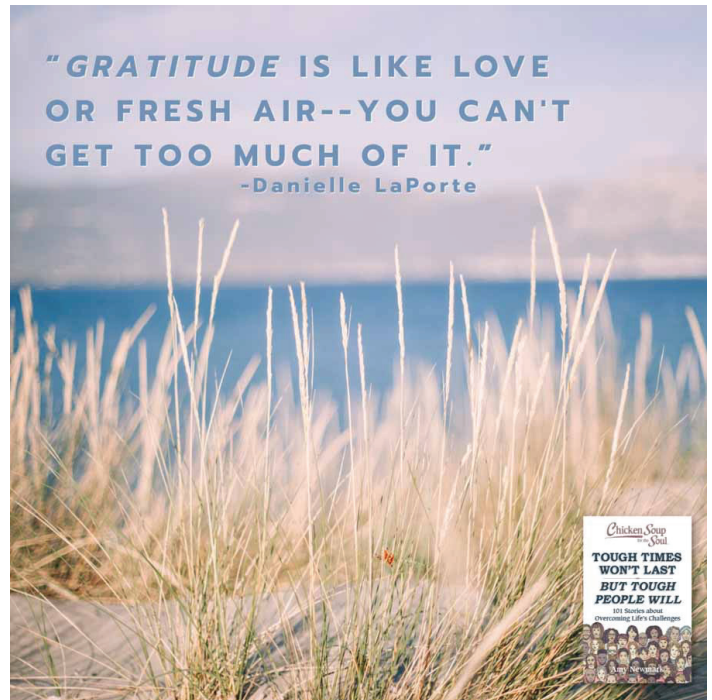


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St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; worship with communion at Zion, 11 a.m.

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.

Wednesday, May 24

Senior Menu: Roast beef, mashed potatoes and gravy, broccoli, fruit cocktail, whole wheat bread.

Groton Community Calendar

Saturday, May 20

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

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

Sunday, May 21

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

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

United Methodist: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Coffee hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.; Newsletter items due.

Groton Daily Independent

PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

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

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

JANUARY 24, 2023

World in Brief

Republican Rep. Garret Graves said it's "time to press pause" on debt ceiling talks as both sides remain divided. President Joe Biden is cutting his overseas trip short to return for continued discussions.

The Pentagon is reportedly unsure whether a U.S. missile strike killed a senior al-Qaeda official in Syria earlier this month, according to The Washington Post.

Five TikTok 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.

Target is recalling nearly 5 million candles over laceration and burn risks. The Threshold candles, sold in various scents between August 2019 and March 2023, should be returned to Target for a refund.

Pro Football Hall of Famer Jim Brown has died at 87, his family announced. Brown, who was known for his social activism, won the NFL's MVP award in 1965 before leaving professional football to pursue a career in acting.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russia responded to new sanctions by including former President Barack Obama and late-night hosts Stephen Colbert, Seth Meyers and Jimmy Kimmel on a list of 500 U.S. citizens now barred from entering the country. .

WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAY AHEAD

"I'm so stunned by the ability of our leaders to be able to convince us that we're powerless in the face of gun violence and that the vulnerability of innocent people in this country is a sacrifice we have to make if we want to be truly American. It's so mind bogglingly cruel. It's insanity." Musician Dave Matthews spoke of gun violence during a recent interview about his band's new album with USA Today, adding, "I don't like being afraid of my children being murdered at school."

"Jordan was not annoying someone on the train. Jordan was screaming for help. We keep criminalizing people with mental illness. People keep criminalizing people that need help. They don't need abuse; they need help." Reverend Al Sharpton spoke at a funeral service held in New York City for Jordan Neely, the 30-year-old Black man who died on a New York City subway train earlier this month after a fellow rider placed him in a chokehold.

"We, the Leaders of the G7, met at a historical juncture in Hiroshima, which together with Nagasaki offers a reminder of the unprecedented devastation and immense human suffering the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki experienced as a result of the atomic bombings of 1945. In a solemn and reflective moment, we reaffirm, in this first G7 Leaders' document with a particular focus on nuclear disarmament, our commitment to achieving a world without nuclear weapons with undiminished security for all." In a meeting in Hiroshima, Japan, G7 leaders released a joint statement urging a commitment to nuclear disarmament.



Frost on the roof tops

There was some signs of frost on the roof tops this morning. The temperature dipped down to 38.8 degrees. Don't like the cool weather - just wait - N\next week daytime highs should be in the 80s with a low around 60. El Niño is brewing and could bring hot weather to the upper plains in the months ahead. Forecasters are saying this El Niño could cost trillions of dollars in damages this time around.

State Track and Field qualifiers still to be determined

In talking with Coach Shaun Wanner, there will be a lot of movement in the top 24 yet today before the state Track and Field qualifiers are determined.

Looking at the standings this morning, Wanner said Canton has four in the top 24 in the girls shot put, but a school can only have three that qualify for state. That means even though Emma Kutter dropped to 25th, she'll get back into the top 24 once the adjustments are made. Results are still coming in from Mobridge on that region and Wanner said Miller had a better time in the girls sprint medley relay which would push Groton's team out of the top 24.

The final state qualifiers will be determined tonight so we should have them posted in the GDI tomorrow.

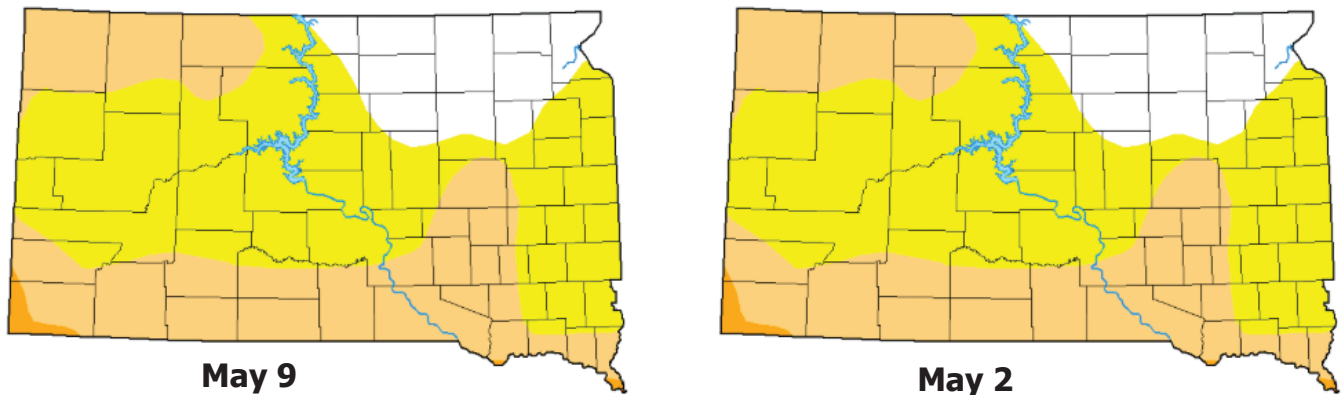
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Drought Classification



