcement don't know what the words neutralized means," Parker says.

Adding to the situation, the initial news conferences were brief and infrequent. One lasted less than two minutes, and police took no questions.

Eventually she learned that her coworkers had survived, but a security guard she knew was among the dead. Twenty-year-old Christian LaCour had helped jump start a customer's car just a few days earlier.

"Very anxiety-inducing," Seeley said of the whole experience.

## MAKING THE BEST OF SOCIAL MEDIA

How to harness social media in the best ways — and quickly — was on everyone's mind last week as public information officers gathered at a midyear conference of the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

"You had a little more time to get information out five or six years ago. The expectation wasn't there that it would be immediate, and I think it is now," says Sarah Boyd, who is on the executive board of the association's group on public communication.

She says her colleagues often text each other to discuss how communications are handled after tragedies. The responsibility weighs on her; she is well aware that the messages police tweet in the midst of a mass shooting might be read by someone hiding from the shooter.

"All they've got is their phone, and that tweet is their lifeline," says Boyd, a former newspaper reporter. She is now the public relations manager at the Clay County, Missouri, Sheriff's Office in the Kansas City area.

This newest crop of public information officers, who like Boyd are much more likely to be former reporters themselves than in the past, also are demanding to have a seat at the table when officers are planning how to respond to mass casualty events and police shootings.

They note that the flow of information can go both ways, generating tips from the public, who might have cell phone or Ring doorbell video that could help investigators.

It can be challenging, though, with police nationally struggling to regain the public's trust in the wake of George Floyd's killing in 2020 and the protests that followed. Many factors — for example is the suspect still on the loose? — play a role in what can be released. And even if the suspect is killed, the investigation isn't over; law enforcement still must determine whether the shooter acted alone, says Alex del Carmen, an associate dean of the school of criminology at Tarleton State University in Texas.

Missteps after the mass shooting at Uvalde, when law enforcement released shifting and at times contradictory information, show the importance of getting details right.

"People were just scratching their heads on the second or third day," del Carmen says. He has sympathy, though, for the officers faced with communicating the unimaginable; entire careers can be defined by moments like these.

## A MODEL FOR QUICKER INFORMATION

The bulk of the nation's police forces are small, and there are vast differences in what each state allows them to release. In Missouri, for instance, 911 recordings are inaccessible to the public.

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The public itself has no such restrictions, though.

After a man killed 10 people at a supermarket in Boulder, Colorado, in March 2021, an independent, part-time journalist began livestreaming on his YouTube channel before officers even arrived. The effect can be instantaneous — and, for authorities, quite dizzying.

“We’re putting out information quicker than I’ve ever seen before,” says Boulder police public information officer Dionne Waugh. Given the speed of social media, she says, there’s simply no choice.

Amid a crush of media, each victim’s family was assigned its own public information officer. All the while, what had happened was hitting Waugh personally; the victims included police Officer Eric Talley, a friend who died rushing into the store.

Though she described the experience as “life-changing” and “horrible,” she has led trainings in the years that have followed. She hopes that reliving it will help others.

Sadly, it wasn’t long after Nashville Police Department spokesperson Don Aaron asked her to speak that he faced his own mass shooting. In March, a shooter killed three children and three adults in March at a Christian school in his city before being gunned down by police.

The police tweets were fast. The very first one announced that the shooter was dead. Surveillance video was released before the 10 p.m. nightly newscast. Body camera footage came out the following morning, in line with the department’s policy of releasing such video quickly. The stream of information was fast, continual and generally accurate.

“As we have made decisions about releasing body cam in police-shooting situations, I have said to some of my colleagues across the country, especially when this first started, that I was flying a jet trying not to crash it,” says Aaron, a 32-year police veteran. “And so far, it hasn’t crashed.”

## Why Ukraine’s spring offensive still hasn’t begun — with summer just weeks away

By TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For months, Western allies have shipped billions of dollars worth of weapons systems and ammunition to Ukraine with an urgency to get the supplies to Kyiv in time for an anticipated spring counteroffensive.

Now summer is just weeks away. While Russia and Ukraine are focused on an intense battle for Bakhmut, the Ukrainian spring offensive has yet to begin.

Last week Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said it’s been delayed because his country lacks enough Western weapons to succeed without suffering too many casualties. Weather and training are playing a role too, officials and defense experts say.

Officials insist the counteroffensive is coming. Preliminary moves by Ukraine to set the conditions it wants for an attack have already begun, a U.S. official said on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters.

A look at the factors delaying the counteroffensive and the preparations both sides are making in anticipation of it starting soon.

### WEATHER

A big part of the delay is the weather. It’s taken longer than expected for Ukraine’s frozen ground to thaw and dry, due to an extended, wet, cold spring, which has made it difficult to transition into an offensive.

Instead, the ground has retained a deep mud that makes it more difficult for non-tracked vehicles to operate.

The mud is like a soup, the official said. “You just sort of sink in it.”

### TRAINING

In the past few months, tens of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers have been trained by the U.S. and allies for the fight. But the final Ukrainian battalion the U.S. is currently training is just finishing its course now.

This final class brings the total number of Ukrainians the U.S. has trained for this fight to more than 10,700. Those forces have learned not only field and medical skills but advanced combined arms tactics

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with the Stryker and Bradley armored fighting vehicles and Paladin self-propelled howitzers. It also includes highly skilled forces who were trained to operate the Patriot missile defense system.

According to U.S. Army Europe-Africa, as many as 11,000 additional Ukrainian troops a day are in other training programs run by more than 30 partner nations.

Soon a new phase will begin: The U.S. will start training Ukrainians on Abrams tanks at the Grafenwoehr Training Area in Germany. But the Ukrainians won't wait for the tank training to be finished before they launch their counteroffensive, Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov told reporters in late April.

## WEAPONS ARRIVALS

In just the past five months alone, the U.S. has announced it would send more than \$14 billion in weapons and ammunition to Kyiv, most of which is being pulled from existing stockpiles in order to get the supplies to Ukraine faster. NATO and Western allies have responded too, pledging billions in tanks, armored vehicles and air defense systems.

But a lot of that gear still hasn't arrived, said Ben Barry, a former British intelligence official who is now the senior land warfare fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

For example, of the approximately 300 tank systems pledged — such as the Leopard 2 tanks promised by countries including Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain and Germany — only about 100 have arrived. Of the 700 or so pledged fighting vehicles, such as British Marauders and U.S. Bradley infantry fighting vehicles, only about 300 have arrived, he said.

Ukraine will also need enough ammunition on hand to sustain a higher tempo fight once the counteroffensive begins. When it comes to the ammunition needed, Ukraine's chief military logistician will also have a strong say in when the army is ready to launch, Barry said.

In just one munition — the 155mm howitzer round — Ukraine is firing between 6,000 and 8,000 rounds per day, Ukrainian parliamentary member Oleksandra Ustinova told reporters in April.

## COUNTEROFFENSIVE CLUES

Both Russia and Ukraine are taking steps in anticipation of the counteroffensive.

Russia has approximately 200,000 troops along a 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) battle line, dug in using the same type of trench warfare tactics used in World War I, a Western official said on the condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence matters.

These troops are not as highly trained as Russia's initial invading force, which sustained heavy casualties. But they are defended by ditches, minefields and dragon's teeth — above ground triangle-shaped concrete barriers that make it difficult for tanks to move.

Meanwhile, Ukraine has begun shaping operations, such as targeting Russia's forward lines with long-range artillery fire. That may indicate that Ukraine is about to push forward on that location — or it could be a decoy to draw Russia's attention from its actual planned first strike, the official said.

When Ukraine does try to punch through those lines — whether in a limited area or a complex campaign carried out in multiple locations — that will be the likely indicator the offensive has begun, both Barry and the Western official said.

Barry said when Ukrainian brigades start crossing into Russian-held territories and try to attack the first line of Russian defenses, "that's going to be a dead giveaway I think."

AP reporter Jill Lawless contributed from London.

## Nebraska expected to pass combo bill on abortion, gender-affirming care for minors

By MARGERY A. BECK Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Conservative Nebraska lawmakers are expected to have just enough votes to pass a bill Friday that combines a ban on gender-affirming care for minors with a 12-week abortion ban.

The mood in the Nebraska Capitol since the hybrid measure was advanced Tuesday by a single vote has been volatile. Lawmakers have traded insults and promises of retribution on the legislative floor and



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protesters have loudly voiced their displeasure even in the days after vote.

Omaha Sen. Machaela Cavanaugh has led an effort to filibuster nearly every bill this session — even ones she supports — to protest the ban on gender-affirming care for minors. She has railed against conservatives who voted for the hybrid bill and warned that people, medical professionals and businesses will leave the state over it.

Cavanaugh declared in early March that she would “burn the session to the ground over this bill,” and she and a handful of progressive allies have followed through since. They have introduced hundreds of amendments and motions to slow every bill at every stage of debate, impeding the work of the Legislature and sending leadership scrambling to prioritize which bills to push through.

The day after lawmakers merged the abortion limits with the trans health bill, she clashed with Sen. Julie Slama, who insinuated that conservatives were supporting the ban on gender-affirming care to retaliate against Cavanaugh. Slama noted that the ban did not initially have the 33 votes needed to survive.

“But then Machaela Cavanaugh got up and ran her mouth because she was just overjoyed that the national media was here to give her some more attention,” Slama said. “So that gave us 33 votes.”

Cavanaugh responded that she was willing to suffer conservatives’ scorn.

“But it’s going to cost you something, colleagues,” she said. “I am going to take all of the time. Every single, solitary minute of it to make sure the speaker has to decide what actually gets scheduled in these last handful of days.”

Conservatives in the one-house, officially nonpartisan Legislature announced early this month that they would amend the trans health bill to squeeze in the abortion restrictions, creating a bill that combines the two most contentious measures of the session.

That unconventional move came after conservatives failed to advance a bill that would have banned abortion once cardiac activity can be detected — which happens around six weeks of pregnancy, before many women know they are pregnant. Nebraska currently bans abortions starting at 20 weeks of pregnancy.

Legislative rules state that a bill failing to defeat a filibuster must be tabled for the year. So opponents were surprised when conservatives announced a plan for a 12-week ban. Progressive lawmakers say it was an underhanded way to ramrod through a ban after the issue had already failed. Conservatives say they view it as a compromise.

A supermajority of 33 votes are needed Friday to end debate, after which a simple majority of the Legislature’s 49 lawmakers can pass the hybrid bill. Republican Gov. Jim Pillen has said he would sign it into law. Because an emergency clause is attached to the bill, it will take effect immediately.

## **Guardman Jack Teixeira, Pentagon leak suspect, due back in court as judge weighs detention**

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

A judge is poised to decide Friday whether a Massachusetts Air National Guard member accused of leaking highly classified military documents will remain behind bars while he awaits trial.

Jack Teixeira is due back in federal court in Worcester, Massachusetts, where a magistrate judge is expected to hear arguments on prosecutors’ request to keep the 21-year-old locked up before issuing his ruling.

Teixeira, who faces charges under the Espionage Act, is accused of sharing secret military documents about Russia’s war in Ukraine and other top national security issues in a chat room on Discord, a social media platform that started as a hangout for gamers.

Prosecutors said in court papers filed this week that Teixeira was caught by superiors months before his April arrest taking notes on classified information or viewing intelligence not related to his job.

He was twice admonished by superiors in September and October, and again observed in February viewing information “that was not related to his primary duty and was related to the intelligence field,” according to internal Air National Guard memos filed in court.

The revelations have raised questions about why Teixeira continued to have access to military secrets

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after what prosecutors described as “concerning actions” related to his handling of classified information.

Pentagon spokesperson Sabrina Singh was questioned Thursday about why Teixeira’s leaders did not take action after the concerns were raised. Singh referred to the Justice Department and Air Force investigations, and said those concerns and potential lack of response to them were areas the inquiries would examine.

Teixeira has been in jail since his arrest last month on charges stemming from the most consequential intelligence leak in years.

Magistrate Judge David Hennessy heard arguments on detention from lawyers late last month, but put off an immediate decision and scheduled a second hearing for Friday. The judge has said he expects to rule Friday.

The high-profile case is being prosecuted by the Massachusetts U.S. Attorney’s office, whose leader — U.S. Attorney Rachael Rollins — is expected to resign by the end of the day Friday after two federal watchdog agencies found she committed a slew of ethical and legal violations.

Teixeira has not yet entered a plea. His lawyers are urging the judge to release Teixeira to his father’s home, noting he 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.”

Teixeira’s lawyers noted in court papers this week 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.

During last month’s hearing, prosecutors told the judge that Teixeira kept an arsenal of weapons before his arrest and had a history of violent and disturbing remarks.

Teixeira frequently had online discussions about violence, saying in one November message that he would “kill a (expletive) ton of people” if he had his way, because it would be “culling the weak minded,” according to prosecutors. Years earlier in high school, he was suspended when a classmate overheard him discussing Molotov cocktails and other weapons as well as racial threats, prosecutors said.

The Justice Department said Teixeira used his government computer in July to look up mass shootings and government standoffs, including the terms “Ruby Ridge,” “Las Vegas shooting,” “Mandalay Bay shooting,” “Uvalde” and “Buffalo tops shooting” — an apparent reference to the 2022 racist mass shooting at a Buffalo supermarket.

Investigators believe Teixeira was the leader of an online private chat group on Discord called Thug Shaker Central, which drew roughly two dozen enthusiasts who talked about their favorite types of guns and shared memes and jokes. The group also held a running discussion on wars that included talk of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

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.

## **Most say pair debt limit increase with deficit cuts, but few following debate closely: AP-NORC poll**

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE and FÁTIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — About two-thirds of U.S. adults say they are highly concerned about the impact on the national economy if the U.S. debt limit is not increased and the government defaults on its loans, according to a new poll, even as few say they have a solid understanding of the ongoing debt limit negotiations.

The poll shows about 6 in 10 say they want any increase in the debt limit to be coupled with agreed-upon terms for reducing the federal budget deficit. At the same time, Americans are more likely to disapprove than approve of how President Joe Biden and congressional negotiators on both sides of the aisle are handling negotiations. Still, slightly more approve of Biden’s handling of the situation than of congressional

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Republicans.

The new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research shows 27% say they approve of Biden and 26% say the same about congressional Democrats, while 22% approve of congressional Republicans. Close to half disapprove of each.

Sixty-six year-old Robert Hutchins says he somewhat approves of how House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and Republicans in Congress are handling negotiations.

"At least he's trying to do something," the Republican from Milton, Delaware, said of McCarthy's leadership over his conference. "The Democrats want to spend more money and they don't want any limit to it."

Hutchins said he doesn't have "any confidence whatsoever" in Biden and doesn't believe in abolishing the debt ceiling, as it serves as a constant reminder of the nation's debt load, which currently stands at \$31.4 trillion.

Otherwise, "you just think you have an unlimited credit card and you can spend whatever you want," he said.

Overall, about 2 in 10 U.S. adults say they are following negotiations over raising the debt limit extremely or very closely, and about 4 in 10 are following somewhat closely. Similarly, about 2 in 10 say they understand the situation very well and about 4 in 10 say they understand it somewhat well.

Still, a clear majority — 63% — say they think negotiations over the debt limit should be coupled with terms to reduce the budget deficit. Nineteen percent say the debt limit should be raised without conditions and 16% say it should not be raised at all. Overall, the adults who say they understand the debate best are especially likely to say the debt limit should be increased without conditions — 37% say so, compared with 50% who say it should be tied to terms about reducing the budget deficit.

A default would likely spell catastrophe for the U.S. economy, with spillover throughout the globe, and would prompt a probable recession.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen warned this week that a national default would destroy jobs and businesses, and leave millions of families who rely on federal government payments to "likely go unpaid," including Social Security beneficiaries, veterans and military families.

An AP-NORC poll conducted earlier this year also shows little consensus on cuts that would make a dent in the deficit: While most Americans said the government spends too much overall, majorities favored increased spending on popular and expensive programs including Medicare and Social Security.

Similar percentages of Republicans and Democrats say they are following and understanding negotiations, and concern about the economy if the U.S. defaults is widely bipartisan. But about a third of Democrats say the national debt limit should be increased without conditions, while just 6% of Republicans say the same.

Twenty-three percent of Republicans but just 7% of Democrats say the national debt limit should not be increased under any circumstances.

Aaron Loessberg-Zahl, a 33-year-old Democrat from San Jose, California, said the debt ceiling should be raised without conditions, and called the statutory limit on borrowing "arbitrary."

"Congress already controls the purse strings, they approve the annual budgets for our government," Loessberg-Zahl said, "and I think that's plenty of control over the spending."