Drought Monitor



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

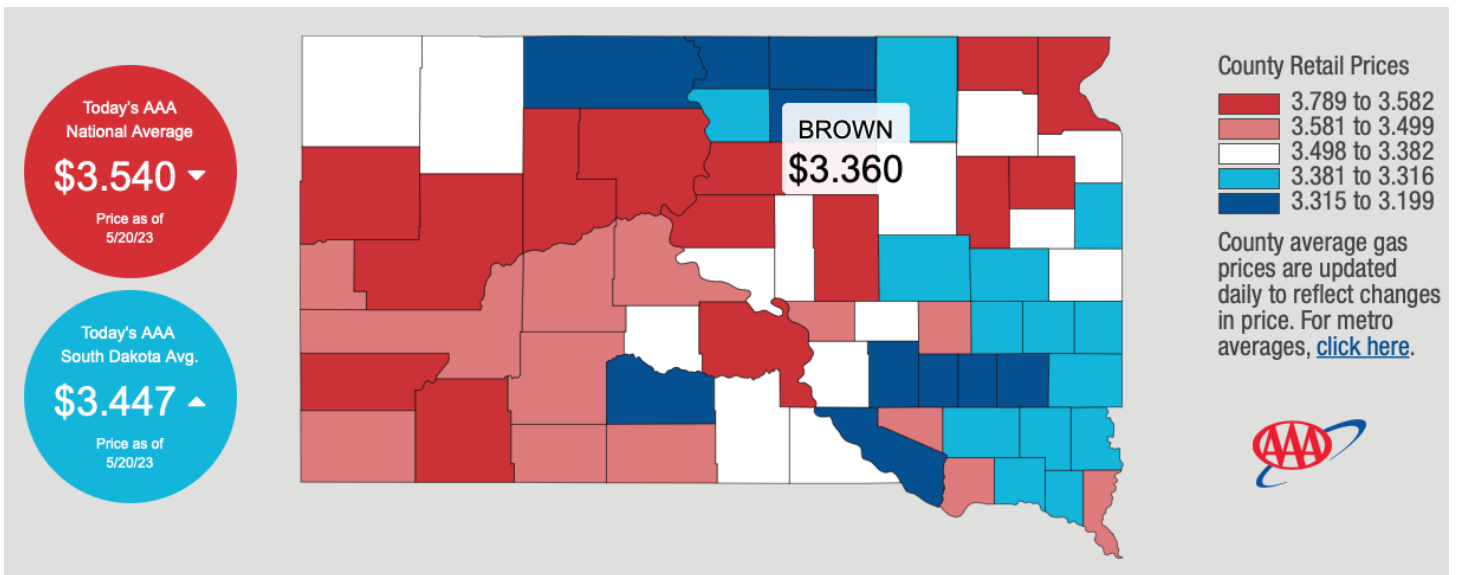
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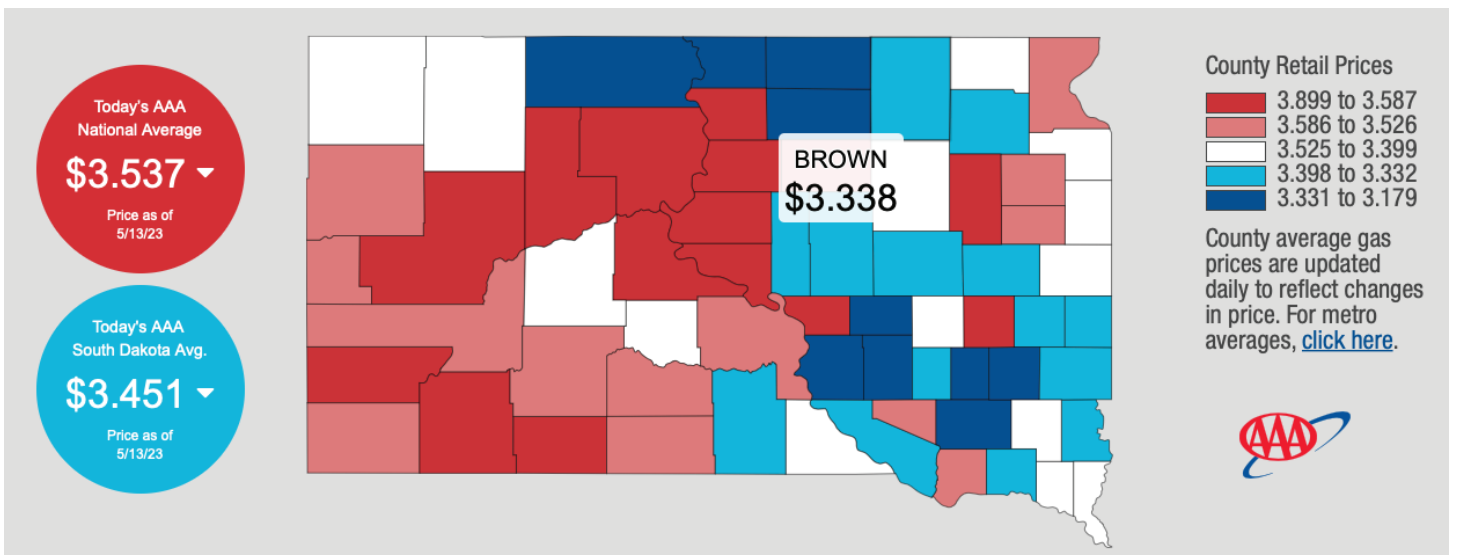
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.447	\$3.574	\$4.050	\$3.803
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.446	\$3.576	\$4.053	\$3.811
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.451	\$3.592	\$4.043	\$3.801
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.592	\$3.700	\$4.135	\$3.982
Year Ago Avg.	\$4.201	\$4.306	\$4.675	\$5.311

This Week



Two Weeks Ago



Weber Landscaping Greenhouse Now Open!

620 West Third Ave., Groton

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



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Brian Gravatt was putting up the flags this morning in Groton. Gravatt has been doing flag duty for about six years. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

OPEN HOUSE



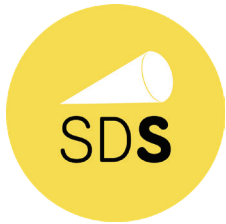
**403 15th Ave E
Groton, SD**

**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.



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SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

State board considering expansion of Black Hills gold mine

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - MAY 19, 2023 2:40 PM

A state board won't make a final decision on the proposed expansion of South Dakota's lone large-scale gold mine for another two months, after the board listened to two days of testimony during a hearing this week in Pierre.

The expansion of the Coeur Wharf Resources mine, just north of Terry Peak and west of Lead, would cover 48 acres to the south of its operation on land already owned by the company. The expansion is expected to extend the mine's life by one to three years, or until 2028 or 2030. The mine was granted four other expansion permits in its 40-year history, the latest in 2011.

Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources Secretary Hunter Roberts recommended conditional approval of the permit on April 17. Steven Blair, assistant attorney general, said "no grounds exist for denial of the permit" based on the DANR permitting process.

But after the Board of Minerals and Environment heard testimony Thursday and Friday, the board chairman instructed attorneys for Wharf and the DANR to amend conditions in the recommended permit to assure the public that a water quality violation at the mine is being addressed in a timely manner.

Wharf in violation of surface water standards

Several Black Hills residents, Wharf employees and business partners attended the meeting in support of the mine, citing the company's contributions to local communities and organizations, and the economic impact on the region. Wharf employs over 250 people and accounts for nearly a quarter of Chicago-based Coeur Mining's gold production.

"They're here to stay," said Bob Ewing, chairman of the Lawrence County Commission.

But concerns from Rapid City-based activist Carla Marshall prompted a hearing after she filed as a formal intervenor in the case. A couple of other concerned citizens and organizations, including the Prairie Hills Audubon Society, sent opposition letters to the DANR. Marshall's concerns focused on the environmental, aesthetic and cultural impact the mine has in the Black Hills.

Marshall, a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, said the mine is illegal because it's in unceded territory under the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty. That agreement promised the Black Hills to Native American tribes but was later broken by the U.S. government. She wants government-to-government consultation and cultural surveys to be completed.

The mine uses the heap-leach extraction method. Mined ore is crushed, piled on giant pads and treated with a cyanide solution to leach out the precious metals. The pads are double lined with alarms to catch any leaks or spills in the material, Wharf officials testified.

Wharf is currently in violation of surface water quality standards for selenium, a naturally occurring mineral in soil that can be harmful to people and fish in great amounts. DANR issued a warning letter in 2021 about selenium in water near the mine.

Roberta Hudson from the state Minerals, Mining and Superfund Program testified that selenium had built up in fish tissue at False Bottom Creek. The department first noticed increases in 2014, Hudson said. Wharf had begun depositing rock at the site in an effort to reclaim an area no longer used for the mine, though Wharf Environmental Manager Matt Zietlow said it was "unknown" if Wharf caused the problem.

Higher amounts of selenium over time can cause reproductive impairments and disfiguration in fish, and eventually threatens aquatic life. In 2020, the accumulated amount rose above the acute limit and has remained "pretty consistently above" since then, Hudson said.

DANR directed Wharf in late 2021 to report monthly progress toward a solution and called for Wharf to establish a treatment plan by October 2024 and to have it operating by 2025. The mitigation project, which included sonic drilling to analyze the source of the selenium, is ongoing.

The board does have grounds to deny the permit because of the violation, board member Bob Morris said during the hearing, although it is technically a separate activity to the proposed expansion.

"Everything else Wharf submitted is fully in compliance with the law," Morris stated during Hudson's testimony. "This is one issue of concern but it's not a deal-breaker."

Board Chairman Rex Hagg told South Dakota Searchlight the board prefers to see a mitigation timeline added in the expansion permit conditions to provide accountability and assurance to the public.

"Our job as the board is to be the last point of oversight on these types of deals," Hagg said, "so we're there to protect the public and state's interest to make sure this is taken care of."

Wharf reclaims former mining lands

During the permit application process, the company conducted environmental surveys and tests, with subcontractors and guidance from the state. The company also surveyed for affected and endangered wildlife and vegetation in the area. Although an endangered bat species, the northern long-eared bat, was noted in the area at one point, a later survey did not find the bats again. A small patch of mountain huckleberry, identified by DANR as a sensitive species, was also observed on the far western edge of the expansion border, which Wharf officials said would be transplanted elsewhere if the operation disturbs the plants.

Representatives from Wharf, including Zietlow, the environmental manager, explained how the company reclaims areas as it completes mining. Topsoil is stripped and stockpiled during the operation and used later for reclamation. Mine reclamation includes the placement of topsoil over the area, reseeding with native vegetation and trees, and continued monitoring by the company.

"Mining is a short-term disturbance," Zietlow said.

Ewing said he's visited the reclaimed sites in his role as a county commissioner.

"It's just like nothing happened," he said. "They've done a good job."

The expansion will disturb an estimated 31.9 million tons of material, including 6.7 million tons of ore and 25.2 million tons of overburden and non-mineralized rock.

Wharf produced nearly 80,000 ounces of gold in 2022, over 91,000 ounces in 2021 and over 93,000 in 2020, according to the 2022 Coeur annual report. There was no silver produced at the mine during those years, though it did produce roughly 63,000 ounces of silver in 2019. Wharf's 2022 sales totaled over \$150 million, and its net income was over \$34 million.

Zietlow told board members Wharf paid about \$6 million in severance taxes to the state over the last five years.

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

State investment manager argues against ban on 'green' investments

Official says his team 'cares about the bottom line' when making decisions

BY: JOHN HULT - MAY 19, 2023 2:39 PM

The state's top investment officer doesn't want lawmakers to bar him from trading the securities of "green" companies — provided those companies can make money for the state.

The goal of stock market purchases in South Dakota, Investment Officer Matt Clark said, is to buy low and sell high — regardless of the kind of business behind the stock's ticker symbol.

"There isn't anything we won't buy at the right price, including a pile of manure," Clark told the Legislature's Executive Board on Friday in Pierre.

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Environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations in investing have grown controversial in recent years, as environmental and social activist groups have pressured the leaders of publicly traded companies to look beyond immediate financial returns when making business decisions.

That pressure has played out through legal and informal means. Some lawmakers in Democratic states like California have tried to force public divestment in companies that profit from fossil fuels or financial institutions that fund fossil fuel investments. Citizens, meanwhile, have called on the public to boycott companies engaged in such business, or to boycott companies that fail to consider things like diversity, equity and inclusion.

On the flipside, lawmakers in some conservative states have moved to divest from mutual funds that consider ESG or to ban the purchase of stocks from companies that divest from fossil fuels. The Texas Legislature blocked 10 ESG businesses from working with the state last year, and is moving toward a ban on doing business with insurance companies that weigh environmental factors in setting coverage rates.

State bars social considerations

On Friday, Clark told lawmakers that South Dakota ought to avoid similar measures.

Clark's office manages not only the trust fund for the state's retirement system, but several other funds, such as the Dakota Cement Plant Trust Fund, Health Care Trust Fund, School & Public Lands Fund and the Education Enhancement Trust Fund.

Clark and his team were on hand at the Executive Board's meeting to offer an update on the state's investment accounts and returns.

The state's returns were mostly flat for fiscal year 2023, lawmakers learned. The investment council's assets sit at about \$19.2 billion this year, up less than \$200 million from the year before after six years of higher returns. The markets have "muddled along" to produce 4-5% returns for the retirement system, Clark said, though he echoed the recession concerns of national economists by warning lawmakers about what could be "lean times" in the coming years.

The Executive Board also took action to replace a retiring member of the state's investment council, which oversees Clark's team.

The ESG comments came after those items of official business. Clark offered his thoughts on ESG investments at the prompting of Rep. Will Mortenson, R-Pierre.

"We've seen kind of a rash of environment, social and governance policy legislation that has come through," Mortenson said. "Are those firms you target? Are they firms you avoid? Do you not care?"

Clark's team "only cares about the bottom line" when buying securities, he said. His investment managers are legally barred from considering anything else. South Dakota passed a prohibition on the consideration of social factors in stock purchases back in 2010 — more than a decade before the current wave of anti-ESG legislation began to take shape.

"I always point with pride to the fact that South Dakota was the first state to advance this," Clark said. "We do not take into account those kinds of issues."

The governance portion of ESG is something the state does consider, Clark said, because "we always want good governance" from leaders of its investment targets. The environmental and social factors are a different story, he said, which is part of the reason he backed and still supports the 2010 law's prohibition on investment decisions based on those factors.

"The 'E' and the 'S' part we think are counterproductive, harm investment results long-term, and they tend to cause you to be the recipient of political pressure," Clark said.

Restrictions could harm returns

Rep. Chris Karr, R-Sioux Falls, asked Clark to explain how further restrictions might complicate the management of the state's investments — or perhaps backfire for retirees.

It's great that the state is only concerned about investment returns, Karr said, but "that also doesn't mean that we are not invested in companies that would be in that category of ESG."

"We've had legislators that have drafted bills to say, 'Well, let's make sure we're not part of these in the future,'" Karr said. "Can you just briefly touch on the complexity of trying to, I guess, divest us of any

investment that would have an ESG category attached to it?"

Some ESG-favored companies are solid investments, Clark said. Electric carmaker Tesla, for example, is a company that would count as ESG friendly by some metrics, but it's also a company that has boosted the state's retirement funds.

If the state invests in a "green" company, Clark said, it's because those companies yield green in the form of returns.

"We'll buy cigarette companies. We own a lot of coal companies. Coal companies have been some of our favorite investments. And we'll own Tesla at times," Clark said. "It's strictly on the basis of the present value of future cash flows and the risk assignment to those cash flows."

In fact, Clark said, ESG buying can be a benefit for South Dakotans. If ESG-minded investors overbuy a stock and the price plummets, that gives the state an opportunity to buy that stock at a lower price and cash in later on.

If that approach makes money, he said, he and his staff will follow it.