He called the debate over whether and how to raise the debt ceiling "not productive" and said he approves of the president's handling of negotiations.

Loessberg-Zahl said, "My belief is that those people probably don't understand the full ramifications of what would happen if the country were to default."

The poll of 1,680 adults was conducted May 11-15 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 3.4 percentage points.

**Push for transit, walkable communities growing across US**

By SHARON JOHNSON Associated Press



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ATLANTA (AP) — On the weekend in March when Brittany Glover would have turned 34, her mother stood on the same busy road in Atlanta where her daughter died six months earlier.

Glover, a flight attendant with a passion for clothes, was coming from an entertainment venue during the early morning of Sept. 19, 2022. She had lived in Atlanta for only 48 hours when she was hit by a driver while crossing Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway, which elected officials and activists call one of the most dangerous streets in the city. The driver fled and hasn't been identified.

"Brittany didn't have to die," her mother Valerie Handy-Carey said, surrounded by friends and supporters as speeding cars whizzed by. Atlanta, she said, needs to do more to protect pedestrians and cyclists. She's far from alone in her call to action.

With pedestrian deaths in the U.S. at their highest in four decades, citizens across the nation are urging lawmakers to break from transportation spending focused on car culture. From Salt Lake City to Charlotte, North Carolina, frustrated residents are pushing for increased funding for public transportation and improvements that make it safer to travel by bike or on foot.

"We already hit the point of diminishing returns," said Roby Greenwald, a public health professor at Georgia State University. "We're going to have to examine other transportation modes that make that easier or else we're just going to have to deal with increased congestion, increased traffic fatalities and increased air pollution emissions."

Nationwide, the number of pedestrians killed in 2022 rose 13%, and cyclist fatalities were up 2% for the year, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

"There are plenty of people who must bike and walk for transportation because that's their only means of transportation," said Rachael Panik, a Georgia Tech transportation systems engineering researcher.

Panik previously worked as a transportation planning consultant for cities across the southeast. She said there was unmet demand for biking and walking in most of them.

"More people want to bike, more people want to walk, but they can't because it's either not safe or the destinations that they need to get to are too far and they can't," she said.

Quanisha Ball, 31, was struck by a car and killed in November while crossing a street on her way to work in the Atlanta suburb of Decatur. The driver was identified but never charged.

"I wanted to cross that street to see how dangerous it is. It's dangerous," said Courtney Thompkins, Ball's mother. Pushing a button gives pedestrians less than a minute to cross seven or eight lanes of traffic, adding that speed bumps, better lighting and longer crossing times would help.

Atlanta City Councilman Jason Dozier said he realized he could have been another victim — he was hit by a car while riding a bike.

"That experience really did a lot to radicalize me," Dozier said.

He and 10 council members have proposed zoning legislation to prevent drive-thrus and gas stations from being built around the Atlanta BeltLine, a bike and pedestrian trail that runs through numerous city neighborhoods.

Some city leaders across the country are already taking big steps to reduce car traffic.

In 2021, the city council in Charlotte, North Carolina, adopted a plan to expand their transit system by adding shaded bikeways, bus routes and commuter rail lines in the next two decades. One goal is to reduce single-person trips by 25%, said Shannon Binns, president of Sustain Charlotte, a nonprofit organization focused on local sustainability.

"It's an ambitious goal, but of course it will require us to really make a lot of different decisions budget-wise to give people those opportunities to get around without a car," Binns said.

Salt Lake City Mayor Erin Mendenhall has made pedestrian safety a priority for 2023 after her city saw an increase in fatalities in 2022 and a tragic start to 2023. In the span of a few weeks, two sets of kids on foot and a pair sharing a bicycle were all hit by drivers but fortunately survived, she said.

"The accidents that have happened from vehicles increasing means that we have to go beyond the way we've been operating," Mendenhall said.

A local mobility advocacy group called Sweet Streets Salt Lake City has worked with the city council to

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drop the speed limit on residential streets and is pushing the city to create a network of byways that cater to walking, biking and jogging.

"We really do believe our policy choices are killing people, and the way we stop doing that is by changing those policies," Sweet Streets Board member Benjamin Wood said.

Despite some encouraging signs, advocates face high hurdles to creating walkable and transit-friendly communities.

The Utah Transit Authority implemented an on-demand service that is a combination of a public bus and ridesharing. It's been popular, but it's underfunded.

"We didn't realize it would be as wildly popular as it is, and now, we're turning away rides because we can't afford to run more service," the transit authority's transportation division director, John Larsen, said during a January work session.

In Charlotte, city council members have complained about the lack of progress with the 2030 Transit Corridor System Plan.

The city must gain local funding to access federal dollars for the mobility plan. One option is to create a referendum for a local sales tax, but city officials are already hearing it would be unlikely to win approval from the state legislature. Dana Fetton, a lobbyist for Charlotte's city government, recently told council members if they presented the transit plan as is to the legislature, it would be "dead on arrival."

Winning funding for safe or sustainable transportation projects is a challenge nationwide.

The Georgia Department of Transportation first devotes resources to projects considered state priorities, such as interchange and bridge improvements. That leaves lower tier projects — like improving the parkway where Glover was fatally struck in Atlanta — to compete for funding.

Donald Lee Hollowell Parkway had more than 1,900 crashes over the course of a decade before construction began to make it safer by narrowing parts of the roadway from four lanes to three, according to the Georgia Transportation Department. The changes won't affect the stretch where Glover was killed.

Standing on a corner of the busy street with a handful of birthday balloons and flowers, Handy-Carey said she was worried about whether any improvements would come.

"I'm feeling that the state of Georgia, the city of Atlanta, Fulton County, didn't value me or my daughter's life," she said. "Even after Brittany was killed, you still have more people dying. How many more people have to die?"

## **More than 30 million US drivers don't know if they're at risk from a rare but dangerous airbag blast**

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — More than 33 million people in the United States are driving vehicles that contain a potentially deadly threat: Airbag inflators that in rare cases can explode in a collision and spew shrapnel.

Few of them know it.

And because of a dispute between federal safety regulators and an airbag parts manufacturer, they aren't likely to find out anytime soon.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is demanding that the manufacturer, ARC Automotive of Knoxville, Tennessee, recall 67 million inflators that could explode with such force as to blow apart a metal canister and expel shrapnel. But ARC is refusing to do so, setting up a possible court fight with the agency.

NHTSA argues that the recall is justified because two people have been killed in the United States and Canada and at least seven others have been injured by ARC's inflators. The explosions, which first occurred in 2009, have continued as recently as this year.

NHTSA tentatively concluded, after an investigation that has lasted for eight years, that the inflators are defective. The agency's documents show that the inflators date from at least the 2002 model year to January 2018, when ARC installed equipment on its manufacturing lines that could detect potential safety problems.

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One of those who died was Marlene Beaudoin, a 40-year-old mother of 10 from Michigan's Upper Peninsula who was struck by metal fragments when her 2015 Chevrolet Traverse SUV was involved in a minor crash in 2021. She and four of her sons had been on their way to get ice cream. The sons were not hurt.

ARC maintains that no safety defect exists, that NHTSA's demand is based on a hypothesis rather than technical conclusions and that the agency has no authority to order a parts manufacturer to carry out recalls, which ARC contends are the responsibility of automakers.

In a letter to NHTSA, ARC said no automaker has found a defect common to all 67 million inflators, and no root cause has been identified in the inflator ruptures.

"ARC believes they resulted from random 'one-off' manufacturing anomalies that were properly addressed by vehicle manufacturers through lot-specific recalls," the letter said.

In a statement, NHTSA indicated that both ARC and automakers are responsible for recalls and that it can seek a recall from a parts maker that supplies multiple automakers.

The next step is for NHTSA to issue a final ruling on whether the inflators are defective, then hold a public hearing. It potentially could take ARC to court to seek a recall order. NHTSA would not say when or whether any of this will happen.

In the meantime, owners of vehicles made by at least a dozen automakers — Chevrolet, Buick, GMC, Ford, Toyota, Stellantis, Volkswagen, Audi, BMW, Porsche, Hyundai and Kia — are left to wonder anxiously whether their vehicles contain driver or front passenger inflators made by ARC. (Some vehicles have ARC inflators on both sides.)

Because ARC supplies inflators that are included in other manufacturers' airbags, there's no easy way for vehicle owners to determine whether their inflators are made by ARC. Neither NHTSA nor ARC nor the automakers have released a full list of affected models.

The standoff with ARC has sent automakers struggling to find out just how many of their vehicles contain the inflators. The auto manufacturers are also asking NHTSA whether they must start doing recalls. Automakers know many of the models affected. But many say they're still gathering information from later model years to determine which vehicles contain the affected inflators.

"We are still investigating," said Maria Buczkowski, a spokeswoman for Ford. "We have not had any ARC airbag inflators rupture in the field."

James Bell, a Kia spokesman, said, "We do not have a final count on vehicles that were built with ARC inflators, but the team is collecting the data."

Toyota confirmed that some of its vehicles have ARC inflators but wouldn't comment further.

Other automakers said they were trying to find a cause and were working with the government or didn't respond to requests from The Associated Press for information.

NHTSA contends that byproducts from welding during manufacturing can clog a vent inside the inflator canister that's designed to let gas escape to fill air bags quickly in a crash. Pressure can build to the point where the canister is blown apart.

Michael Brooks, executive director of the nonprofit Center for Auto Safety, called on NHTSA and the automakers to release a list of affected models.

"Customers, I think, have a right to know if there's a potential defect in their car, particularly if it's sitting a few inches from their chest and can explode," Brooks said.

The situation, he said, is reminiscent of the early stages of the Takata air bag inflator recalls in 2001. It took years for all the affected vehicle models to be announced.

Both ARC and Takata used ammonium nitrate to inflate air bags. Takata's situation was more dangerous, Brooks said, because in its inflators, the chemical could deteriorate over time when exposed to high heat and humidity. Unlike Takata, ARC uses ammonium nitrate only as a secondary chemical to inflate air bags. ARC's problem appears to derive instead from a manufacturing defect.

From 2017 to 2022, the ARC problems triggered seven small recalls from automakers. On Friday, the same day NHTSA announced its action against ARC, General Motors announced the recall of nearly 1 million more.



The company said it's recalling certain 2014 through 2017 GMC Acadia, Chevy Traverse and Buick Enclave SUVs because the ARC inflators can explode. The recall came after GM was told this year that the driver's air bag ruptured in a 2017 Traverse. GM, which says it doesn't know what caused the inflator to explode, has hired an engineering firm to help investigate.

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

While the recall demand is being sorted out, Brooks of the Center for Auto Safety recommends that owners of vehicles from the 12 affected brands insist that dealers disclose whether their particular vehicle contains an ARC inflator.

"The more customers who complain, the more pressure that puts on the manufacturers," he said.

## **TikTok content creators file lawsuit against Montana over first-in-nation law banning app**

AMY BETH HANSON, HALELUYA HADERO and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

HELENA, Mont. (AP) — Five TikTok content creators have filed a lawsuit seeking to overturn Montana's first-in-the-nation ban on the video sharing app, arguing the law is an unconstitutional violation of free speech rights.

The Montana residents also argued in the complaint, filed in federal court late Wednesday without public notice, that the state doesn't have any authority over matters of national security. Republican Gov. Greg Gianforte signed the bill into law Wednesday and said it would protect Montana residents' private data and personal information from being harvested by the Chinese government.

The ban is scheduled to take effect on Jan. 1, 2024.

"The law takes the broadest possible approach to its objectives, restricting and banning the protected speech of all TikTok users in Montana to prevent the speculative and unsubstantiated possibility that the Chinese government might direct TikTok Inc., or its parent, to spy on some Montana users," the complaint states.

"We expected a legal challenge and are fully prepared to defend the law," said Emily Flower, spokeswoman for the Montana Department of Justice.

TikTok has argued the law infringes on people's First Amendment rights.

However, spokesperson Brooke Oberwetter declined to comment on the lawsuit Thursday. She also declined to say whether the company helped coordinate the complaint.

The plaintiffs are Montana residents who use the video-sharing app for things like promoting a business, connecting with military veterans, sharing outdoor adventures or expressing their sense of humor. Two of them have more than 200,000 followers.

One content creator, Carly Ann Goddard, shares videos about living on a ranch, parenting, recipes and home decor. Her account has 97,000 followers and has allowed her to roughly triple her family's household income, the complaint states. TikTok creators can make money in several ways, including by being paid to advertise products to their followers.

The lawsuit — filed just hours after Gianforte signed the measure into law — states the ban would "immediately and permanently deprive Plaintiffs of their ability to express themselves and communicate with others."

"Montana can no more ban its residents from viewing or posting to TikTok than it could ban the Wall Street Journal because of who owns it or the ideas it publishes," the plaintiffs' attorneys wrote.

The case could serve as a testing ground for the TikTok-free America many national lawmakers have envisioned. Cybersecurity experts say it could be difficult to enforce.

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 information 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 Chi-

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nese government, a claim ByteDance says is baseless.

China passed laws in 2014 and 2017 that compel companies to cooperate with the country's government for state intelligence work. TikTok says it has never been asked to hand over its data and it wouldn't do so if asked.

"TikTok is spying on Americans. Period," Montana Attorney General Austin Knudsen told a legislative committee in March. "TikTok is a tool of the Chinese Communist Party. It is owned by a Chinese company, and under China law, if you are based in China, you will cooperate with the Chinese Communist Party. Period."

More than half the U.S. states, including Montana, and the federal government have banned TikTok from government-owned devices.

Montana's law would prohibit 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.

The idea of 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 order 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.

Montana's law would be nullified if the federal government placed a ban on TikTok or if it was sold to a company not based in a country that is federally designated as a foreign adversary, which currently includes China, Russia, North Korea, Iran and Cuba.

## **88-year-old Australian doctor freed 7 years after kidnapping by Islamic extremists in West Africa**

By ROD MCGUIRK Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — An 88-year-old Australian doctor held captive by Islamic extremists in West Africa for more than seven years has been freed and has returned to Australia.

Ken Elliott was safe and well and was reunited with his wife and their children on Thursday night, Foreign Minister Penny Wong said.

"I'm very pleased to advise that Dr. Ken Elliott, who's been held hostage in Western Africa for some seven years, has been reunited in Australia with his family," Wong told reporters in Sydney.

Elliott and his wife were kidnapped in Burkina Faso, where they had run a medical clinic for four decades. Jocelyn Elliott was released three weeks later.

"We wish to express our thanks to God and all who have continued to pray for us," Elliott's family said in a statement released by Wong's department.

"We express our relief that Dr. Elliott is free and thank the Australian government and all who have been involved over time to secure his release," the family statement said.

Wong said no ransom was paid to secure Elliott's freedom, but no other details on his release were disclosed. Media reported he was reunited with his family in Perth, the west coast city where he is from.

"At 88 years of age, and after many years away from home, Dr. Elliott now needs time and privacy to rest and rebuild strength," the family added.

The militant group behind the kidnapping, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, rose to prominence in large part through kidnap-for-ransom operations targeting foreign aid workers and tourists.

On the day the Australian couple were kidnapped — Jan. 15, 2016 — 30 people were killed in an extremist attack in Burkina Faso's capital Ouagadougou. Al-Qaida's North Africa wing claimed responsibility for that attack and other high-profile strikes in West Africa months earlier, including killing 20 people in an attack on a hotel in Mali's capital Bamako.

The Elliotts were kidnapped near the northern Burkina Faso town of Djibo, near the border with Mali and Niger.

Jocelyn Elliott was freed in neighboring Niger. Niger's then-President Mahamadou Issoufou had worked with Burkina Faso intelligence services to secure her release, his office said at the time.

Australia had not paid ransom to secure Ken Elliott's release, Wong said.

"The Australian government has a clear policy that we do not pay ransoms," Wong said.

"What we have done over the last seven years is ensure that we worked with other governments and local authorities in relation to Dr. Elliott," she added.

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

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

At least 17 states have 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 to restrict or ban care. Proposed bans are also pending before Texas and Missouri's governors.

Oklahoma on Thursday agreed to not enforce its ban while opponents of the law seek a preliminary injunction against it in federal court.

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' 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



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several states where 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.

A proposal that failed in New Hampshire's House on Thursday would have required school officials to disclose to inquiring parents that their child is using a different name or being referred to as being a different gender. Opponents said the bill would have exposed LGBTQ+ students to the risk of abuse at home.

Not all states are adopting restrictions, and some Democratic-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.

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

## **Car rushes Vatican gate, is fired on by gendarmes; driver apprehended after reaching courtyard**

ROME (AP) — A car driven by someone with apparent psychiatric problems rushed through a Vatican gate Thursday evening and sped past Swiss Guards into a palace courtyard before the driver was apprehended by police, the Holy See said.