"Some of my staff may secretly be environmentalists," Clark said. "It doesn't matter. They're not allowed to take any of those things into consideration."

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.

A default on the U.S. debt would be far worse than a government shutdown. Here's how.

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT, ASHLEY MURRAY, JACOB FISCHLER AND ARIANA FIGUEROA - MAY 19, 2023 2:59 PM

WASHINGTON — A U.S. default on its debt would have a significantly broader impact on federal operations, financial markets and the global economy than recent government shutdowns that have left ordinary Americans largely untouched.

While the two have been confused frequently during debate over the debt limit, the federal government has had considerable practice with partial government shutdowns during the past decade — unlike a default on the debt, which would be uncharted territory. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has warned default could come as soon as June 1 without an agreement between Congress and President Joe Biden.

Government shutdowns don't hit payments for Social Security, Medicare, or Medicaid, since Congress places those programs in the mandatory category that's exempt from the annual government funding process and therefore predominantly exempt from funding lapses.

A default would potentially reduce payments that keep millions of households afloat, as well as payments to states and providers for health care for elderly and low-income Americans.

Government shutdowns don't affect the financial markets that much anymore, meaning Americans' retirement accounts typically don't start shrinking the longer a lapse in government operations extends.

Economists expect that would be much different in an unprecedented debt default.

William Galston, Ezra K. Zilkha chair and senior fellow in governance studies at the Brookings Institution, said partial government shutdowns and a default on the debt are "almost like mirror images of each other."

"In the first case, there's money available but no plan to authorize and appropriate expenditures of that money. That's when the government shuts down," explained Galston, who served as a top domestic official in the Clinton administration.

"When you reach the debt limit, the government has already enacted programs — some of which are permanent programs, like Social Security and Medicare — but it no longer has the money to pay for them, because it can't borrow what it needs to fill the gap between what it's taking in and what it would have

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to put out," he added.

That even includes the military. The Pentagon is bracing for a series of "severe" and unknown consequences for troops and national security should lawmakers fail to address the debt ceiling, officials told States Newsroom.

"Because there is no precedent for a default, it is difficult to know the precise impacts on specific federal programs. But what's clear is that, without the ability for the federal government to borrow funds, there is a very real potential that any government program or payment would be halted or severely delayed," a Pentagon spokesperson said in an emailed statement.

Here are more of the specific ways a default could roll across America:

Social Security

If the U.S. government defaults, payments to the estimated 67 million people who are relying on Social Security this year could be delayed.

Social Security is the largest government program in terms of how many Americans are affected by it, including retired workers and dependents, people with disabilities and surviving dependents of deceased workers who count on Social Security payments as a major source of income.

A temporary disruption in payments to those who depend on Social Security income to pay their own bills could result in "impacts that would ripple through the economy at-large," wrote Jean Ross, a senior fellow for economic policy at the liberal-leaning Center for American Progress.

At the end of 2022, roughly 48.6 million retired workers along with 2.7 million of their dependents relied on Social Security checks that averaged \$1,825 a month, according to the Social Security Agency.

The U.S. spent \$1.2 trillion on Social Security benefits in 2022.

"The short story here is that U.S. taxpayers owe people money because of legislation enacted in the past. We can talk about what kinds of recent legislation have pushed up federal borrowing means, but in fact some of this legislation was passed 90 years ago," said Wendy Edelberg, director of The Hamilton Project and a senior fellow in economic studies at the liberal-leaning Brookings Institution, on a call Thursday with a group of economists.

"We owe interest to those who have lent to the U.S. by purchasing Treasury securities. We owe (money to) doctors and hospitals who have treated Medicare and Medicaid patients, and millions of people are entitled to benefits," said Edelberg.

The Social Security Administration referred all questions about a possible default to the U.S. Treasury. Treasury did not respond to an inquiry for more information.

Veterans benefits

Veterans Administration Press Secretary Terrence Hayes said he does not have a "blueprint for what happens to the VA" if lawmakers do not strike a deal in the coming days. The Treasury Department will soon exhaust all special accounting maneuvers it has been using since January when the U.S. hit its \$31.4 trillion debt ceiling.

"Because there is no precedent for a default, it is difficult to know the precise impacts on specific federal programs. But what is clear is that, without the ability for the federal government to borrow funds, there is a very real potential that any government program or payment would be halted or severely delayed," Hayes said in an emailed statement to States Newsroom.

The Treasury makes payments totaling \$25 billion on behalf of the VA each month, according to the agency.

"There are 4 million disabled veterans whose payments are scheduled for June 1, and those payments are now uncertain," Edelberg, citing recent estimates.

A more detailed list of those payments, according to the VA's figures, include:

\$12 billion per month in benefits payments to more than 7.1 million veterans and their families.

\$4.8 billion per month in pay to more than 451,000 VA employees.

\$2.6 billion per month to community providers caring for roughly 900,000 veterans per month.

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\$1.8 billion per month to medical and other contractors, on over 114,000 contracts.

\$835 million per month in pharmacy costs, for roughly 57,000 monthly payments.

\$3 billion per month for other costs, including to small and veteran-owned businesses.

Hayes also said there is a risk that the VA's vendors could decide "to reduce or completely cease providing goods and services to VA if payment was uncertain."

"As President Biden has made clear, a default would be catastrophic for the American people and for our nation's Veterans," he said.

Medicare and Medicaid

Government payments to physicians, skilled nursing homes, hospitals and insurance companies could lag behind if lawmakers do not raise the U.S. borrowing limit so that the government can pay its bills on time.

As of September 2022, more than 65 million Americans were enrolled in Medicare, the federal program that pays for health care for Americans age 65 and up and certain younger people with disabilities.

Medicare plans are categorized into four options — parts A, B, C and D — that range from inpatient hospital stay coverage to prescription drug benefits and various medical services in between. As of 2022, 49 million Americans relied on Medicare Part D for prescription drug coverage.

"Private practices, hospitals, and community health centers, many of which run on tight budgets and rely on timely payments for providing services, would be in the unprecedented situation of being unsure of whether they will be paid for providing care to patients covered by Medicaid and Medicare," said Antoinette Kraus, spokesperson for the advocacy group Pennsylvania Health Access Network.

"A default would create tremendous uncertainty for doctors and patients alike. Patients who are receiving treatment for a serious health condition or who require regular care for a disability or chronic condition could find themselves unable to get the care they need," Kraus said.

Low-income individuals, including children, disabled or pregnant persons, and seniors, can receive health care coverage under Medicaid, a joint federal-state program that provides medical and long-term care.

Of the more than 93 million Americans enrolled in some form of Medicaid, 46.2% were children, according to January data released by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid.

"It is very likely that federal Medicaid payments to states would, along with many other obligations of the federal government, be delayed," said Kate McEvoy, head of the National Association of Medicaid Directors. "Default is a very different scenario from an impasse in settling the federal budget, in which case payments for Medicaid and other entitlements continue to be made."

Most nursing home residents rely on Medicaid and Medicare to cover their care, meaning a potential default is especially alarming to the industry.

"With the long term care industry already experiencing a historic workforce crisis and recovering from the pandemic, any disruption of lifeline reimbursements will result in devastating consequences for our nation's most vulnerable individuals who need access to care. However, we remain optimistic that policy-makers will come to a solution," said a spokesperson for the American Health Care Association and National Center for Assisted Living, which identifies itself as the largest association in the U.S. representing long-term care facilities.

Federal employees

During a partial government shutdown, exempt federal employees report to work without pay, while non-exempt federal workers are sent home without pay — a situation Congress remedies once they reach a funding agreement. The exempt employees keep the government functioning.

American Federation of Government Employees Public Policy Director Jacqueline Simon said a default on the debt that lasts long enough for federal employees to miss a paycheck would be a vastly different experience than what they've dealt with during past shutdowns.

The union, which represents 750,000 workers within the federal government and the District of Columbia's local government, hasn't sent any guidance to its members about what to do if they don't get paid during a default.

"This is an unprecedented situation and operations will be in uncharted waters," Simon said. "And there's

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no way to make guidance based on law.”

Public safety employees, Simon said, have worked without pay during past partial government shutdowns with a promise they'd get paid eventually when a bipartisan agreement was struck — something she expects they would do after a debt default is resolved.

“In previous shutdowns, public safety employees have been called into work, expected to show up to work with the promise that they'd get paid eventually when the appropriations bills pass,” Simon said.

“I assume there'd be a similar kind of situation where you don't even need appropriations bills to pass, you just need the default to end,” she said, later adding that because the United States has never defaulted, “nobody really knows.”

Substance use prevention and recovery, mental health

The U.S. is facing a staggering drug overdose epidemic, and many states and local governments rely on federal grants for prevention and treatment efforts.

Drug overdose rates in the U.S. have risen fivefold in the past two decades, according to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study published in December. In 2021

the CDC tracked a record 107,622 overdose deaths — 71,238 of them were due to man-made, illegal fentanyl substances, an issue in the crosshairs of both Democrats and Republicans.

Illicit fentanyl ending up in other drugs — for example, counterfeit prescription pills, cocaine and heroin — has been the target of federal agencies and the subject of multiple congressional hearings and roundtables.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, or SAMHSA, administers two major grant programs: one for substance abuse prevention and treatment services, the other for mental health services.

The agency, housed under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, devoted 65% of its 5.89 billion program budget in 2020 to treatment programs.

Facilities that receive federal dollars could be in limbo if the government defaults.

“It's a little hard to tell. I don't know if the publicly funded facilities would stop accepting patients or if they would assume that it's going to be paid at a later date. And, you know, it's just so unclear and up in the air because this is such an unusual situation,” said Mark Dunn, director of public policy for the National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers.

SAMHSA did not respond to requests for comment.

National defense

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told Senate appropriators on May 11 that a potential default brings uncertainty for the over 3.4 million military personnel and the U.S. military's global presence and commitments.

“There is substantial risk to our reputation,” Austin testified. “Again, we are viewed as being a source of stability globally. And we always pay our debts, and there's just a number of things that we're working with allies and partners on and that would come into question as to whether or not we'll be able to execute programs.

“But most importantly, this will affect the livelihood of our troops and our civilians. We won't be able to pay people like we should and, and I think that's something that China and everybody else can exploit,” he continued.

USDA food assistance

One in four Americans, from infants to seniors, participate in one of the 15 food and nutrition assistance programs offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Many of those programs offer monthly assistance, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, known as SNAP, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, referred to as WIC.

If the government defaults, monthly payments to more than 42.5 million Americans on SNAP, and monthly payments to the more than 6 million families on WIC, could be delayed.

The recent bill that House Republicans barely passed that would temporarily raise the U.S. borrowing limit also tightened access to food and assistance for low-income Americans by expediting the effective

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dates for safety net work requirements — from 2025 to 2024 for SNAP.

SNAP already has two sets of work requirements.

Another program that could be affected if there are delays in payments is the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, where each month USDA sends packed foods to about 84,000 individuals on Native American reservations.

A USDA spokesperson said in an email that the exact impact of certain federal programs can depend on uncertain factors.

“But what’s clear is that, without the ability for the federal government to borrow funds, there is a very real potential that any government program or payment would be halted or severely delayed,” the spokesperson said.

School lunches, which USDA provides for more than 30 million children each day, could also be affected.

Other child nutrition programs that could get wrapped up in payment delays include the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program and the Special Milk Program.

Lisa Davis, the senior vice president of the No Kid Hungry campaign at Share Our Strength, said in an email that a default would have a devastating impact on families and individuals who rely on food assistance programs such as SNAP. Share Our Strength is a national organization that aims to end child hunger and poverty in the U.S.

“Not only is SNAP being used as a bargaining chip in these negotiations, but the people who benefit from this critical program will be some of the individuals hit hardest if a government default becomes reality,” she said.

Farmers could also run into problems if there are delays to any USDA payments, ranging from crop insurance payouts to new loans for expanding farming operations.

USDA announced in early May an additional \$130 million in automatic financial assistance for qualifying farm loan program borrowers who are facing financial risk. For those who qualify, they will receive automatic payments from the Farm Service Agency, but those funds could be delayed if the country were to default on its debt.

Homeland security

If the U.S. government were to default, it would mean the U.S. Department of Homeland Security would have to delay payments to various private contractors such as those that run Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention facilities, and even delays in grants to nonprofits that provide aid and transportation to migrants seeking asylum.

It would also mean that the more than 50,000 Transportation Security Administration employees across more than 440 airports could have their paychecks delayed.

The Department of Homeland Security did not respond to States Newsroom’s request for comment.

Court proceedings before immigration judges would also be delayed. There is already a more than 1.6 million backlog of cases.

The Department of Justice, which handles immigration court proceedings, did not respond to State Newsroom’s request for comment.

Highways and transit

The Highway Trust Fund, which sends money from federal gas and diesel taxes to states for road and transit maintenance and construction, could also see a rare disruption in outlays.

On paper, the trust fund has a healthy balance — it was \$94.2 billion at the beginning of April.

But if Treasury doesn’t have the money to actually spend, that could mean payments from the trust fund would be delayed, said Jeff Davis, a transportation spending expert and senior fellow at the Eno Center for Transportation, a nonpartisan think tank.

After making debt service payments, there’s no clear indication what already-obligated spending would take priority, putting highway and transit funds on par with scores of other programs, Davis said, cautioning that his analysis was provisional because it was not backed by precedent or Treasury Department guidance.

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"I think they're going to have to wait in line with everybody else," Davis said of Highway Trust Fund payments if the debt limit is hit. "Just because there's theoretically that much money in the trust fund doesn't make a difference if there's actually no dollars in the Treasury."

Conservation

Conservation advocates won a huge legislative victory in 2020 when Congress passed the Great American Outdoors Act that provided \$900 million annually for the Land and Water Conservation Fund and removed the fund from the annual appropriations process by classifying it as mandatory spending.

Prior to 2020, the fund, which is filled by fees on offshore oil and gas development and used to protect national parks and forests, wildlife refuges, coasts and other natural areas and provides matching grants for state and local recreation projects, was subject to periodic fights over its funding levels and — at times — its continued existence.

Proponents considered the 2020 law approving the fund in perpetuity a once-in-a-generation victory. Montana Republican U.S. Sen. Steve Daines, a leading proponent of the measure, thanked then-President Donald Trump "for signing the most important piece of conservation legislation in over 50 years."

But a default could reintroduce the uncertainty proponents thought they'd erased with the 2020 law. "A default would be an economic disaster across the board — even in ways we don't know yet," U.S. House Natural Resources ranking member Raúl Grijalva, an Arizona Democrat, said in a written statement. "The Treasury would likely have to make tough calls about extraordinary measures to redirect mandatory funds to pay our debt, so even widely beloved programs like the Land and Water Conservation Fund could be at-risk."

A spokeswoman for the U.S. Interior Department, which manages the fund, declined to comment on what would happen in a potential default.

"We can't speculate on unforeseen circumstances," the spokeswoman, Melissa Schwartz, wrote in an email. Similarly, Daines spokeswoman Rachel Dumke declined to entertain the possibility of default.

"Senator Daines does not see a default on the national debt as an option and he is calling on President Biden to make a deal with Speaker McCarthy as soon as possible to avoid a crisis," she wrote in an email.