Vatican gendarmes fired a shot at the speeding car's front tires after it rushed the gate, but the vehicle managed to continue on its way, the Vatican press office said in a statement late Thursday.

Once the car reached the San Damaso Courtyard of the Apostolic Palace, the driver got out and was immediately arrested by Vatican gendarmes. The Vatican said the driver was about 40 years old and was in a "serious state of psychophysical alteration." He was being held in the Vatican barracks.

It wasn't clear if Pope Francis was anywhere near the incident, which occurred after 8 p.m. at the Santa Anna gate, one of the main entrances to the Vatican City State in the heart of Rome.

Francis lives on the other side of Vatican City at the Santa Marta hotel, where at that hour he would normally be having dinner and retiring to his room. The Vatican statement said that as soon as the gendarmes sounded the alarm of an incursion, the main gate blocking access to the piazza in front of Francis' hotel was shut.

The incident was a rare incursion into the city state, much of which is off limits to the general public, especially at night.

While visitors can access St. Peter's Basilica and the Vatican Museums during business hours, and people with doctors' prescriptions can go to the Vatican pharmacy, permission is required to get into other buildings in the enclave.

The Apostolic Palace, which houses the papal apartments, key reception rooms, the Vatican archives and offices, is guarded around the clock by Swiss Guards and gendarmes who man various checkpoints.

It's not the first time that someone with apparent psychiatric problems caused a disturbance at the

Vatican. During a 2009 Christmas Eve Mass, a woman jumped the barricade of St. Peter's Basilica and tried to attack Pope Benedict XVI. He was not harmed, though a cardinal walking in the procession broke his hip in the ruckus.

## **G7 stance on China complicated by huge stakes in economic ties, cooperation on global issues**

By ELAINE KURTENBACH and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

HIROSHIMA, Japan (AP) — Leaders of the Group of Seven advanced economies are generally united in voicing concern about China. The question is how to translate that worry into action.

Over the past two years, President Joe Biden's administration has sought to reframe the relationship with Beijing and build support among like-minded nations for a strong response to what officials in Washington and some other Western democracies say is "economic coercion."

But the G7 also needs to cooperate with China on broader global issues such as climate change, North Korea, the war in Ukraine and the debt problems of a growing number of developing economies. And all the G-7 countries have a big stake in strong ties with the world's second-largest economy.

At a summit this week in Hiroshima, U.S. officials say they expect leaders of the G-7 to jointly endorse a unified strategy on "economic coercion," which they define as economic retaliation for policies deemed contrary to another country's interests, in this case, China's.

Advisers to Biden have been pushing for this approach since he took office in early 2021. His administration has taken clear actions against China in restricting trade and investment in the name of national security, despite the economic spillovers.

The issue is retaliation against "countries that take actions that China's not happy with from a geopolitical perspective. That's a matter that should be of concern to all of us," Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said last week at G-7 finance meetings in Niigata, Japan.

"We would like to work jointly with our partners and are continuing our conversations about that," Yellen said. Efforts to safeguard economic security would be most effective, she said, with coordinated action, though the U.S. has no interest in breaking up economically with China.

Meanwhile, the European Union also has moved to enact its own platform for dealing with "economic coercion," an effort spurred by actions taken by President Donald Trump's "America First" moves against fellow G-7 members.

"While we all have our independent relationships with China, I'm confident that the G-7 leaders will convene on a set of very core shared principles," EU President Ursula von der Leyen said in a news conference Monday.

Echoing similar comments by Yellen and other U.S. officials, she said the EU's strategy is aimed at "de-risking, not decoupling."

Yellen says U.S. limits on trade with and investment in China, which are still being worked out, would be "narrowly scoped" and targeted to protect technologies with national security implications.

In October, the Commerce Department banned exports of advanced computer chips and equipment to China out of concern that Chinese companies and the government were using the technology for military purposes. It also got the Netherlands and Japan to agree with its export controls, undermining one of President Xi Jinping's goals of making the Chinese economy dominant in key technologies.

The Treasury Department can impose sanctions on threats tied to cybersecurity and China's military. The U.S. government also reviews Chinese investments into the U.S. and is considering restrictions to U.S. investments in China.

But the U.S. imported nearly \$537 billion worth of goods last year from China and ran a \$383 billion goods deficit, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. That creates a codependence — with Chinese companies reliant on U.S. customers and America in need of products from China.

U.S. businesses have a cumulative investment in China of nearly \$120 billion. European nations — especially Germany, the United Kingdom, Netherlands and France — have put more than \$140 billion into

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China businesses over the past 20 years, according to EU figures.

During the pandemic, disruptions to supplies of all sorts of products, from computer chips and window frames to baby formula to work boots, drove home the extent to which the world depends on trade with China to stock shelves and keep the world clothed, fed and housed.

Adding to the perceived risks, Chinese police recently raided the offices of consulting companies Bain & Co. and the Mintz Group. Beijing also launched a national security review of the U.S. chip maker Micron.

"We're watching China employ policy tools and practices like military-civil fusion, economic coercion, and extreme forms of digital protectionism," said Suzanne Clark, CEO of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. "These policies and practices in pursuit of China's absolute security — together with massive state subsidies, unfair commercial practices, and human rights abuses — have made the world less secure."

The differences with China range well beyond trade and technology.

China's leaders have challenged the Western-dominated "international order" and "rule of law" with threats to take the island democracy of Taiwan by force and expanding the Chinese military presence in the South China Sea.

Beijing demands that businesses and governments alike avoid violating its stance in areas that it deems vital to its own security interests, while the U.S. and other G-7 nations must answer to international norms on human rights and rule of law.

The question is how far Washington and other G-7 nations might go and what measures might tip the balance beyond what China will accept.

Beijing's outraged response to accusations of economic coercion suggests it will be difficult to separate G-7 financial and trade interests from military and diplomatic ties.

During the G-7's finance-related talks, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Wang Wenbin, slammed the U.S. and said it was the chief culprit. On Tuesday, Wang took aim at Japan, saying that as host of the G-7 summit, Japan was "addicted to provoking and creating camp confrontations, which harms regional interests."

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the U.S. and its allies sought to weave the global economy more tightly, expecting that shared financial interests could limit the risk of conflict.

Yet greater trade with China hollowed out manufacturing communities in the U.S. — a factor helping to destabilize American politics. And China has evolved in ways U.S. leaders had not anticipated. Xi, the country's most powerful leader since the 1960s, has vastly expanded the ruling Communist Party's powers to include social controls and suppression of dissent or criticism, leveraging the latest technology to create the first truly modern surveillance state.

"Economic integration didn't stop China from expanding its military ambitions in the region, or stop Russia from invading its democratic neighbors," White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said in a recent speech. "Neither country had become more responsible or cooperative."

Biden's election as president and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have given the G-7 a renewed impetus. At the same time, "The biggest question for the G7 leaders gathering in Hiroshima is what vision of leadership they want to project," said a recent analysis by the International Crisis Group.

## FBI employees testify on GOP politicization claims after losing clearances

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former FBI employees accused the bureau of politicization in congressional testimony Thursday, a day after the agency disclosed that two of the men had seen their security clearances revoked over concerns about how their views of the Capitol attack on Jan. 6, 2021, affected their work.

The three men alleged overreach and retaliation by the FBI in testimony to a special House committee investigating what Republicans assert is the "weaponization" of the federal government against conservatives.

"If you're not politically correct ... you're not in line with what they think to be the political position or the

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proper position, you're the target," Rep. Jim Jordan of Ohio, the Republican chairman of the committee, said in his opening statement.

Former FBI employees Marcus Allen and Steve Friend testified to the panel just hours after the FBI informed Jordan in a letter Wednesday — obtained by The Associated Press — that both men had been stripped of security clearances after either attending the Capitol riot in 2021 or espousing alternate theories about the attack.

A mob of pro-Trump rioters, some armed with pipes, bats and bear spray, charged into the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, quickly overrunning overwhelmed police officers trying to keep them back. More than 100 police officers were injured, many beaten, bloodied and bruised. Over 1,000 people have been prosecuted in the Jan. 6 attack on a range of charges from low-level misdemeanors for those who only entered the Capitol to felony seditious conspiracy charges against far-right extremists.

"My colleagues have brought in these former agents, men who lost their security clearances because they were a threat to our national security," said Rep. Stacey Plaskett, the top Democrat on the committee. "People who out of malice or ignorance or both have put partisan agenda above the oath they swore to serve this country and protect its national security."

Jordan and other Republicans on the committee hailed the former FBI employees as rank-and-file patriots who were facing retribution for speaking out against government abuse. Allen, Friend and Garrett O'Boyle, a former field agent, shared stories with the committee about how they said their decision to come forward has resulted in suspensions and dismissals for their posts.

"My oath did not include sacrificing the hopes, dreams and livelihood of my family," said O'Boyle.

Many of them testified about their personal struggles, including not being able to find employment elsewhere and struggling to support their loved ones and young children while their cases were being investigated.

"I sacrificed my dream job to share this information with the American people," Friend testified. "I humbly ask all the members to do your jobs and consider the merit of what I have presented."

But Democrats dismissed the testimony, calling the hearing another attempt by Republicans on the committee to help former president Donald Trump.

"This select committee is a clearinghouse for testing conspiracy theories for Donald Trump to use in his 2024 presidential campaign," Plaskett added.

The letter from the FBI detailed how Friend refused to participate in a SWAT team arrest of a suspect in the Jan. 6 insurrection while serving in Florida, and "espoused an alternative narrative" about the attack. Friend maintained the show of force wasn't needed.

Allen, a former operations specialist at the FBI field office in Charlotte, North Carolina, also backed "alternative theories" about Jan. 6 to co-workers multiple times, even after his supervisor told him to stop, according to the FBI letter. Allen disputed those findings, and a lawyer for both men cast suspension of their security clearances as retaliation against whistleblowers.

"I'm hopeful that scrutiny from Congress and from the inspector general will deter the FBI from abusing the security clearance process to retaliate against others the way it's retaliated against me," Allen told the committee.

The FBI, though, has said that of the nearly 80,000 staff at the agency, only 32 currently have their clearances suspended, a clear departure from the GOP claims that retaliation of rank-and-file staff is widespread. That's according to recently transcribed testimony from Jennifer Leigh Moore, an executive assistant director of human resources at the agency.

A third employee who did not testify had a security clearance revoked after he entered the restricted area around the Capitol himself on Jan. 6, and later provided false or misleading information to investigators about what he did that day, the FBI's letter said. All three employees can appeal the security clearance decisions.

Two of the former FBI employees who testified, Friend and O'Boyle, acknowledged that they had received money from Kash Patel, a close Trump ally who held multiple roles in his administration and now oversees a charity.

They said they needed that money to support their families after FBI suspensions left them unable to



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work, but Democrats said those ties show the partisan nature of the “weaponization” investigation.

In a series of contentious exchanges, Democrats complained that one of Thursday’s witnesses, Allen, was only interviewed by Republican lawmakers on the committee. Many pointed to House rules that state minority and majority staff are required to have equal access to witness testimony, regardless of whether it is a whistleblower account or not.

Since January, House Democrats on both the select and Judiciary committees have accused Jordan and GOP lawmakers of stonewalling them from several transcribed interviews, refusing to allow them into the room or provide official transcripts or videos of the interviews after the fact.

“We’re in the dark. That’s not how Congress works. That’s not how committees work,” said Democratic Rep. Dan Goldman of New York.

The investigation by the select committee has also encompassed social media companies and other large businesses. Republicans on the committee released a report before the hearing with new allegations against the FBI, including that Bank of America had given data to the FBI on all of their customers who made transactions in Washington, D.C., in the days around Jan. 6.

Lawmakers played video testimony from George Hill, a retired FBI National Security Intelligence supervisor, who told the committee about the list after seeing it in the system, although he said he never opened it. Bank of America provided the information to the FBI voluntarily, according to Hill’s testimony, though it remained unclear whether and how the agency may have used the data.

Bank of America issued a brief statement to The Associated Press, saying it follows the law to “narrowly respond” to law enforcement requests, but it did not directly answer whether it shared the customer data with the FBI.

“We don’t comment on our communications with law enforcement,” bank spokesperson Naomi Patton said. “The report’s suggestion that Bank of America proactively searched our data for broad types of customer behavior, such as making any purchase in a specific city on a specific day, did not occur.”

Democrats have said Hill was among the former FBI employees who are “deeply biased,” citing social media posts where some committee witnesses have referred to Jan. 6 as a “setup.”

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Associated Press writer Ken Sweet in New York contributed to this report.

## **\$3 billion accounting error means the Pentagon can send more weapons to Ukraine**

By TARA COPP and LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Pentagon has overestimated the value of the weapons it has sent to Ukraine by at least \$3 billion — an accounting error that could be a boon for the war effort because it will allow the Defense Department to send more weapons now without asking Congress for more money.

The acknowledgment Thursday comes at a time when Pentagon is under increased pressure by Congress to show accountability for the billions of dollars it has sent in weapons, ammunition and equipment to Ukraine and as some lawmakers question whether that level of support should continue.

It also could free up more money for critical weapons as Ukraine is on the verge of a much anticipated counteroffensive — which will require as much military aid as they can get. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has previously said the offensive was delayed because they did not yet have everything they needed.

The error was caused when officials overvalued some of the systems sent to Ukraine, using the value of money it would cost to replace an item completely rather than the current value of the weapon. In many of the military aid packages, the Pentagon has opted to draw from its stockpiles of older, existing gear because it can get those items to Ukraine faster.

“During our regular oversight process of presidential drawdown packages, the Department discovered inconsistencies in equipment valuation for Ukraine. In some cases, ‘replacement cost’ rather than ‘net book

value' was used, therefore overestimating the value of the equipment drawn down from U.S. stocks," said Pentagon spokeswoman Sabrina Singh.

She added that the mistake hasn't constrained U.S. support to Ukraine or hampered the ability to send aid to the battlefield.

A defense official said the Pentagon is still trying to determine exactly how much the total surplus will be. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations, said the comptroller has asked the military services to review all previous Ukraine aid packages using the proper cost figures. The result, said the official, will be that the department will have more available funding authority to use as the Ukraine offensive nears.

The aid surplus was first reported by The Wall Street Journal.

To date the U.S. has provided Ukraine nearly \$37 billion in military aid since Russia invaded in February 2022. The bulk of that has been in weapons systems, millions of munitions and ammunition rounds, and an array of trucks, sensors, radars and other equipment pulled from Pentagon stockpiles and sent quickly to Ukraine.

Members of Congress have repeatedly pressed Defense Department leaders on how closely the U.S. is tracking its aid to Ukraine to ensure that it is not subject to fraud or ending up in the wrong hands. The Pentagon has said it has a "robust program" to track the aid as it crosses the border into Ukraine and to keep tabs on it once it is there, depending on the sensitivity of each weapons system.

There also is a small team of Americans in Ukraine working with Ukrainians to do physical inspections when possible, but also virtual inspections when needed, since those teams are not going to the front lines.

In late February, the Pentagon's inspector general said his office has found no evidence yet that any of the billions of dollars in weapons and aid to Ukraine has been lost to corruption or diverted into the wrong hands. He cautioned that those investigations are only in their early stages.

## **Feinstein's office details previously unknown complications from shingles illness**

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democratic Sen. Dianne Feinstein's office said Thursday that she is suffering from Ramsay Hunt syndrome, a complication from the shingles virus that can paralyze part of the face, and that she contracted encephalitis while recovering from the virus earlier this year.

Feinstein, 89, had not previously disclosed those medical details, though she said in a statement last week that she had suffered complications from the virus. The longtime California senator returned from a more than two-month absence on May 10 after weeks of questions about her declining health and whether she would be back in the Senate at all.

Adam Russell, a spokesman for Feinstein, said that the encephalitis, or inflammation of the brain, "resolved itself shortly after she was released from the hospital in March." Feinstein continues to have complications from the Ramsay Hunt syndrome, Russell said.

Russell confirmed the two complications after the New York Times first reported them, raising questions about whether she had been hiding the extent of her illnesses. Upon her return last week, Feinstein was using a wheelchair and noticeably thinner, and has appeared confused at times when speaking to reporters or being wheeled through the halls.

"The senator previously disclosed that she had several complications related to her shingles diagnosis," Russell said in the statement. "As discussed in the New York Times article, those complications included Ramsay Hunt syndrome and encephalitis."

Feinstein's face has appeared partially paralyzed since she returned to the Senate, stirring some speculation about whether she had had a stroke. Ramsay Hunt syndrome is a complication that occurs when the shingles virus reaches a facial nerve near the ears. It can also cause hearing loss.