Housing assistance

A spokesperson for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development said in an email that "without the ability for the federal government to borrow funds, there is a very real potential that any government program or payment would be halted or severely delayed."

HUD handles rental assistance, housing vouchers, claims of unfair housing practices, obtaining affordable loans and public housing among other things.

"Some of HUD's key agency programs and initiatives, which play a vital role for Americans across the country, could be halted or severely delayed ... which would impact our nation's most vulnerable communities," the spokesperson said.

Earlier this year, the agency announced more than 2,400 grants totaling \$5.6 billion in funding for 1,200 communities across the U.S. for community development, homeless assistance and affordable housing. Payments to those programs could be delayed if the government defaults.

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

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

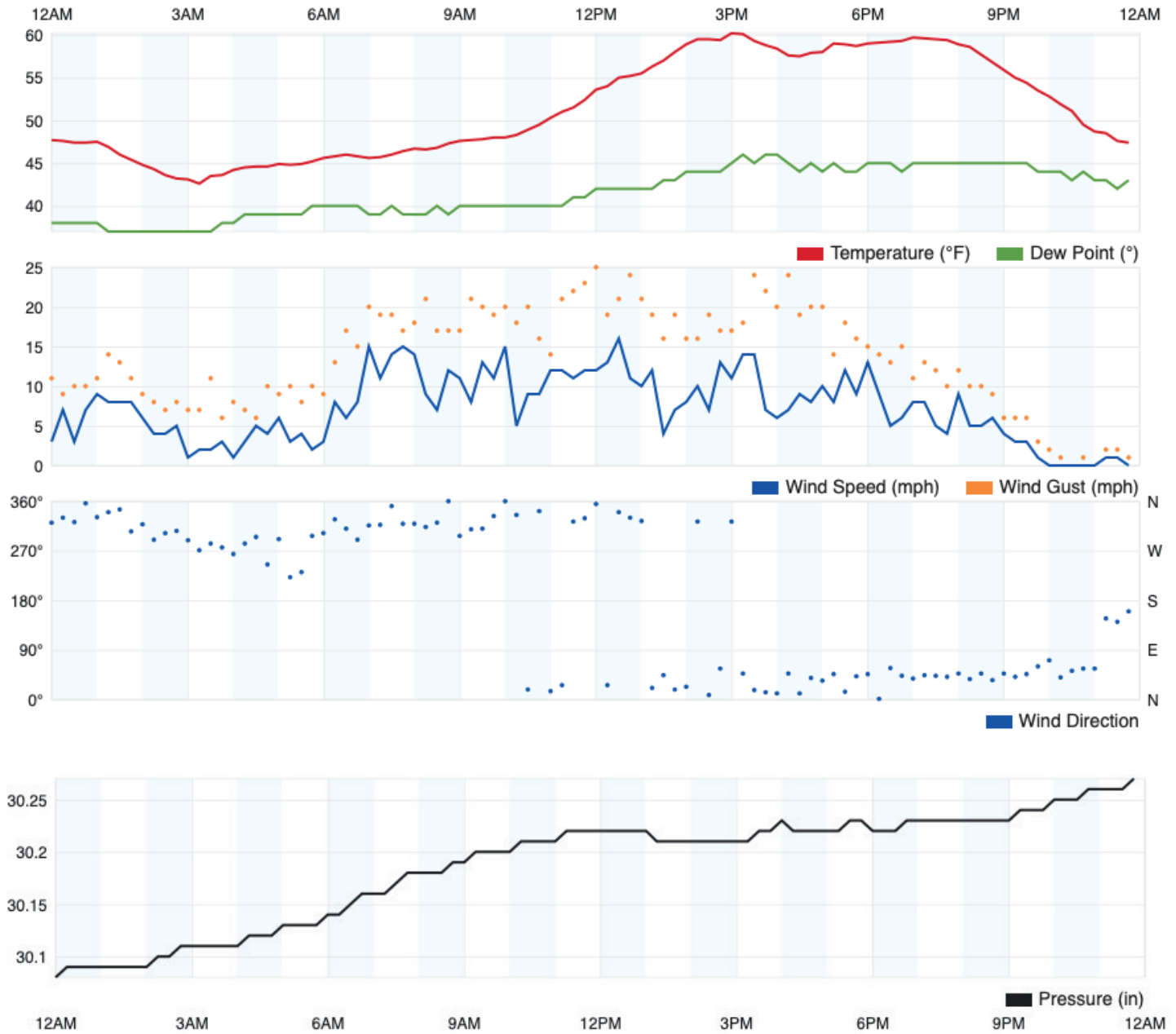
Jacob covers federal policy as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.

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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
						
Patchy Frost and Areas Fog then Sunny	Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Sunny then Sunny and Breezy	Mostly Clear and Breezy	Sunny and Breezy then Sunny
High: 75 °F	Low: 47 °F	High: 78 °F	Low: 55 °F	High: 85 °F	Low: 60 °F	High: 85 °F

Warmer, Smokier, Then Wetter Weather Ahead

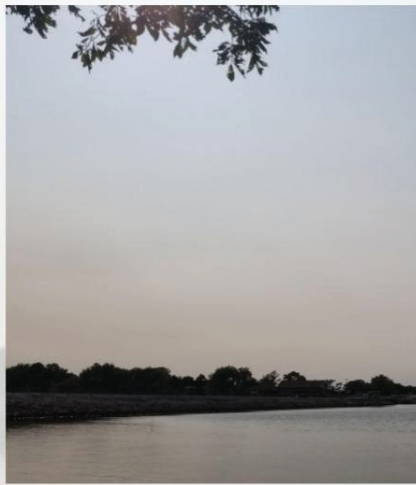
Today, May 20th

Sunny with highs warming into the 70s. Smoke aloft becomes thick this evening.



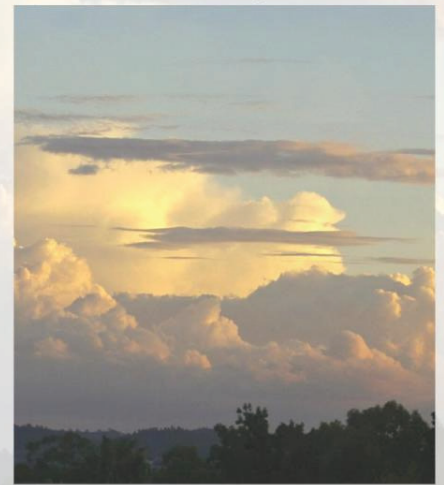
Sunday - Monday

Sunny with highs in the 70s and 80s. Milky white skies due to Canadian wildfires.



Tuesday - Friday

Increasing chances for showers and thunderstorms. Above normal temps remain.