Encephalitis can also be caused by shingles. The swelling of the brain can have a number of different

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symptoms, including personality changes, seizures, stiffness, confusion and problems with sight or hearing, according to the Mayo Clinic.

Aides to Feinstein said last week that she is still recovering from her illness and would operate on a reduced schedule. Since she has returned, she has missed some votes where she was not needed. On Wednesday, for example, she missed the first three Senate votes of the day but appeared for the last two, in which the margin was much closer.

Feinstein has faced questions for several years about her clearly declining health and her mental acuity. In February Feinstein said she would not run for re-election in 2024.

But some Democrats have pushed for her to leave sooner. A member of the California congressional delegation, Democratic Rep. Ro Khanna, called on her to resign as she stayed away from Washington for more than ten weeks, and several other House progressives have echoed his call. And Senate Democrats were increasingly anxious during Feinstein's absence as they were unable to confirm some of President Joe Biden's judicial nominees with a narrow 51-49 majority.

As Democrats worried, Feinstein made an unusual request to be temporarily replaced on the Judiciary panel while she remained out of the Senate. But Republicans last month blocked a vote, saying there was little precedent for a temporary committee replacement and that they didn't want to help Democrats confirm the most partisan judges. Others said they thought Democrats were unfairly trying to push her out of office.

Two weeks later, Democrats said that Feinstein would return to Washington.

A senator for more than three decades, Feinstein has had a groundbreaking political career and shattered gender barriers. She was the first woman to serve as president of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in the 1970s and the first female mayor of San Francisco. She ascended to that post after the November 1978 assassinations of then-Mayor George Moscone and City Supervisor Harvey Milk by a former supervisor, Dan White. Feinstein found Milk's body.

In the Senate, she was the first woman to head the Senate Intelligence Committee and the first woman to serve as the Judiciary Committee's top Democrat.

## **Navy probe prompted by suicides condemns conditions at shipyard: 'We let our people down'**

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Navy investigation prompted by a spate of suicides is recommending widespread improvements in housing, food, parking and internet for sailors as well as changes to mental health and other personnel programs. The much-anticipated report lays out a sweeping condemnation of living and working conditions at naval shipyards that had languished for years but were brought to light by the deaths.

"We let our people down." Navy leaders said in response to the findings.

The inquiry concluded that several suicides at the Newport News shipyard in Virginia last year were not connected or caused by any one issue. But the deaths underscored pervasive problems and poor living conditions, particularly among young enlisted sailors doing long-term ship maintenance at that base and others around the United States.

"The focus on the maintenance mission has degraded our ability to take care of our most junior and at-risk sailors," said the investigating officer, Rear Adm. Bradley Dunham, in his findings released Thursday. "This was not one seminal event, decision or individual's action, this was a series of actions and decisions shared by many that resulted in the wholly unnecessary conditions and challenges our sailors face."

Navy leaders said they have taken a number of steps already to improve conditions at Newport News. Additional planned changes are broader and call for similar moves at other shipyards where the same problems exist. Recommended increases in sailor pay, housing benefits, food, health care, job choices and counseling would affect service members across the board.

In a memo accompanying the report, Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro and Adm. Mike Gilday, chief of naval operations, concluded that "collectively, Navy senior leadership, officer and civilian, let our standards

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slip — and in doing so we let our people down.” They blamed it on “organizational drift” and a slow erosion of conditions over time that became unacceptable.

**EDITOR’S NOTE** — This story includes discussion of suicide. If you or someone you know needs help, please call the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. This is a hotline for individuals in crisis or for those looking to help someone else. To speak with a trained listener, call 988. Service members and veterans can call 988 and then press “1”. There is also an online chat at [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org)

The investigation began last year after seven service members assigned to the aircraft carrier USS George Washington died over a 12-month period ending April 2022, including three in one week. The carrier was docked for overhaul at Newport News shipyard.

Of the seven deaths, three were health-related or accidental, but four were suicides, including the three during the week of April 9-15. A Navy investigation released last December found that the suicides were not connected, but that poor quality of life onboard the ship was a “contributing factor” in one of the deaths.

As that investigation was going on, four more sailors died by suicide between last Oct. 30 and Nov. 26 at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Maintenance Center in Norfolk, Virginia, setting off a second examination. All four sailors had been assigned to limited duty jobs there due to injuries, health or other issues. A review concluded that those deaths were unconnected, but cited factors such as family, finance and career issues, alcohol use and access to personally owned firearms.

That review recommended improvements to the system that puts sailors into limited duty slots when they are unable to perform their regular jobs due to issues ranging from injuries and pregnancy to mental health and other problems. It also called for expanded mental health care and increased staffing, which are similar quality of work and life concerns reflected in the shipyard report. In their memo, Del Toro and Gilday outlined needed changes in limited duty assignments as part of the broader effort to improve sailors’ quality of service.

“Every sailor unable to perform normally assigned duties deserves full, direct support,” said Del Toro and Gilday, adding that sailors must be assigned “in the right numbers, to the right commands, with access to the right resources.”

They acknowledged that the shipyard and personnel problems “will not be corrected with the stroke of a pen,” but will require a long-term effort with more money, resources and policy changes.

Adm. Daryl Caudle, commander of the Navy’s Fleet Forces Command, said improvements to housing, parking and other services at Newport News have been made, and mental health facilities have been set up away from the ship, where crew are more likely to seek help. He said Navy leaders will be seeking more money from Congress; they had no specific totals or timelines for the changes.

“We’re going to have to do what’s right, whatever the costs,” Master Chief Petty Officer James Honea added in a call with reporters Thursday.

The Navy said it has requested \$258 million in the 2024 budget for housing, parking garages and recreation facilities. Other changes, including pay and additional personnel for counseling and health care, could take years to get congressional approval and funding.

The shipyard report dug deeply into sailors’ work and living conditions when they are assigned to a ship that is undergoing major overhaul or maintenance in a Navy shipyard. The George Washington, for example, was brought to Newport News for a four-year overhaul that includes refueling the nuclear reactors and other intensive repair work.

In one case, a young sailor who later died by suicide had been sleeping in his car due to noise on the ship. The investigation noted that he was counseled on the matter, but there was no evidence of any follow-through by leadership. In other cases, sailors complained that lack of nearby parking and the difficult commute were adding hours to their days. Depending on the location, sailors could face a three-hour commute from the time they left home, drove to the parking lot, took the shuttle bus and then walked the final stretch to the ship.



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Since 2021, there have been five suicides among George Washington crew members. One death earlier this year is under investigation. Across the Navy, there were 70 suicides last year, compared with 59 in 2021. There have been 25 this year, as of April 30.

One key change, Caudle said, will ensure that young sailors do not spend the bulk of their first enlistment term on a ship docked for maintenance.

"We definitely want a sailor who joined the Navy to go to sea, to get that opportunity to see the ocean, get into a port call, experience why that person joined, and not spend that entire tour in a maintenance facility where the ship's being repaired," Caudle said.

Del Toro and Gilday said shipyard assignments are essential but should not consume a young sailor's early years. They endorsed recommendations allowing sailors to seek other jobs after one year, and limiting shipyard duty to two years.

Asked if anyone was disciplined as a result of the problems, Caudle said no one person was liable. Instead, Navy leadership was accountable and must ensure no other ships endure the problems the George Washington had.

Honea, the Navy's most senior enlisted member, said leaders must be empowered to make changes. "I can't write good enough policy to replace bad leadership," he said. "But I can place good leadership that will overcome bad policy every single day."

## 'Indiana Jones' swings into Cannes Film Festival; Harrison Ford honored before joyous festivalgoers

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

CANNES, France (AP) — Indiana Jones and Harrison Ford swung 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.

Fedoras abounded in the throngs of onlookers who watched Ford and company hit the red carpet.

Ford walked hand in hand with his wife, Calista Flockhart, and later joined his cast mates as John Williams' score played across the red carpet. Among those in attendance were Disney chief Bob Iger, Lucasfilm's Kathleen Kennedy and filmmaker Steve McQueen.

Ford, 80, who has said "Dial of Destiny" will be his last performance as the character, also received an honorary Palme d'Or from the Cannes Film Festival. Last year, Cannes feted "Top Gun Maverick" and Tom Cruise in a similar manner.

Inside the theater, Ford was greeted with thunderous applause. He beamed and looked around the theater before receiving the honorary Palme.

"I'm very touched. I'm very moved by this. They say when you're about to die, you, you see your life flash before your eyes. I just saw my life flash before my eyes," Ford said after a clip reel of his career was played.

"A great part of my life, not all of my life," Ford continued, thanking Flockhart as well as "Dial of Destiny" director James Mangold and co-star Phoebe Waller-Bridge.

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, Mangold ("Ford vs. Ferrari," "Logan") takes the reins for a film co-starring Waller-Bridge, Antonio Banderas and Mads Mikkelsen.

## FDA advisers back RSV vaccine for pregnant women that protects their newborns

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By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A first-of-its-kind RSV vaccine for pregnant women guards their newborns against the scary respiratory virus — and federal health advisers on Thursday backed Pfizer's shot despite some lingering questions.

RSV fills hospitals with wheezing babies each fall and winter, and the virus struck earlier than usual and especially hard in the U.S. this past year.

If the vaccine pans out, "many infants and their parents will breathe easier in the coming years," said Dr. Jay Portnoy, a member of the Food and Drug Administration advisory panel from Children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City, Missouri.

The idea: Give women a single injection late in pregnancy, between 24 weeks and 36 weeks, so they develop RSV-fighting antibodies that pass through the placenta — just like they pass protection against other bugs to their babies.

In Pfizer's international study of nearly 7,400 pregnant women, maternal vaccination proved 82% effective at preventing severe RSV during babies' most vulnerable first three months of life. At age 6 months, it still was proving 69% protective against severe illness.

Pfizer said there were no signs of safety problems but the FDA did ask its scientific advisers to consider whether a slight difference in premature birth between vaccinated moms and those given a dummy shot was of concern. Debate over whether that was really a hint of trouble or just due to chance dominated the panel's daylong meeting.

Pfizer pledged to closely track the vaccine's real-world use for more evidence. Ultimately the advisers unanimously decided that the shot is effective — and voted 10-4 that there's adequate safety data. The FDA will consider Thursday's recommendations in making the final decision on approval.

"If you're in any sense risking premature births with this vaccine, I think there will be a big price to pay," said Dr. Paul Offit of the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, among the panelists who voted "no" on the safety question.

If the FDA ultimately approves the maternal shot, it would mark a second milestone in the decades-long quest to prevent the respiratory syncytial virus. Earlier this month the FDA approved the world's first RSV vaccine, rival GSK's shot for older adults, who also are at high risk. There isn't a vaccine yet for children, but Pfizer is about to begin testing one.

Here are some things to know:

## RSV IS A COMMON THREAT

For most healthy people, RSV is a cold-like nuisance. But it can be life-threatening for the very young — infecting deep in the lungs to cause pneumonia or impeding babies' breathing by inflaming their tiny airways. In the U.S. alone, between 58,000 and 80,000 children younger than 5 are hospitalized each year, and between 100 and 300 die, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"All young infants are at risk of severe disease with RSV," but postponing infection even by a few months lessens that risk, said CDC's Dr. Katherine Fleming-Dutra.

## VACCINE'S POTENTIAL IMPACT

Pfizer's vaccine isn't intended to prevent RSV infection but to avoid the worst outcomes. In late-stage testing, six infants born to vaccinated mothers had a severe RSV illness in their first three months of life compared to 33 infants whose mothers received a dummy shot. In addition, the vaccine cut in half the chances of needing any medical attention for an RSV infection by age 6 months.

The company predicts the U.S. could prevent as many as 20,000 infant hospitalizations a year, and 320,000 doctor visits, if enough pregnant women were vaccinated.

## SAFETY DATA

Vaccine reactions included typically mild injection-site pain and fatigue. As for the prematurity question, vaccinated mothers had slightly more preterm infants — 5.7% versus 4.7%. The vast majority were born just a few weeks early. That's better than the nation's preterm birth rate — overall in the U.S., 1 in 10 babies were born premature last year — and the study imbalance wasn't statistically significant, meaning it could be due to chance.

Competitor GSK halted its own trials of a maternal RSV vaccine because of prematurity concerns, spurring questions about Pfizer's shot. Pfizer said the preterm difference in its study was fueled by participants in South Africa — for unknown reasons — and there was no difference spotted in the U.S. or other high-income countries.

"Do you hold hostage the potential benefits of the vaccine" without clear evidence of a problem, Dr. William Gruber, Pfizer's senior vice president, asked the panelists.

"There is certainty that the vaccine works and will keep infants out of the hospital in the United States as soon as this winter," he said.

A total of 17 infants died during the study, five born to vaccinated mothers and 12 to those given a dummy shot. Researchers deemed none of the deaths related to the vaccine but FDA said it "is unable to exclude the possibility" that one infant's death, stemming from extreme prematurity, might be related.

Vaccines always get close safety scrutiny but regulators are especially mindful of a major setback in the 1960s when an experimental RSV shot worsened infections in children. Eventually scientists figured out the problem and the RSV vaccines in the pipeline today are made with safer, modern methods -- yet still were tested first in older adults.

#### ANOTHER OPEN QUESTION

FDA's advisers also cautioned that it's not clear which other vaccines given to pregnant women can be administered during the same doctor's visit. They pointed to data suggesting that a vaccine against whooping cough doesn't seem as strong if pregnant women receive it at the same time as the RSV shot.

#### WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

FDA's advisers already have recommended approving Pfizer's vaccine for older adults, and the agency is expected to make a decision by month's end. Whether to use the same shot in pregnant women will be a separate FDA decision, expected in August.

Meanwhile, rival GSK is gearing up for fall immunizations with its RSV vaccine for seniors. First, the CDC's advisers will debate next month whether all older adults or only those at high risk need vaccination.

Vaccines aren't the only advance in the pipeline. High-risk infants can get monthly doses of a protective drug during RSV season, although CDC data shows too few receive it. European regulators recently approved the first one-dose option, from Sanofi and AstraZeneca, opening that type of protection to more infants. FDA's advisers will debate that drug next month, too.

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## 8-year-old girl dies in Border Patrol custody in Texas, as agency struggles with overcrowding

By VALERIE GONZALEZ and REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

MCALLEN, Texas (AP) — A little girl from Panama born with heart problems died in Border Patrol custody Wednesday, the second death of a child from Latin America in U.S. government custody in two weeks.

The 8-year-old girl and her family were being held in Harlingen, Texas, in the Rio Grande Valley, one of the busiest corridors for migrant crossings. The Border Patrol's parent agency, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, has struggled with overcrowding at its facilities, spurred by a large increase in migrants ahead of the expiration last week of a key regulation on immigration linked to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The girl experienced "a medical emergency" and emergency medical services were called. They took her to the hospital where she was pronounced dead, the agency said. An autopsy has been ordered.

The girl's name was Anadith Tanay Reyes Alvarez, said Honduran Consul José Leonardo Navas, who is based in McAllen, Texas. He said she is from Panama, although her parents are from Honduras. The consul said she was traveling with her father, mother and two older siblings.

She was born with heart problems and was operated on three years ago in Panama, according to her father who spoke with the consul.

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Customs and Border Protection's internal affairs office will investigate the girl's death, and the Homeland Security Department's inspector general and Harlingen police have been notified, Customs and Border Protection said.

Her death comes a week after a 17-year-old Honduran boy, Ángel Eduardo Maradiaga Espinoza, who was traveling alone, died in U.S. Health and Human Services Department custody.

Also, earlier this year, a 4-year-old "medically fragile unaccompanied child from Honduras" died at a hospital in Michigan, Health and Human Services said in a statement Thursday. The agency said the child, who was in the care of the agency's Office of Refugee Resettlement, was taken to the hospital on March 14 following a "cardiac arrest event." She died three days later, the agency said.

In recent weeks the U.S. has struggled with large numbers of migrants coming to the border in expectation of the end of Title 42, a regulation that had curbed migration during the pandemic.

Last week, hundreds of migrants were held in open air on U.S. soil between two border walls in San Diego. Many subsisted for days on a limited Border Patrol diet of water and chips or granola bars and whatever volunteers or vendors passed through openings in the wall.

Pedro Rios, director of the American Friends Service Committee's U.S.-Mexico border program, said Thursday that portable bathrooms were too full to use, forcing migrants to relieve themselves outdoors. He said the Border Patrol told him to call 911 when volunteers encountered an 8-month-old child between the walls was "listless and vomiting." The camp has since been disbanded.

On Thursday, advocates also warned of dangerous conditions for migrants who are still in Mexico trying to gain entry to the United States. Advocates said during a news conference with journalists that they had visited a number of encampments in Mexico to assess conditions there and found little in the way of medical care.

Amy Fischer, director of Refugee and Migrant Rights at Amnesty International USA, said "almost everyone" they saw on the Mexico side of the border "had some type of health condition that they were dealing with." She said that was "almost universal" that migrants were "lifting up their shirt and showing a rash or saying that my kid had X kind of sickness."

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.

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 Border Patrol has a network of stations and processing facilities across the southwest border where it holds and processes migrants agents encounter before they're either released into the U.S. or turned over to Immigration and Customs Enforcement. On its website, the agency says it has a maximum capacity of 5,000 although the agency has been rapidly expanding capacity in recent months.

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

During the Trump administration, the deaths of children in U.S. custody became flashpoints of controversy, calling into question the administration's efforts to protect the most vulnerable migrants at a time when the U.S. was seeing a rise in the number of families with children coming to the southern border. At least six children died during a roughly year-long period from 2018 to 2019; they were held in either Border Patrol or Health and Human Services custody.

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This story has been corrected to note that the girl died in Border Patrol custody, not at a Border Patrol station.

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Santana reported from Washington. Elliot Spagat in San Diego and Gisela Salomon in Miami contributed to this report.



## Meet D'Arcy Drollinger, a drag queen who's now the first drag laureate in the US

By STEFANIE DAZIO and HAVEN DALEY Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Anti-trans legislation is roiling the nation. Bills prohibiting drag performances are cropping up in statehouses. Violence and vitriol are turning children's drag story hour events into headline-news protests.

San Francisco is fighting back Thursday by naming the nation's first drag laureate, an ambassador-style position designed to represent the city's famous LGBTQ+ community at a time when rights are under attack.

In a city known for its support of LGBTQ+ rights, San Francisco Mayor London Breed says it was a natural step to create a position that not only embraces drag culture but puts government resources toward it. D'Arcy Drollinger, a well-known drag performer and nightclub owner, will receive a \$55,000 stipend in her 18-month role as the city's inaugural drag laureate.

"My goals are to make San Francisco sparkle. I think drag performers bring a lot of sparkle and humor and glamor and silliness to the world. I think that is part of why drag is so successful," said Drollinger, a man who uses feminine pronouns when in drag. She expects to be in drag for the entirety of her role. "I'm going to be in drag pretty much 24/7 for the next 18 months."

She noted San Francisco's drag community is already politically engaged and active.

"There's a lot of power for the drag community in San Francisco," she said. "I feel very honored to be able to take that one more step."

West Hollywood is on the verge of appointing its own drag laureate later this month, though at a much lower salary and with limited engagements. In New York, where the Stonewall riots marked a major turning point in the fight for LGBTQ+ rights, a 2021 effort to create such a position has languished in a committee, reflecting the challenges of creating such jobs even in liberal cities.

In San Francisco, Drollinger will inaugurate the role three weeks before Pride Month begins. Her duties will span from producing and participating in drag events to serving as a spokesperson for San Francisco's LGBTQ+ community to helping officials to ensuring the city's drag history is "shared, honored and preserved." The job posting sought someone who will "embody San Francisco's historic, diverse and inclusive drag culture, elevating the entire community on the national and international stage."

The city's mayor called Drollinger a "bright star in San Francisco" for her advocacy and elevation of the city's drag community.

"Whether it's through a tragedy or to celebrate an occasion, she really has been a leader in this community and supporter of so many others," Breed told The Associated Press.

Drollinger said she felt both nervous and honored when she was told the job was hers, given the recent violence targeting drag performers, even in the Bay Area.

"I know that there are a lot of anti-drag folks out there, and they are very loud, right? But I also don't want to live my life under the shadow of fear. I don't want to have intimidation stop me from growing," she said. "So, yes, I am a little nervous. But I got a lot of fabulous people and fabulousness behind me."

Members of the Proud Boys sparked a hate crimes investigation when they protested and shouted slurs outside a Bay Area library hosting Drag Story Hour, where drag queens read to kids, last June. In Oregon last year, demonstrators — some of them armed — threw rocks and smoke grenades at each other outside a drag event.

In November, a shooter at a Colorado Springs nightclub turned a drag queen's birthday party into a massacre, killing five people and injuring 17 more. The suspect was charged with hate crimes and murder.

The American Civil Liberties Union is tracking 474 anti-LGBTQ+ pieces of legislation in the U.S., including Tennessee's first-in-the-nation law that essentially bans drag from public property or in the presence of minors. A federal judge temporarily blocked the measure hours before it was set to go into effect in late March.

Jonathan Hamilt, executive director of Drag Story Hour, a global nonprofit event network that began

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in San Francisco in 2015, said he hopes other cities across the country will enact their own drag laureate programs.

"It's just having that visibility and having that personal human connection — having that social story of someone from your community that looks like you or someone that you see or interact with on a regular basis," Hamilt said.

New York City Councilmember Kristin Richardson Johnson plans to keep pushing for a drag laureate in her city if the position doesn't win support this year. Jack McClatchy, the elected official's legislative and budget director, couldn't give a specific reason for why the effort has stalled, only noting that it's one of more than 1,000 bills before the council.

West Hollywood, which was founded in part by LGBTQ+ activists in 1984, is expected to name its drag laureate in the coming weeks after a 2021 attempt failed over a pay dispute. Officials originally advertised the position with a \$5,000 stipend, nearly double what the city's poet laureate gets. Pushback prompted the council to raise it to \$15,000 annually for the two-year term that begins July 16 — International Drag Day.

Drollinger owns the Oasis nightclub, which hosted "Meals on Heels" after the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown, where drag performers brought food, cocktails and socially distant lip-synching performances to home-bound customers.

"I hope that the drag laureate position telegraphs to the rest of the country that drag is not something to be scared of," Drollinger said. "Drag is something to celebrate."

Dazio reported from Los Angeles.

## Disney scraps plans for new Florida campus as fight with Gov. Ron DeSantis continues

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. (AP) — The Walt Disney Co. announced Thursday that it was scrapping plans to build a new campus in central Florida and relocate 2,000 employees from Southern California to work in digital technology, finance and product development.

The decision follows a year of attacks from Gov. Ron DeSantis and the Legislature because the company opposed a state law that bans classroom lessons on sexual orientation and gender identity in early grades. Disney filed a First Amendment lawsuit against DeSantis and other officials last month.

Disney had planned to build the campus about 20 miles (30 kilometers) from the giant Walt Disney World theme park resort, but Josh D'Amaro, chairman of the parks, experiences and products division, said in a memo to employees that "new leadership and changing business conditions" prompted the company to abandon those plans.

"I remain optimistic about the direction of our Walt Disney World business," D'Amaro said. "We have plans to invest \$17 billion and create 13,000 jobs over the next ten years. I hope we're able to do so."

Disney and DeSantis have been engaged in a tug-of-war for more than a year that has engulfed the GOP governor in criticism as he prepares to launch an expected presidential bid in the coming weeks.

DeSantis spokesman Jeremy Redfern said the state had been unsure whether the new Disney campus would come to fruition since it was announced nearly two years ago.

"Given the company's financial straits, falling market cap and declining stock price, it is unsurprising that they would restructure their business operations and cancel unsuccessful ventures," Redfern said.

Florida Sen. Joe Gruters, a former chairman of the state Republican Party, called Disney's decision a huge loss.

"I hope we can put this conflict behind us and get back to a more normal working relationship with a company that's been one of our best business and tourism partners that we've had over the last 50 years," Gruters said. "Two thousand jobs and a billion dollars worth of investments into our state, I would say that's a serious blow. The market is much better at dealing with companies rather than heavy-handed government."

Democratic Rep. Anna Eskamani, who represents the Orlando area in the Florida House, released a

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statement blaming the governor for the lost jobs.

"Governor Ron DeSantis is a job killing moron who cares more about his own political ambitions and culture wars than Florida and our future," Eskamani said. "According to him, 'woke makes you go broke' but this is another example of how it's actually the complete opposite. DeSantis is not who you want for President — ever."

The feud started after Disney, in the face of significant pressure, publicly opposed the state concerning lessons on sexual orientation and gender identity in early grades that critics called "Don't Say Gay."

As punishment, DeSantis took over Disney World's self-governing district through legislation passed by lawmakers and appointed a new board of supervisors. Before the new board came in, the company signed agreements with the old board stripping the new supervisors of design and construction authority.

In response, the Republican-controlled Florida Legislature passed legislation allowing the DeSantis-appointed board to repeal those agreements and made the theme park resort's monorail system subject to state inspection, when it previously had been done in-house.

Disney's suit against DeSantis alleges the governor waged a "targeted campaign of government retaliation." It asks a federal judge to void the takeover of the theme park district, as well as the DeSantis oversight board's actions, on the grounds that they were violations of the company's free speech rights.

The creation of Disney's self-governing district by the Florida Legislature was instrumental in the company's decision in the 1960s to build near Orlando. Disney told the state at the time that it planned to build a futuristic city that would include a transit system and urban planning innovations, so the company needed autonomy. The futuristic city never materialized, however, and instead morphed into a second theme park that opened in 1982.

## Supreme Court avoids ruling on law shielding internet companies from being sued for what users post

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Thursday sided with Google, Twitter and Facebook in lawsuits seeking to hold them liable for terrorist attacks. But the justices sidestepped the big issue hovering over the cases, the federal law that shields social media companies from being sued over content posted by others.

The justices unanimously rejected a lawsuit alleging that the companies allowed their platforms to be used to aid and abet an attack at a Turkish nightclub that killed 39 people in 2017.

In the case of an American college student who was killed in an Islamic State terrorist attack in Paris in 2015, a unanimous court returned the case to a lower court, but said there appeared to be little, if anything, left of it.

The high court initially took up the Google case to decide whether the companies' legal shield for the social media posts of others, contained in a 1996 law known as Section 230, is too broad.

Instead, though, the court said it was not necessary to reach that issue because there is little tying Google to responsibility for the Paris attack.

"We therefore decline to address the application of Section 230 to a complaint that appears to state little, if any, plausible claim for relief," the court wrote in an unsigned opinion.

The outcome is, at least for now, a victory for the tech industry, which predicted havoc on the internet if Google lost. But the high court remains free to take up the issue in a later case.

"The Court will eventually have to answer some important questions that it avoided in today's opinions. Questions about the scope of platforms' immunity under Section 230 are consequential and will certainly come up soon in other cases," Anna Diakun, staff attorney at the Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University, said in an emailed statement.

Google general counsel Halimah DeLaine Prado said an email that the company will "continue our work to safeguard free expression online, combat harmful content, and support businesses and creators who benefit from the internet."

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A lawyer for the family of Nohemi Gonzalez, who was killed in Paris, expressed disappointment at the outcome, but pledged to fight on. "We lawyers see this decision as just another hurdle we need to navigate. It took decades to topple Big Tobacco, we'll eventually rein in reckless and greed driven Big Tech as well," Nitsana Darshan-Leitner wrote in an email.

The families of victims in both attacks asserted that the internet giants did not do enough to prevent their platforms from being used by extremist groups to radicalize and recruit people.

They sued under a federal law that allows Americans injured by a terrorist attack abroad to seek money damages in federal court.

The family of a victim in the bombing of the Reina nightclub in Istanbul claimed that the companies assisted in the growth of the Islamic State group, which claimed responsibility for the attack.

But writing for the court, Justice Clarence Thomas said the family's "claims fall far short of plausibly alleging that defendants aided and abetted the Reina attack."

In the Paris attack, Gonzalez' family raised similar claims against Google over her killing at a Paris bistro, in an assault also claimed by the Islamic State. That was one of several attacks on a June night in the French capital that left 130 people dead.

The family wants to sue Google for YouTube videos they said helped attract IS recruits and radicalize them. Google owns YouTube.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled that most of the claims were barred by the internet immunity law.

The Supreme Court's decision in October to review that ruling set off alarm at Google and other technology companies. "If we undo Section 230, that would break a lot of the internet tools," Kent Walker, Google's top lawyer, said.

Yelp, Reddit, Microsoft, Craigslist, Twitter and Facebook were among the companies warning that searches for jobs, restaurants and merchandise could be restricted if those social media platforms had to worry about being sued over the recommendations they provide and their users want.

## China's 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 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 required 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?"



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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 Chinese 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 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

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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 should 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.

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 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.

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.

One good sign: The IMF on Wednesday announced approval of a \$3 billion loan for Ghana, suggesting

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it is hopeful a debt restructuring deal can be struck among creditors.

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 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 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, Chinese loans of \$4 billion to help 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: At least \$385 billion of hidden and underreported Chinese debt in 88 countries, and many of those countries were in far worse shape than anyone knew.

Among the disclosures was that China issued a \$3.5 billion loan to build a railway system in Laos, which would take nearly a quarter of the 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.

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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 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 \$1.8 billion annually in such swaps for years, an amount equivalent to 14% of its annual economic output. Pakistan has taken out nearly \$3.6 billion annually for years and Laos \$300 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 Sicalwe in Lusaka, Zambia, contributed to this report.

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



## Supreme Court rules against Andy Warhol's foundation in a case about a portrait he made of Prince

By JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court ruled Thursday that the 2016 publication of an Andy Warhol image of the singer Prince violated a photographer's copyright, a decision a dissenting justice said would stifle the creation of art.

The high court ruled 7-2 for photographer Lynn Goldsmith. "Lynn Goldsmith's original works, like those of other photographers, are entitled to copyright protection, even against famous artists," Justice Sonia Sotomayor wrote in the opinion for the court.

In a dissent, Justice Elena Kagan warned that the decision would "stifle creativity of every sort" and suggested the majority needed to "go back to school" for an Art History 101 refresher course.

The case involved images Warhol created of Prince as part of a 1984 commission for Vanity Fair. Warhol used one of Goldsmith's photos as a starting point, a so-called artist reference, and Vanity Fair paid Goldsmith to license the photo. Warhol then created a series of images in his signature bright-colored and bold style.

Vanity Fair chose one of the resulting images — Prince with a purple face — to run in the magazine. Following Prince's death in 2016 Vanity Fair ran a different image from the series on its cover — Prince with an orange face. It was that second use that the justices dealt with in the case.

Lawyers for Warhol's foundation had argued that the artist had transformed the photograph and there was no violation of copyright law when the orange-faced Prince was reproduced in the magazine. But a majority of the justices said a lower court had correctly sided with Goldsmith in this instance.

Sotomayor said the court was expressing no opinion "as to the creation, display, or sale of any of the original" Warhol works and whether they'd be seen as copyright infringement. "The same copying may be fair when used for one purpose but not another," she wrote.

In a dissent, Kagan asked, "If Warhol does not get credit for transformative copying, who will?" She was joined in her dissent by Chief Justice John Roberts.

Kagan wrote that the majority's decision would "impede new art and music and literature" and "thwart the expression of new ideas and the attainment of new knowledge." "It will make our world poorer," she concluded.

Kagan said the visual arts has a tradition of imitation and copying. As one example she cited paintings by the artist Giorgione and his pupil Titian, including images of a reclining nude by each. The images were some of more than a dozen in the decision, unusual for a high court opinion. Images occasionally appear in opinions, particularly in art cases, but this time the color was particularly helpful. Without it, the purple-faced and orange-faced versions of the Prince images would look the same.

Goldsmith's original photo is black and white. Vanity Fair paid her \$400 to license it for Warhol's use, and Warhol used it to create 16 works: two pencil drawings and 14 silkscreen prints. The silkscreens are done in the same style he had used to create well-known portraits of Marilyn Monroe, Jacqueline Kennedy and Mao Zedong. He cropped Goldsmith's image, resized it and changed the tones and lighting. Then he added bright colors and hand-drawn outlines.

Vanity Fair ran just one of the images Warhol created, the purple-faced Prince, with its 1984 story. The article, titled "Purple Fame," came shortly after the release of Prince's hit "Purple Rain." Goldsmith, a well-known photographer of musicians, got a small credit by Warhol's image.

Warhol died in 1987. Following Prince's death, Vanity Fair paid his foundation \$10,250 to use the orange-faced Prince portrait in a tribute issue. Goldsmith saw the cover and contacted the foundation seeking compensation, among other things. The foundation then went to court seeking to have Warhol's images declared as not infringing on Goldsmith's copyright. A lower court judge agreed with the foundation, but it lost on appeal.

Some amount of copying is acceptable under copyright law as "fair use." To determine whether something counts as fair use, courts look to four factors set out in the federal Copyright Act of 1976. A lower

court found that all four factors favored Goldsmith. Only the first factor — “the purpose and character of the use” of the work — was at issue in the Supreme Court case. Sotomayor wrote, “The first factor favors Goldsmith.”