National Weather Service Aberdeen, South Dakota

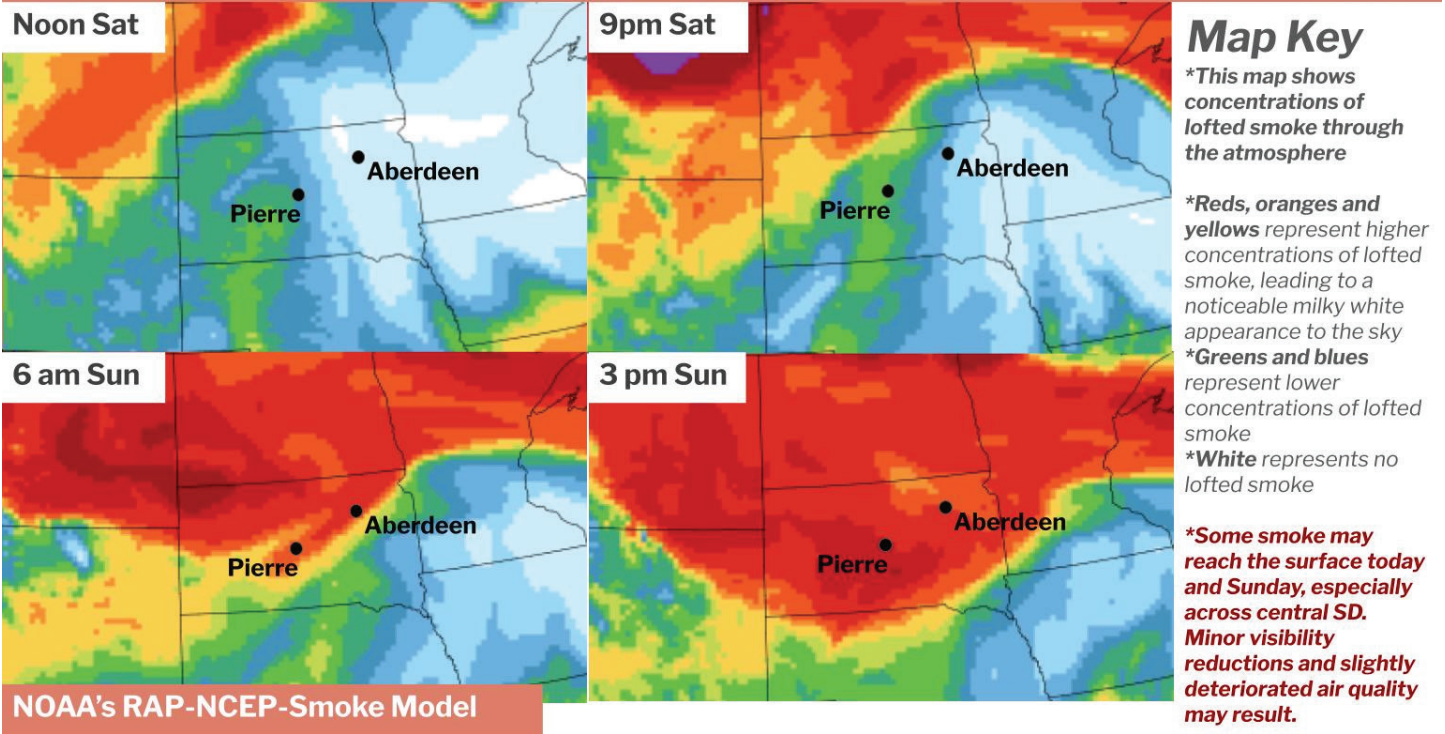


Updated: May 20, 2023

5:12 AM

Temperatures will be on the rise from today into the new work-week, along with dry conditions through at least Monday. Heads up for more mostly lofted smoke this evening through Sunday and beyond, making sunny skies appear milky white. Minor visibility reductions and deteriorations in air quality are possible as well. Precipitation chances re-enter the picture by Tuesday, and become greater through the week.

Smoke Aloft Potential through Sunday afternoon, May 21st, 2023



This is one model's take on timing and concentrations of lofted smoke moving in from Canadian wildfires. Milky white skies are expected on Sunday as a result. Be aware that some smoke may reach the surface today and Sunday as well, resulting in minor impacts.

Air quality impacts your health

Avoid spending time outdoors when air quality is poor.

weather.gov/airquality

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 60 °F at 3:06 PM

Low Temp: 43 °F at 3:14 AM

Wind: 25 mph at 11:52 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 08 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 96 in 1934

Record Low: 23 in 1907

Average High: 72

Average Low: 46

Average Precip in May.: 2.21

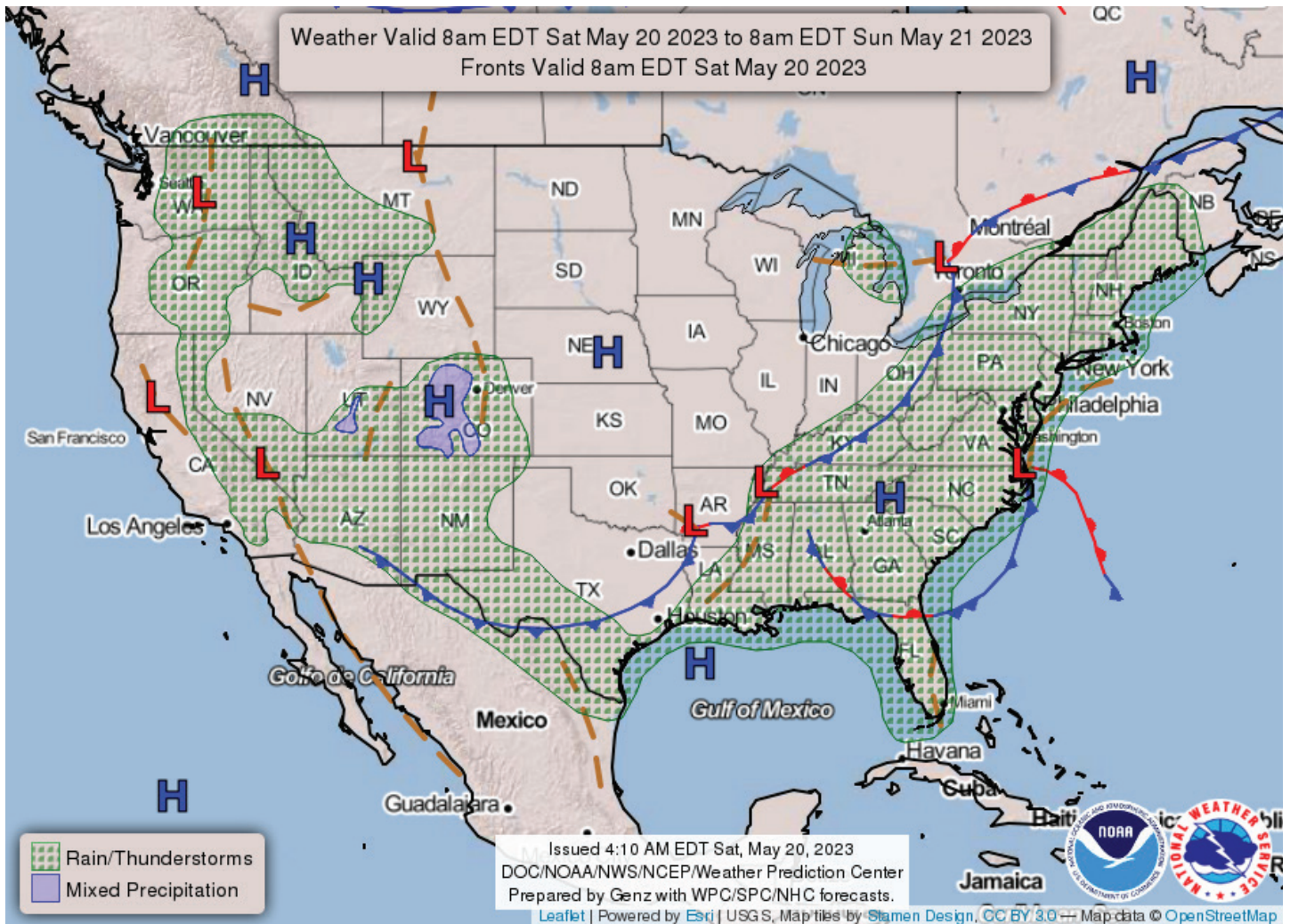
Precip to date in May.: 2.15

Average Precip to date: 6.18

Precip Year to Date: 7.87

Sunset Tonight: 9:03:08 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:53:45 AM



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Today in Weather History

May 20, 1965: A tornado hit north of Frederick. A barn and all outbuildings were destroyed on one farm. Windows exploded outward at the house. The tornado was estimated to be on the ground for about 5 miles.