In a statement, Joel Wachs, the president of The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, said the foundation disagrees with the court’s decision but welcome the justices’ “clarification that its decision is limited to that single licensing and does not question the legality of Andy Warhol’s creation of the Prince Series in 1984.”

Goldsmith said in a statement that she was “thrilled by today’s decision.” “This is a great day for photographers and other artists who make a living by licensing their art,” she said.

The case is The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts v. Lynn Goldsmith, 21-869.

## **Pentagon leak suspect was warned multiple times about mishandling of classified information**

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.

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.

The revelations have raised questions about why military officials did not take further action and why Teixeira continued to have access to classified information after his superiors raised concerns.

Pentagon spokesperson Sabrina Singh was questioned on Thursday about why Teixeira’s leaders did not take action after the concerns were raised. Singh referred to the Justice Department and Air Force investigations, and said those concerns and potential lack of response to them was one of the areas the inquiries would examine.

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

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"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.

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Associated Press reporter Tara Copp in Washington contributed.

## **CNN's Amanpour criticizes network's decision to hold Trump town hall**

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Veteran correspondent Christiane Amanpour became the most prominent CNN journalist to publicly criticize her network for airing last week's town hall with former President Donald Trump.

Amanpour told a group of graduating students at Columbia University's graduate school of journalism on Wednesday that she would have "dropped the mic at 'nasty person,'" a reference to when Trump lobbed that insult at moderator Kaitlan Collins.

CNN was criticized for hosting Trump at a live event in New Hampshire, where the 2024 presidential candidate repeated lies about the last election before a mostly adoring audience. CNN Chairman Chris Licht has defended the town hall as newsworthy and important, and Amanpour said she had a "robust discussion" with him about it.

Everyone knows Trump tries to seize the stage and dominate at such events, said Amanpour, the chief international correspondent who has worked at CNN for 40 years.

"No matter how much flak the moderator tries to aim at the incoming, it doesn't work," she said.

Perhaps today's journalism leaders should learn from those in the 1950s, who refused to give Sen. Joseph McCarthy attention "unless his foul lies, his witch hunts and his rants" reached the basic level for evidence allowed in a courtroom, she said.

"Maybe less is more," she said. "Maybe live is not always right."

Amanpour criticized the town hall's audience, chosen by CNN because they were Republicans or independents who plan to vote in the 2024 Republican primary.

Citing the precedents of past candidate debates or forums, CNN should have insisted "that our invited

guests behave themselves — no hooting, no hollering, no jeering, no cheering.”

“I can only hope that your trust in us might have been shaken but not shattered, that you believe that we can survive and rebuild that trust,” she said.

A spokesman for Licht did not immediately return messages for comment. In an internal call with CNN staff members last week, Licht noted that people in the town hall audience represented a large swath of America.

“The mistake the media made in the past is ignoring that those people exist,” he said. “Just like you cannot ignore that President Trump exists.”

## **False claims of a stolen election thrive unchecked on Twitter even as Musk promises otherwise**

By ALI SWENSON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — In an interview this week, Twitter owner Elon Musk said users making false claims of stolen elections “will be corrected” on the platform.

Prompted by a CNBC reporter for extra assurance that would happen, Musk responded, “Oh yeah, 100%.”

Yet many such claims have thrived on Twitter in the week since former President Donald Trump spent much of a CNN town hall digging in on his lie that the 2020 election was “rigged” against him. Twitter posts that amplified those false claims have thousands of shares with no visible enforcement, a review of posts on the platform shows.

The contrast between Musk’s promise and the extent the claims are spreading on Twitter underscores a major challenge for social media companies trying to call out election conspiracy theories and falsehoods that Trump and his supporters continue to promote. That will only grow as the nation prepares for a presidential election next year in which Trump is again vying to be the Republican nominee.

It’s unclear whether Musk and his newly hired chief executive, Linda Yaccarino, are planning any changes to Twitter to crack down on the misinformation, which election experts and tech accountability advocates say heightens risks to election officials and erodes trust in democracy.

“Talk is cheap,” said David Becker, a former U.S. Justice Department lawyer who now leads the nonprofit Center for Election Innovation and Research. “It’s good that he acknowledges that it’s important for Twitter to act responsibly. ... But then we have to see this action actually taken, because it’s happening right now.”

An analysis by the media intelligence firm Signal Labs on behalf of The Associated Press surfaced the 10 most widely shared tweets promoting a “rigged election” narrative in the five days following Trump’s town hall.

While Twitter has a system in place for users to add context to misleading tweets, the 10 posts, which collectively amassed more than 43,000 retweets, had no such notes attached.

The most widely shared tweets included false claims from U.S. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., and Kari Lake, a Republican who lost her bid for Arizona governor last year.

Twitter’s policy on civic integrity and misleading information says it “may” label or remove “unverified information about election rigging,” but the 10 tweets and dozens of others claiming a “stolen” or “rigged” election in 2020 or 2022 in recent days remained live and unlabeled on the platform as of Thursday, an AP search found.

In January 2022, months before Musk took over the platform that October, Twitter had already confirmed to CNN that it had stopped taking action against 2020 election misinformation, saying its policy was meant for use during an election cycle, not long after one.

False claims that the 2020 election was illegitimate have continued to gain traction on the platform and across social media since then, propelled by Trump, whose recent media appearances show he is making them a core talking point of his campaign for the GOP nomination.

Tech accountability advocates said it’s difficult to monitor content on a scale as large as Twitter and they note that Twitter is not the only platform where election misinformation surfaces. TikTok, Facebook,



Instagram and other social media sites also play a role in spreading falsehoods.

But since he took over, Musk has reinstated notorious election deniers, overhauled Twitter's verification system and gutted much of the staff that had been responsible for moderating posts. Those choices have allowed falsehoods to flourish, said Jesse Lehigh, co-founder of Accountable Tech, a nonprofit watchdog group.

"I think they already had inadequate resources ... but there's no doubt that he's making it worse," Lehigh said. "And he's effectively fired everyone responsible for trust and safety at Twitter, so at this point, they couldn't enforce their own civic integrity policies if they tried."

Twitter sent an automated reply when the AP asked for comment, as Twitter does to most media inquiries, and did not provide a response to the continued spread of election misinformation.

In an ideal world, platforms would help reduce the spread of false claims online with policies such as blocking known misinformation sources, labeling it, adopting community enforcement standards and de-prioritizing misinformation in trending topics, said Anjana Susarla, a social media researcher and professor at Michigan State University.

Complicating Twitter's response to the misinformation is Musk's own use of the platform. He has used his Twitter account to amplify election-related conspiracy theories.

Last week, he tweeted a reply to a false claim that a conference hosted by the Center for Election Innovation and Research was "secret" and "HYPER PARTISAN."

In the message broadcast to his nearly 140 million followers, Musk called the session "far left" and said it was strange that officials from "pivotal regions" would attend. In fact, the conference had its own public web page with links to its agenda, a list of speakers that included Republicans and Democrats, and a livestream that allowed anyone interested to watch the sessions.

Musk's post drove other Twitter users to see the original tweet and pile on with stolen-election claims.

"He gets it ... he knows the elections were stolen massively," one Twitter user replied.

"Exactly. They're coordinating the steal for 2024," wrote another.

Becker, the center's executive director, said when prominent Twitter users amplify falsehoods about election officials, "threats increase to their safety, to their offices, to their staff."

"That makes democracy more vulnerable and puts stresses on them as human beings," he said.

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## **Incredible shrinking lakes: Humans, climate change, diversion costs trillions of gallons annually**

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Climate change's hotter temperatures and society's diversion of water have been shrinking the world's lakes by trillions of gallons of water a year since the early 1990s, a new study finds.

A close examination of nearly 2,000 of the world's largest lakes found they are losing about 5.7 trillion gallons (21.5 trillion liters) a year. That means from 1992 to 2020, the world lost the equivalent of 17 Lake Meads, America's largest reservoir, in Nevada. It's also roughly equal to how much water the United States used in an entire year in 2015.

Even lakes in areas getting more rainfall are shriveling. That's because of both a thirstier atmosphere from warmer air sucking up more water in evaporation, and a thirsty society that is diverting water from lakes to agriculture, power plants and drinking supplies, according to a study in Thursday's journal Science.

Authors also cited a third reason they called more natural, with water shrinking because of rainfall pattern and river runoff changes, but even that may have a climate change component. That's the main cause for

Iran's Lake Urmia to lose about 277 billion gallons (1.05 trillion liters) a year, the study said.

The declining lakes don't mean places are suddenly going to go without drinking water, but it may lead to more competition for lake water, which is also used in hydroelectric power and recreation such as boating, the study authors said.

"More than half of the decline is primarily attributable to human consumption or indirect human signals through climate warming," said study lead author Fangfang Yao, a climate scientist at the University of Colorado.

The diversion of water from lakes — a direct human cause of shrinkage — is probably larger and more noticeable because it is "very acute, very local and it has the capability of really changing the landscape," said co-author Ben Livneh, a University of Colorado hydrologist.

But the indirect human shrinking, from warmer air due to climate change, "is this global blanketing effect that kind of affects everything or more places," Livneh said. California's Mono Lake is a good example of this type of shrinking, Yao said.

Even areas that are getting wetter because of climate change are losing lake water because hotter air is sucking more moisture out of the lakes. And that means more water in the air, which can fall as rain or snow but "may end up falling as rain far away, outside the basin where it evaporated or even over the ocean," Livneh said in an email.

Yao, Livneh and colleagues used almost 30 years of satellite observation, climate data and computer simulation to figure out what's happening to lakes and found more than half of them have shrunk so much that it is statistically significant and not random.

In the United States, Lake Mead lost two-thirds of its water between 1992 and 2020, while the Great Salt Lake also shrank noticeably, Yao said. The Great Lakes dropped considerably from 1992 to 2013 then plateaued and then increased.

Another problem is that lakes are filling with sediment or dirt from upstream rivers.

Scientists have long known about the problems of climate change, diversion and sedimentation, "however the complete quantification of water storage variations for large lakes that Yao and colleagues provide is new" and it creates "a much more complete picture" than past research has, said University of North Carolina hydrology professor Tamlin Pavelsky, who wasn't part of the study.

"I'm generally most worried about lakes that are ecologically important and in populated areas without a lot of other good sources of water," Pavelsky said in an email. "Lake Urmia in Iran, the Dead Sea, the Salton Sea ... these are all worrisome."

It's likely to get worse as society looks for more water and more reservoirs with a growing population and a warmer Earth, said UCLA climate hydrologist Park Williams, who wasn't part of the study.

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## **El Ninos are far costlier than once thought, in the trillions, study says -- and one's brewing now**

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The natural burst of El Nino warming that changes weather worldwide is far costlier with longer-lasting expenses than experts had thought, averaging trillions of dollars in damage, a new study found.

An El Nino is brewing now and it might be a big — and therefore costly — one, scientists said. El Nino is a temporary and natural warming of parts of the equatorial Pacific, that causes droughts, floods and heat

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waves in different parts of the world. It also adds an extra boost to human-caused warming.

The study in Thursday's journal *Science* totals global damage with an emphasis on lasting economic scars. It runs counter to previous research that found, at least in the United States, that El Ninos overall aren't too costly and can even be beneficial. And some — but not all — outside economists have issues with the new research out of Dartmouth College, saying its damage estimates are too big.

Study authors said the average El Nino costs the global economy about \$3.4 trillion. The strong 1997-1998 one cost \$5.7 trillion. The World Bank estimated the 1997-1998 El Nino cost governments \$45 billion, which is more than 100 times smaller than the Dartmouth estimate.

But the Dartmouth team said they are looking at more than the traditional costs and for longer time periods.

"We have this sense that El Nino is a really big hammer that hits the Earth system every few years. But we didn't have as much of a handle on its sort of macroeconomic implications, both what that means just on a year-to-year basis and what that might mean with future global warming," said study lead author Christopher Callahan, a climate impacts researcher at Dartmouth.

"Economies bear the scars of El Nino for a decade or more and potentially forever," said study co-author Justin Mankin, a Dartmouth climate scientist.

The economic scars are the diversion of spending away from technology and innovation toward recovery and rebuilding efforts, Callahan said. It's about opportunities lost while digging out of the El Nino hole.

The way Callahan and Mankin did this was to simulate a world without an El Nino event and look at the global difference in costs, compared to the global gross domestic product, Mankin said.

El Nino's biggest impacts generally hit in the northern winter, but in the summer it reduces hurricane activity in the Atlantic, studies show. It makes it wetter across much of the U.S. South and West, Peru, Uruguay and Argentina, some of Southeast Asia, and a bit of east central Africa. It makes it drier in south-east Africa, southern Asia, northern Australia and the Amazon and often leads to increased wildfires in those areas. It's warmer in much of Asia, the American Pacific Northwest and Australia.

El Ninos occur on average about every three to five years and vary in strength, according to the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The last strong El Nino was in 2016.

Because "the impacts of El Nino look a lot like the impacts of global warming," studying the El Nino economic damage "is pretty essential" to understanding the bigger damage from human-caused climate change, Mankin said. And it shows a world unprepared for the hurt that's coming, he said.

"Our economies are poorly adjusted and poorly adapted to the climate variability that we have right now," Mankin said.

Neither Mankin nor Callahan are full-time economists. Economists who looked at their study were not impressed, but other climate scientists were.

"It's not the case that all countries suffer from an El Nino. In fact in some cases it's just the opposite," said University of Cambridge macro-economist Kaimar Mohaddes. His 2017 study in the *Journal of International Economics* looked at 21 national economies, mostly developed, during past El Ninos and found in the United States and Europe an El Nino "has a growth-enhancing effect" while it harmed Australia, Chile, Indonesia, India, Japan, New Zealand and South Africa.

Mankin and Callahan said their study looked at the globe as a whole, not individual countries.

In those places hurt, El Nino economic damage evaporated quickly contrary to what the Dartmouth team said, Mohaddes said. He also found the Dartmouth estimates of damage too big, with their estimates coming close to the economic cost of the Great Recession of 2007 and 2008.

Climate economist Gary Yohe at Wesleyan University in Connecticut said "the enormous estimates cannot be explained simply by forward-looking accounting," calling them not credible.

However, Marshall Burke, an economist and environmental policy professor at Stanford University, said the Dartmouth scientists "make a compelling case that this has really slowed growth in severely affected countries like Peru, and resulted in trillions of (dollars) of lost economic output around the world."

"This paper has certainly made me much more worried about the upcoming and likely large El Nino,"

Burke said in an email.

Michael McPhaden, a NOAA oceanographer who studies El Ninos, said he has long thought damage estimates of El Nino were way too low, and more important the "big loser during El Nino is the global south," which are poorer nations that are hit the hardest.

"The economic impacts of the El Nino that is predicted for later this year will depend on how strong it is," McPhaden said in an email. Big "monster El Ninos" like those in 1997-98 "can be hugely damaging with lingering effects that carry over into following years. On the other hand, if it turns out to be a garden variety El Nino, the consequences may be more muted and the recovery time shortened."

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## Why a government default could be worse than a government shutdown

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — All the hand-wringing over a potential government default if Congress doesn't increase the government's \$31.4 trillion debt ceiling has conjured up images of past government shutdowns. In shutdowns, "essential" workers — TSA agents and such — showed up, but most federal employees stayed home. Work piled up in offices, and litter piled up in untended national parks.

However, there's a big difference between a government shutdown and a default on the nation's debts.

America very well knows what happens in a shutdown — it's had four of them in the past 30 years. There's a lot more uncertainty about a default, which could well have more wide-ranging and devastating impacts, at home and around the world. There's never been a default, and negotiators are trying to find a way to avoid one now.

A look at what is known — and not — about both:

### GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

A shutdown occurs when Congress doesn't approve funding legislation so that the government can keep spending money to remain open.

When Congress hasn't authorized or extended government funding, there is no authority to spend money. Essential work continues — the military remains on guard — but most federal workers are sent home, and activities cease until Congress acts.

It's harmful to the economy, and can disrupt many lives, but it's is far from catastrophic.

The U.S. has experienced four true government shutdowns where operations were impacted by more than one business day, according to the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget. That usually includes limitations on government services — like park maintenance and benefit checks — and non-essential federal employees are sent home.

"We know what a government shutdown looks like," said Shai Akabas, director of economic policy at the nonprofit Bipartisan Policy Center. "And everyone knows on which date that will occur."

The White House keeps a long list of agency contingency plans in the event of a government shutdown. The country narrowly avoided one last December.

### GOVERNMENT DEFAULT

A default would occur if the government exceeds its legal borrowing limit and can no longer pay all its creditors or pay for existing programs.

The uncertainty about a default starts with when it actually occurs and in what order the government



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would pay its bills with whatever money it still has coming in.

A default "would be a very different situation" from a shutdown, said Akabas. "We don't know what the effects would look like because it's never happened in the history of our country."

He added that there is "massive uncertainty" about when the U.S. would reach its X-date, the moment when it no longer can borrow money to pay bills.

Brian Riedl, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute focusing on tax issues, said "there is no blueprint for how the government can manage a debt limit default," and much of it would come down to how Treasury would pay or put off paying its bills.

President Joe Biden, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and countless economists have warned darkly about the "catastrophic" impacts of a default.

Yellen this week said it would destroy jobs and businesses, and leave millions of families who rely on federal government payments to "likely go unpaid," including Social Security beneficiaries, veterans and military families.

"A default could cause widespread suffering as Americans lose the income that they need to get by," she said. Disruptions to federal government operations would impact "air traffic control and law enforcement, border security and national defense, and food safety."

## WHO GETS PAID — AND WHO DOESN'T

Wendy Edelberg, an economist at the Brookings Institution, said that in the event of a default "it is widely assumed that Treasury would figure out how to make principle and interest payments until they had money to pay all non-interest payments."

That means many programs could be up in the air until the U.S. raised enough money to pay for them, while debt holders like China would receive payments — in a scheme called "debt payment prioritization."

So while Social Security recipients, for instance, continued to receive automated payments and scheduled checks during a shutdown, Akabas said, it's not so clear that they would get paid in a default.

"Maybe workers will come into work," maybe they won't, Riedl said. "There is an assumption that federal workers would come into work and get paid eventually."

"There's no specific blueprint. It comes down to whether their agency gets funding," he said. "If we do hit the debt limit, there's going to be a lot of new court cases on who determines who gets paid and how."

## WHERE NEGOTIATIONS STAND

Democratic and Republican leaders have said that a default will not occur, despite their standoff on raising the debt limit.

Before leaving Wednesday for a Group of Seven summit meeting in Japan, Biden said he was "confident" that the U.S. will be able to raise the debt ceiling.

Republicans are asking for steep spending cuts before they agree to raise the debt limit, and most recently the president has shown a willingness to discuss possible budget changes.

Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy have named top negotiators to discuss the contours of a deal.

## First full-size 3D scan of Titanic shows shipwreck in new light

By SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Deep-sea researchers have completed the first full-size digital scan of the Titanic, showing the entire wreck in unprecedented detail and clarity, the companies behind a new documentary on the wreck said Thursday.

Using two remotely operated submersibles, a team of researchers spent six weeks last summer in the North Atlantic mapping the whole shipwreck and the surrounding 3-mile debris field, where personal belongings of the ocean liner's passengers, such as shoes and watches, were scattered.

Richard Parkinson, founder and chief executive of deep-sea exploration firm Magellan, estimated that the resulting data — including 715,000 images — is 10 times larger than any underwater 3D model ever attempted before.

"It's an absolutely one-to-one digital copy, a 'twin,' of the Titanic in every detail," said Anthony Geffen,

head of documentary maker Atlantic Productions.

The Titanic was on its maiden voyage from Southampton, England, to New York City when it hit an iceberg off Newfoundland in the North Atlantic on April 15, 1912. The luxury ocean liner sank within hours, killing about 1,500 people.

The wreck, discovered in 1985, lies some 12,500 feet (3,800 meters) under the sea, about 435 miles (700 kilometers) off the coast of Canada.

Geffen says previous images of the Titanic were often limited by low light levels, and only allowed viewers to see one area of the wreck at a time. He said the new photorealistic 3D model captures both the bow and stern section, which had separated upon sinking, in clear detail — including the serial number on the propeller.

Researchers have spent seven months rendering the large amount of data they gathered, and a documentary on the project is expected to come out next year. But beyond that, Geffen says he hopes the new technology will help researchers work out details of how the Titanic met its fate and allow people to interact with history in a fresh way.

"All our assumptions about how it sank, and a lot of the details of the Titanic, comes from speculation, because there is no model that you can reconstruct, or work exact distances," he said. "I'm excited because this quality of the scan will allow people in the future to walk through the Titanic themselves ... and see where the bridge was and everything else."

Parks Stephenson, a leading Titanic expert who was involved in the project, called the modelling a "gamechanger."

"I'm seeing details that none of us have ever seen before and this allows me to build upon everything that we have learned to date and see the wreck in a new light," he said. "We've got actual data that engineers can take to examine the true mechanics behind the breakup and the sinking and thereby get even closer to the true story of Titanic disaster."

## **Johnny Depp on his Cannes return and finding 'the basement to the bottom'**

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

CANNES, France (AP) — Just a year ago, the image of Johnny Depp smiling and waving atop the Palais steps at the Cannes Film Festival would have been unthinkable to most — including to Depp, himself.

"When you hit the bottom, you hit the bottom, you hit the bottom, then you find the basement to the bottom," Depp told The Associated Press the day after "Jeanne du Barry," in which he stars as King Louis XV, opened Cannes.

This time last year, Depp was immersed in a libel trial he brought against Amber Heard, his ex-wife, based on a 2018 Washington Post op-ed piece in which she referred to herself as "a public figure representing domestic abuse." A British court had ruled in 2020 that a tabloid labeling Depp "a wife beater" were "substantially true." Soon after the ruling in the U.K., Hollywood had largely cut ties with Depp, jettisoning him from both the "Fantastic Beasts" and "Pirates of the Caribbean" franchises.

"When it all went down, confusion is a good word. Befuddled. Because it does almost reach the Bugs Bunny experience," Depp says now. "You say to yourself: Is this my life? What happened?"

Some greeted Depp's feting in Cannes with similar degrees of befuddlement.

A Virginia jury eventually ruled that Heard had defamed Depp on three counts and awarded him \$15 million in damages. In a countersuit, Depp was found guilty of one charge of libel and Heard was awarded \$2 million. Depp may have won in court, but public opinion remains divided on the actor who was once one of the most bankable stars in movies — with many supporters of abused women and the #MeToo movement wondering if sexual assault victims would be more reticent to come forward if they might be sued for defamation.

Outside the premiere of "Jeanne du Barry" in Cannes, fans grasped for autographs and signs read

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"Viva Johnny!" On social media, the reception was more fraught. Supporters of Heard rallied around the hashtag #CannesYouNot, arguing that Cannes — which has been criticized for welcoming men accused of misconduct — shouldn't have invited Depp.

"If you support Cannes, you support predators," posted Eve Barlow, a journalist and friend of Heard. Heard herself hasn't commented on Depp's Cannes premiere.

Depp has seldom spoken in public since the trial, but he granted an interview with the AP on Wednesday after a day of interviews with mostly French media. (Depp remains very popular in France where he has sometimes lived and where the film industry is contending with its own #MeToo reckoning.) He was eager to cast his own battles in the light of Hollywood scandals of the past.

"Never boring but unpleasant, curious years. Escapades. Rumors. Accusations," Depp said. "I read far too much about Fatty Arbuckle but I didn't see any (Buster) Keaton coming my way to save my ass."

"One of the things that kept going in my head was Hunter," he continued, invoking longtime mentor Hunter S. Thompson. "I could hear his voice: 'Buy the ticket, take the ride.'"

"I don't think Marlon would have survived," Depp said, referencing Brando. "I don't think he came close to going through something like this. Had he been alive to watch this happen, he would have gone sideways. He would have killed somebody."

One thing that's been unclear was if Depp had any remorse for how the trial — a bitter and often theatrical legal battle played out in front of cameras — unfolded. Depp became a hero to some right-wing critics of so-called cancel culture. Asked if he had any misgivings about the supporters he attracted, Depp responded:

"I did notice that people actually opened their mouths about it. At that time, that was brave."

"Not for a moment will I regret anything unless I've done something horrible to someone, which I haven't," Depp added. "I'm not going to regret being taken down a strange road for that period of time because I learned so much more about myself."

"Jeanne du Barry," directed by the French filmmaker and actor Maïwenn, is Depp's first film in three years. Maïwenn stars as Jeanne Vaubernier, a working-class woman who becomes Louis XV's mistress. Depp speaks French in the film, which doesn't yet have U.S. distribution. Maïwenn, too, is a controversial figure. She recently admitted to assaulting prominent French journalist Edwy Plenel at a café, yanking his hair back and spitting in his face.

It's not the only business Depp has in Cannes. He's seeking financing for "Modi," a biopic of Italian artist Amedeo Modigliani that he hopes to shoot this fall, with Al Pacino attached. Depp, who will perform next week at a London tribute for the late Jeff Beck, a close friend, also recently renewed his contract with Dior in a \$20 million deal.

"I don't know the image of Johnny Depp in the U.S.," Cannes director Thierry Fremaux said Monday. "If Johnny Depp had been banned from acting in a film, or the film was banned, we wouldn't be here talking about it."

And there's been plenty of conversation generated by Depp's appearance in Cannes, even in reviews haven't been good. Time's Stephanie Zacharek called it "less a comeback than a tepid lurching into a very small spotlight." But the overall reception has been warm. Depp, who said he lives 45 minutes away, was taken aback by the thrall.

"I didn't know what planet I was on," he said, smiling.

Speaking to reporters in the festival press conference, Depp mocked the idea that he has many critics, likening anyone who protested his presence in Cannes to "some species, some tower of mashed potatoes, covered in the light of a computer screen, anonymous, with apparently a lot of spare time."

Sitting on a terrace overlooking the Cannes' Croisette later, Depp appeared relaxed and jovial, though his thoughts remained fixed on his legal battles with Heard.

"You're not powerless but you've been postponed," he said of how he felt before the trial. "At that point, I just thought: F--- it. I've been lucky. I've been around for a long time. I've made a lot of films. That's, I suppose, my legacy. Alright. I can live with that. I didn't do anything wrong." But he said after years of swimming through "that horrible molasses," he came out much stronger.

Depp said in the press conference that he has "no further need for Hollywood." In the interview, he said he remains intent on making more films but outside the studio system. At the same time, Depp rejected that he was ever really a movie star in the first place.

"That's the last thing to call me," he said. "For 20 years they never mentioned that until 'Pirates 1.' Oh, he's a movie star now! We like him!"

Many have portrayed Depp's Cannes return as an attempt to win back moviegoers after a thoroughly revealing trial. Depp says he's not trying to convince anyone of anything. To him, there's no such thing as an unsullied movie star.

"You mean people's obsession that everybody must be Doris Day? Even Doris Day wasn't Doris Day. They have to know that," Depp said. "And Rock Hudson certainly wasn't Rock Hudson. I can only try to offer that I feel like might be interesting or different."

## Indiana Army veteran convicted in road rage killing of Muslim man

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — A suburban Indianapolis Army veteran has been convicted in the road rage shooting death of a Muslim man, after witnesses said he hurled ethnic and religious insults at the victim, including yelling, "Go back to your country," before opening fire.

A Marion County jury convicted Dustin E. Passarelli, 37, of murder on Wednesday after a three-day trial over the February 2019 killing of 32-year-old Mustafa Ayoubi. Passarelli, of Plainfield, could get up to 65 years in prison when he's sentenced June 21 on the murder charge.

He was also convicted of a firearm enhancement charge that could boost his sentence by up to 20 years, the county prosecutor's office said.

Defense attorney, Chris Eskew, told The Indianapolis Star that he and Passarelli were disappointed by the verdict, but he declined to comment further about the case until after the sentencing.

Passarelli shot and killed Ayoubi following a road rage incident on Interstate 465 that led to Passarelli following Ayoubi to an apartment complex on the city's northwest side, according to court documents.

Passarelli told police that Ayoubi either threw something at his car or collided with it on the highway and that after he followed Ayoubi to the apartment complex, Ayoubi broke one of Passarelli's car windows with a punch.

The defense argued that Passarelli was within his rights to fire at Ayoubi because it was self-defense.

Multiple witnesses said Passarelli and Ayoubi shouted inflammatory remarks at each other in front of a townhome. They said Passarelli yelled religious and ethnic insults at the unarmed Ayoubi, including, "Go back to your country," shortly before he shot him.

Passarelli claimed that post-traumatic stress disorder he developed during his time in the Army contributed to his behavior on the highway and was partially to blame for the shooting. But Passarelli's mental evaluation and PTSD claims were ruled inadmissible in court.

Passarelli was not charged with a hate crime. The FBI had said it was looking into whether Ayoubi's killing involved a federal civil rights violation, but no federal charges were ever filed.

Six weeks after Ayoubi's killing, Indiana lawmakers passed a hate crimes bill that included a provision allowing judges to impose longer sentences for crimes motivated by bias.

Before the bill became law, Indiana was one of five states without a hate crime law.

Ayoubi's sister, who had urged lawmakers to pass a hate crime law, told The Indianapolis Star that her family was originally from Afghanistan and arrived in the United States in 2001 as refugees. They later became U.S. citizens.

Zahra Ayoubi said Wednesday that the verdict can allow her family to finally begin to celebrate her younger brother's life four years after his killing.

"I wish this never happened," she said. "The true justice would be if we were all still together right now. However, he died. And he left a legacy."

## Hike again? Take a pause? Fed officials are split about what to do



## next to fight inflation

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The stubbornness of high inflation is dividing the Federal Reserve over how to manage interest rates in the coming months, leaving the outlook for the Fed's policies cloudier than at any time since it unleashed a streak of 10 straight rate hikes beginning in March 2022.

Many Fed watchers have expected the central bank's officials to forgo another increase in their benchmark rate when they next meet in mid-June. Yet recent warnings from several of the officials about the continuing threat from high inflation suggest that that outcome is far from certain.

And on Thursday, Lorie Logan, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, said she believes that the economic data so far doesn't support a pause in the central bank's rate hikes next month.

"The data in coming weeks could yet show that it is appropriate to skip a meeting," Logan said in written remarks to the Texas Bankers Association. "As of today, though, we aren't there yet."

On inflation, she said, "We haven't made the progress we need to make."

No Fed officials have yet gone so far as to suggest that the Fed will likely cut rates this year. The financial markets, by contrast, have continued to bet that policymakers will feel compelled to cut interest rates twice by the end of 2023.

"They would like to go on hold and pause, but ... if need be, raising rates further is an option," said Kathy Bostjancic, chief economist at Nationwide. "It comes down to the fact that inflation's remaining so stubbornly high."

Among Fed officials, though, that sentiment is hardly unanimous. Some have stressed the need to pause rate hikes for an extended period. The idea is to give the rate increases time to exert their full effects on growth and inflation. Behind that view is the concern that if the Fed keeps making borrowing costs ever more expensive, it could cause a deep recession.

Greater clarity could arrive Friday, when Chair Jerome Powell is to speak at a Fed economics conference.

The Fed, in its most aggressive series of rate increases since the 1980s, has raised its key rate by a substantial 5 percentage points in the past 14 months. Those hikes have led mortgage rates to more than double and elevated the costs of auto loans, credit card borrowing and business loans. Home sales have plunged.

Most recent Fed speakers have suggested that the policymakers will keep rates unchanged this year and might even raise them further. On Tuesday, Raphael Bostic, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, warned that the Fed was prepared to keep rates high to bring inflation back down to its 2% target, even if unemployment began rising steadily and critics accused the central bank of derailing the economy.

"We haven't gotten to the hard part yet," Bostic said, speaking at a conference sponsored by the Atlanta Fed at Amelia Island in Florida. "There's going to be tension and pressure and stress coming from a lot of different circles, and we are collectively going to have to ... be willing to be resolute and hold the course."

A day earlier, Bostic told CNBC that "inflation is not going to come down very quickly" and that "if there's going to be a bias toward action, for me it would be a bias to increase a little further as opposed to a cut."

In April, inflation slipped to 4.9% compared with a year earlier from 5% in March — the 10th straight such decline and sharply down from a peak of 9.1% last June. Much of that drop, though, reflects slower increases or outright price drops in volatile items, like food and gas.

Measures of underlying inflation pressures, by contrast, have shown less improvement. Excluding food and energy prices, so-called core inflation eased to 5.5% in April from 5.6% in March and from a peak of 6.6% last September. But it hasn't fallen at all since January.

"Inflation is looking sticky in a lot of places, and that's got to concern" the Fed, said Diane Swonk, chief economist at KPMG.

Also Thursday, Philip Jefferson, a member of the Fed's Board of Governors, sketched a fairly bleak outlook for inflation. One measure of prices that Powell is closely tracking — an index that covers services prices like restaurants, hotels and medical care but not energy or housing — has "been stubbornly high," Jefferson noted, and "shows no signs of significant decline yet."

But he also suggested that the Fed should take time to assess the impact that its policies have had so far. "History shows that monetary policy works with long and variable lags, and that a year is not a long enough period for demand to feel the full effect of higher interest rates," Jefferson said in written remarks. (Jefferson was nominated last week by President Joe Biden for the No. 2 position at the Fed, succeeding Lael Brainard, who became a top White House adviser.)

Other high-ranking Fed officials have taken a more sanguine view. John Williams, president of the New York Fed and a close adviser to Powell, suggested Tuesday that inflation has peaked and is "moving gradually in the right direction."

For now, Williams said, the Fed needs to monitor forthcoming economic data to assess how its policies have affected the economy.

Austan Goolsbee, president of the Chicago Fed, held out hope Tuesday that the central bank could achieve what some analysts have called "immaculate disinflation." Under this scenario, the Fed's existing rate hikes would continue to slow inflation without an accompanying rise in unemployment or a recession.

Since the Fed began raising rates, the unemployment rate has actually dipped to 3.4%, matching the lowest level in 54 years. Typically, a sharp rise in borrowing costs would be expected to trigger layoffs and higher unemployment.

Goolsbee noted, though, that supply shortages helped accelerate inflation last year, even when the unemployment rate was still high, a scenario that defied textbook economics.

As a result, Goolsbee added hopefully, "the unraveling of that negative supply side component gives us some potential to have a soft landing," which would also "definitely be unusual."

## **Deutsche Bank to pay \$75 million to settle lawsuit from Epstein victims, lawyers say**

By COURTNEY BONNELL Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Deutsche Bank has agreed to pay \$75 million to settle a lawsuit claiming that the German lender should have seen evidence of sex trafficking by Jeffrey Epstein when he was a client, according to lawyers for women who say they were abused by the late financier.

A woman only identified as Jane Doe sued the bank in federal district court in New York and sought class-action status to represent other victims of Epstein. The lawsuit asserted that the bank knowingly benefited from Epstein's sex trafficking and "chose profit over following the law" to earn millions of dollars from the businessman.

One of the law firms representing women in the case, Edwards Pottinger, said it believed it is the largest sex trafficking settlement with a bank in U.S. history.

"The settlement will allow dozens of survivors of Jeffrey Epstein to finally attempt to restore their faith in our system knowing that all individuals and entities who facilitated Epstein's sex-trafficking operation will finally be held accountable," the firm said in statement.

Deutsche Bank would not comment on the settlement Thursday but noted a 2020 statement from the bank acknowledging its mistake in taking on Epstein as a client, said Frank Hartmann, the German lender's global head of media relations.

"The Bank has invested more than 4 billion euros (\$4.3 billion) to bolster controls, processes and training, and hired more people to fight financial crime," Hartmann said in a written statement.

The Boies Schiller Flexner law firm, which also represents plaintiffs, called the settlement an important step for victims' rights.

"The scope and scale of Epstein's abuse, and the many years it continued in plain sight, could not have happened without the collaboration and support of many powerful individuals and institutions," David Boies, the firm's chairman, said in a statement.

Deutsche Bank had previously joined JPMorgan Chase, which is also facing a lawsuit over its ties to Epstein, in fighting the allegations. Epstein killed himself in prison while facing federal criminal charges of

sexually abusing dozens of underage girls.

The German lender said late last year that it provided "routine banking services" to Epstein from 2013 to 2018 and that the lawsuit "does not come close to adequately alleging that Deutsche Bank ... was part of Epstein's criminal sex trafficking ring."

The lawsuits — which also target the government of the U.S. Virgin Islands, where Epstein had an estate — are drawing in some high-profile figures.

A U.S. judge decided last month that JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon must face up to two days of questioning by lawyers handling the lawsuits.

The Virgin Islands government also is trying to subpoena billionaire Elon Musk as part of its own litigation against JPMorgan, accusing the banking giant of enabling Epstein's recruiters to pay victims and helping conceal his decades of sex abuse.

JPMorgan has denied the allegations and in turn has sued former executive Jes Staley, saying he hid Epstein's abuse and trafficking to keep the financier as a client. A lawyer for Staley had no comment on the lawsuit when it was filed in March.

## **Saving the farm: Heartland clergy train to prevent agriculture workers' suicides**

By GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO Associated Press

LAKE BENTON, Minn. (AP) — With traces of winter's unusually heavy snow still lingering but a warm sun finally shining, farmers were out dawn to dusk in early May on their tractors, planting corn and soybeans across southwestern Minnesota fields many have owned for generations.

The threat of losing these beloved family farms has become a constant worry, affecting many farmers' mental health and raising concerns of another uptick in suicides like during the 1980s farm crisis. Much of the stress stems from being dependent on factors largely outside their control — from the increasingly unpredictable weather to growing costs of equipment to global market swings that can wipe out profits.

"You'd be surprised how many people are suffering with depression. Farmers have been a group of people who keep problems to themselves, proud and private," said Bob Worth, a third-generation crop farmer who with his son works 2,100 acres of rich, black soil near the hamlet of Lake Benton.

"The more you talk about this, the more you realize it can be fixed," added Worth, who credits his wife with saving his life in the 1980s when he got so depressed that he wouldn't budge from bed even for the harvest. At least three neighbors and fellow farmers killed themselves, Worth said.

Increasingly aware of agricultural workers' struggles with mental health, states such as Minnesota and South Dakota, a few miles west of Worth's farm, are offering suicide prevention training to clergy — who are a crucial, trusted presence in rural America.

In Pipestone, the bigger town down the dirt road from Worth's farm — with 4,200 residents and a dozen churches — pastors from three Lutheran parishes are taking the four-week suicide prevention program for clergy that Minnesota's departments of agriculture and health launched this spring.

"I want to learn to help. This could be anybody," said the Rev. Robert Moeller, recalling his first realization of the scourge of suicide among farmers, when a customer in the feed business he worked at before being ordained killed himself.

Moeller plans to introduce suicide prevention in his 5th through 8th grade catechism class at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, and is eager to learn about supporting surviving family members and those who attempted suicide without the stigma and shame often attached to it.

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EDITOR'S NOTE — This story includes discussion of suicide. The national suicide and crisis lifeline is available by calling or texting 988. There is also an online chat at [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org).

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While rising levels of stress and anxiety are affecting Americans from students to service members, the

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dynamics are different in the farmland – and so is the strength of the clergy’s role in rural communities, where churches are essential social gathering points.

“Every farm family I know has a relationship with a house of worship,” said Meg Moynihan, a dairy farmer in southern Minnesota who’s been developing the clergy-focused training programs as a senior advisor to the state’s agriculture department. “There’s a huge sense of pride.”

The evident satisfaction that farmers take in growing crops and raising livestock to feed the country – and beyond, as corn for example is also often sold to China – makes the fear of being unable to keep going a key factor in mental health distress.

“It’s not losing a job or a place. There’s a sense of threat to one’s identity and generational legacy across time,” said Sean Brotherson, professor and extension family science specialist at North Dakota State University. “People treat the farm as a member of the family – and the longest-living member of the family.”

The question, he said, becomes who is going to be the one to decide it’s time to let the farm go.

With financing tapped out and feeling they might not be able to pay off more equity in their middle age, Keith and Theresia Gillie started talking about finding jobs away from his homestead in northwestern Minnesota.

“I never realized that in the midst of us quitting farming, that was his identity,” said Gillie, who found her husband of more than 30 years dead on a gravel road. Six years later, she’s still farming wheat, soybean and sunflowers with two neighbors’ help, and has spoken out about Keith’s suicide to get more farmers to open up about their struggles.

Male agricultural workers’ suicide rates are more than two times higher than the national average, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. There are several issues that play a role, including increased isolation and exacerbated family tensions during the pandemic, the difficulty in rural communities to find in-person mental health counseling or to access broadband for tele-health, as well as the disruptions brought by climate change-driven unpredictable weather patterns, inflation and international trade disputes.

As the average age for farmers inches toward 60, the pressure of passing on a life-defining legacy to new generations is a growing problem, said Monica McConkey, a rural mental health specialist contracted by Minnesota’s agriculture department to provide counseling at no cost.

Driving his tractor and planter, some \$750,000 in machinery, Todd Sanderson reflected on how farming has changed in the 42 seasons he’s been planting corn outside Flandreau, South Dakota. An eye to the sky is still foremost – Sanderson decided to get the seeds in the ground the first week of May even though frost still covered the tractor’s windshield in the morning, because later planting means meager yields.

The physical demands have diminished, with technology in his tractor resembling a cockpit more than an agrarian tool, but the uncertainty of making enough to keep the land only grows as the capital investments rise. Sanderson, 61, hopes a nephew will take over from him eventually.

“That’s what’s keeping me up at night, the transition,” he said. “We out here in ag are pretty solitary. If your mind is going in the wrong direction, it’s pretty easy to end up in a bad place. The more I get stressed, the more I get quiet.”

Breaking farmers out of that proud reserve is a big challenge, even for clergy, said the Rev. Alan Blankenfeld. He is the rural ministry liaison for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s South Dakota synod and Sanderson’s former pastor in Flandreau, where they started a suicide prevention program that includes Spanish information, since many dairy workers there are immigrants.

“As a pastor, you don’t always have to have something profound to say. It’s just, show up,” said Blankenfeld, who likes to visit farmers and ranchers so they don’t have to come to a church, where their parked vehicle might be recognized by everyone in town and start a rumor mill. “They’ll share on their terms. Our place is not counseling, but we can walk with them.”

Back across the state line in Pipestone, the Rev. Ann Zastrow of First Lutheran Church, who’s taking the Minnesota online prevention course, hopes to build up her confidence to remind those struggling with mental health that “God is still in the picture.”



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In many farm families, faith and struggle have long coexisted. First Lutheran's council president, a retired hog farmer who now raises lambs from 500 ewes outside town, said he still remembers when his mother asked him to take guns out of the house because she was worried about his father.

"Stress and depression and suicide in a farmer is part of it. You just hope that it isn't your part," Craig Thies said as newborn lambs tottered around him. "I remember the look on (my father's) face when they sold his cows. Realistically, they're like your children. But somebody is eating tonight because of you."

Seeing themselves as part of a crucial creation plan cements farmers' faith and involvement in church activities, which have historically forged bonds in otherwise isolated homesteads.

That in turn makes the clergy potential lifesavers when given the right tools to help with compassion and without the moral judgment that many still fear about suicide.

"One place we struggle within the church is if we treat suicide as shameful, then they won't share they're not okay," said the Rev. Kelly Ahola, a Lutheran pastor in the Red River Valley, where springtime flooding can wreak havoc on farmland in Minnesota and North Dakota. "We need to say the words. We need to learn to ask, are you thinking of suicide? We need to train the congregation too to know when and how to intervene."

How to tackle suicide from the pulpit and how to approach it theologically when many consider it a sin was one of the first questions raised in the four-week training course that Minnesota is running. Most of the 80 clergy from across the state who enrolled in it had encountered suicides in their ministry.

For one of them, the Rev. Jillene Gallatin, the call to prevention is excruciatingly personal. It was her pastor who drove her to the hospital when, at 15, she tried to kill herself a year after her mother took her own life. And it was in her church that she met comfort instead of the deafening silence and averted eyes elsewhere in her community.

"People need to tell their stories and struggles that are not so visible. That's a gift we can bring as church, being a safe spot," Gallatin said in the sanctuary of Grace Lutheran Church in Waseca, about an hour south of Minneapolis.

Later that spring day, she visited the dairy farm of a church member. Two brothers, along with their wives, children, and father, run the farm that their German immigrant ancestors founded in the 1870s.

There wasn't a dry eye in the room when the relatives discussed the option of stopping the milking operation, Jason Eldeen recalled.

But they persevered, which makes them among the 1.3% of U.S. workers with direct on-farm employment, according to a podcast he likes to listen to when out in the fields – and to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's 2023 data.

"How lucky we are that we get to farm," he said, as some of the cows reached out to lick his and Gallatin's hands in the spring sunshine.

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## Today in History: May 19, Anne Boleyn beheaded

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, May 19, the 139th day of 2023. There are 226 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 19, 1536, Anne Boleyn, the second wife of England's King Henry VIII, was beheaded after being convicted of adultery.

On this date:

In 1780, a mysterious darkness enveloped much of New England and part of Canada in the early afternoon.

In 1913, California Gov. Hiram Johnson signed the Webb-Hartley Law prohibiting "aliens ineligible to

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citizenship" from owning farm land, a measure targeting Asian immigrants, particularly Japanese.

In 1920, ten people were killed in a gun battle between coal miners, who were led by a local police chief, and a group of private security guards hired to evict them for joining a union in Matewan, a small "company town" in West Virginia.

In 1921, Congress passed, and President Warren G. Harding signed, the Emergency Quota Act, which established national quotas for immigrants.

In 1943, in his second wartime address to the U.S. Congress, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill pledged his country's full support in the fight against Japan; that evening, Churchill met with President Franklin D. Roosevelt at the White House, where the two leaders agreed on May 1, 1944 as the date for the D-Day invasion of France (the operation ended up being launched more than a month later).

In 1962, film star Marilyn Monroe sang "Happy Birthday to You" to President John F. Kennedy during a Democratic fundraiser at New York's Madison Square Garden.

In 1967, the Soviet Union ratified a treaty with the United States and Britain, banning nuclear and other weapons from outer space as well as celestial bodies such as the moon. (The treaty entered into force in October 1967.)

In 1993, the Clinton White House set off a political storm by abruptly firing the entire staff of its travel office; five of the seven staffers were later reinstated and assigned to other duties.

In 1994, former first lady Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis died in New York at age 64.

In 2003, WorldCom Inc. agreed to pay investors \$500 million to settle civil fraud charges.

In 2020, a Trump administration policy of quickly expelling most migrants stopped along the border because of the COVID-19 pandemic was indefinitely extended.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama, in a soaring commencement address on work, sacrifice and opportunity, told graduates of historically black Morehouse College in Atlanta to seize the power of their example as black men graduating from college and use it to improve people's lives. At least one person was killed and dozens were injured as a series of tornadoes hit Kansas, Oklahoma, Iowa and Illinois. Taylor Swift won eight awards, including album and artist of the year, at the Billboard Music Awards.

Five years ago: Britain's Prince Harry wed American actress Meghan Markle in a service that reflected Harry's royal heritage and his bride's biracial roots, as well as their shared commitment to put a more diverse, modern face on the monarchy. Justify won the Preakness in foggy Baltimore, on the way to a Triple Crown sweep. Starbucks announced a new policy allowing anyone to sit in its cafes or use its restrooms, even if they don't buy anything; the policy came five weeks after two black men who hadn't bought anything were arrested at a Philadelphia Starbucks. First lady Melania Trump returned to the white House following a weeklong hospitalization for kidney treatment.

One year ago: President Joe Biden embarks on a six-day trip to South Korea and Japan aiming to build rapport with the two nations' leaders while also sending an unmistakable message to China: Russia's faltering invasion of Ukraine should give Beijing pause about its own saber-rattling in the Pacific. The nation's oldest civil rights organization said it will propose a sweeping plan meant to protect Black Americans from white supremacist violence, in response to a hate-fueled massacre that killed 10 Black people in Buffalo, New York. Vangelis, the Greece-born electronic composer who wrote the Academy Award-winning score for "Chariots of Fire" and music for dozens of other movies, documentaries and TV series, died at age 79.

Today's Birthdays: TV personality David Hartman is 88. Actor James Fox is 84. Actor Nancy Kwan is 84. Rock singer-composer Pete Townshend (The Who) is 78. Concert pianist David Helfgott is 76. College Football Hall of Famer and former NFL player Archie Manning is 74. Singer-actor Grace Jones is 72. Rock musician Phil Rudd is 69. Actor Steven Ford is 67. Actor Toni Lewis is 63. Rock musician Iain Harvie (Del Amitri) is 61. Actor Polly Walker is 57. Actor Jason Gray-Stanford is 53. Gospel singer Israel Houghton is 52. Rock singer Jenny Berggren (Ace of Base) is 51. Former race car driver Dario Franchitti is 50. TV personality Kim Zolciak Biermann (TV: "Real Housewives of Atlanta") is 45. Country/rock singer Shooter Jennings is 44. Actor Drew Fuller is 43. Actor-comedian Michael Che (chay) (TV: "Saturday Night Live") is 40. Christian rock musician Tim McTague (Underoath) is 40. Actor Eric Lloyd is 37. Pop singer Sam Smith is 31. Actor Nolan Lyons is 22.