May 20, 1974: Softball size hail fell in Kennebec, in Lyman County, breaking many windows in the schools and other buildings.

1894: A record late snow of two to eight inches whitened parts of central and eastern Kentucky. Lexington received six inches of snow, and Springfield Kentucky received 5 inches.

1916: In three consecutive years, a tornado passed near or through the town of Codell, Kansas. The tornado on this day was an estimated F2. The estimated F3 tornado in 1917 passed two miles west of town. Finally, an estimated F4 tornado moved through Codell on May 20th, 1918. This tornado killed 9 and injured at least 65 others.

1957: A tornado touched down to the southwest of Kansas City and traveled a distance of seventy-one miles cutting a swath of near destruction through the southeastern suburbs of Ruskin Heights and Hickman Mills. The tornado claimed the lives of forty-five persons and left hundreds homeless. It was the worst weather disaster on record for Kansas City. About all that remained of one house were a small table and a fishbowl atop, with the fish still swimming about inside the bowl. A canceled check from Hickman Hills was found in Ottumwa, Iowa, 165 miles away. Pilots reported debris at an altitude of 30,000 feet.

1987 - Thunderstorms in southern Texas produced grapefruit size hail, near the town of Dilley ("by dilly"), and produced wind gusts to 73 mph at Lake Amistad. The large hail broke windows, killed small animals, and damaged watermelon. Thunderstorms developing along a warm front produced severe weather from Indiana to the Dakotas. Thunderstorms produced baseball size hail at Denver IA, and wind gusts to 80 mph in southern Henry County IL. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms in the south central U.S. produced wind gusts to 70 mph at Omaha, NE, and wind gusts to 80 mph at Midland and Dallas, TX. Temperatures in California soared into the 90s and above 100 degrees. San Jose CA reported a record high of 97 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Pre-dawn thunderstorms produced large hail in eastern Oklahoma and northwestern Arkansas. Later in the morning thunderstorms in North Carolina produced dime size hail at Hanging Dog. Thunderstorms also produced severe weather from the Lower Mississippi Valley to the Central Plains Region later that day and night, with baseball size hail reported around Lawn, Novice and Eola TX. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather across the southeastern quarter of the nation through the day and night. Severe thunderstorms spawned six tornadoes, including one which injured two persons at Algoma, MS, and another which injured nine persons at Rogersville, MO. There were 119 reports of large hail or damaging winds. Thunderstorms produced baseball size hail at Houston MO and damaging winds which killed one person at Toccoa GA. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

A GOOD NAME

"Mr. Edison," said his secretary, "we just had a customer call and complain about a defective battery that we manufactured." Surprised at the news, Thomas Edison wondered what might have caused the problem. Realizing that other batteries would have the same problem, he wondered what he should do. Discouraged, but not defeated, he began a large advertising campaign, asking people to return their defective batteries for a complete refund. The amount involved in the transaction was staggering. However, the money he lost meant nothing to him after he compared the cost of the recall to the value he placed on his name and reputation.

It is critical for Christians to have an honorable and respected name. Whatever we do, whatever we say, or wherever we go, we are representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we fail to live lives of grace and beauty, honesty and integrity, purity and righteousness, our witness will be disregarded, our motives questioned, and our testimony impaired. And, when that occurs, God's name is dishonored, and His message disgraced.

Living righteous lives will eliminate our need to worry about being exposed or not living up to what God expects of us. He calls us to live lives that are consistent with His Word, to follow Him and His eternal directions carefully. Great riches are worthless if we get them dishonestly or by deceiving others. "Earning" a good name by honoring God is worth much more than money.

Prayer: Father, we ask You to work in us and through us so that we may represent You faithfully in all we do and say. May we earn a good name to honor You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Choose a good reputation over great riches; being held in high esteem is better than silver or gold. Proverbs 22:1



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

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2023 Community Events

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

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.19.23

5 11 41 44 55 14

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$150,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[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 DRAW: 13 Hrs 36 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.19.23

1 10 28 30 40 16

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 6 Mins 12 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.17.23

14 18 22 28 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$63,000

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 36 Mins 12 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.17.23

21 26 37 52 53 26

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 35 Mins 13 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 DRAW: 13 Hrs 35 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Will Biden's hard-hat environmentalism bridge the divide on clean energy future?

By CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When John Podesta left his job as an adviser to President Barack Obama nearly a decade ago, he was confident that hundreds of miles of new power transmission lines were coming to the Southwest, expanding the reach of clean energy throughout the region.

So Podesta was shocked to learn last year, as he reentered the federal government to work on climate issues for President Joe Biden, that the lines had never been built. They still hadn't even received final regulatory approval.

"These things get stuck and they don't get unstuck," Podesta said in an interview with The Associated Press.

Podesta is now the point person for untangling one of Biden's most vexing challenges as he pursues ambitious reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. If the president cannot streamline the permitting process for power plants, transmission lines and other projects, the country is unlikely to have the infrastructure needed for a future powered by carbon-free electricity.

The issue has become an unlikely feature of high-stakes budget talks underway between the White House and House Republicans as they try to avoid a first-ever default on the country's debt by the end of the month.

Whether a deal on permitting can be reached in time is unclear, with Republicans looking for ways to boost oil drilling and Democrats focused on clean energy. But its mere presence on the negotiating table is a sign of how political battle lines are shifting. Although American industry and labor unions have long chafed at these kinds of regulations, some environmentalists have now grown exasperated by red tape as well.

That represents a stark change for a movement that has been more dedicated to slowing development than championing it, and it has caused unease among longtime allies even as it creates the potential for new partnerships. Still, this transformation is core to Biden's vision of hard-hat environmentalism, which promises that shifting away from fossil fuels will generate blue-collar jobs.

"We have to start building things again in America," Podesta said. "We got too good at stopping things, and not good enough at building things."

What gets built, of course, is the question that's the central hurdle for any agreement.

The issue of permitting emerged last year during negotiations with Sen. Joe Manchin, a West Virginia Democrat who was a key vote for the Inflation Reduction Act, far-reaching legislation that includes financial incentives for clean energy.

Manchin pushed a separate proposal that would make it easier to build infrastructure for renewable energy and fossil fuels. His focus has been the Mountain Valley Pipeline, which would carry natural gas through his home state.

Republicans called the legislation a "political payoff." Liberal Democrats described it as a "dirty side deal." Manchin's idea stalled.

Nonetheless, Elizabeth Gore, senior vice president for political affairs at the Environmental Defense Fund, said the senator "gets a lot of credit for really elevating this."

"It was his effort that really put this issue on the map," she said.

Since then, the Capitol has been awash in proposals to alleviate permitting bottlenecks. House Republicans passed their own as part of budget legislation last month, aiming to increase production of oil, natural gas and coal. Sen. Tom Carper, D-Del., recently introduced another proposal geared toward clean energy.

"I think there is a path forward," Gore said, describing all the ideas "as stepping stones."

Neil Bradley, executive vice president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, was also optimistic.

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"The hurdle isn't whether people think it's a good idea or not," he said. "The hurdle is getting the details worked out."

Despite broad interest in permitting changes, reaching a deal will likely involve trade-offs that are difficult for Democrats and environmentalists to stomach.

Republicans want to see more fossil fuels and, now that they control the House, no proposal will advance without their consent. But too many concessions to Republicans in the House could jeopardize support in the Democratic-controlled Senate.

Biden has frustrated environmentalists by approving Willow, an oil drilling project in an untouched swath of Alaskan wilderness. After Podesta finished a speech on permitting at a Washington think tank this month, activists rushed to block his vehicle with a white banner that said "end fossil fuels" in bold black letters.

Podesta argues that it's impossible to immediately phase out oil and gas, and he said the status quo won't suffice when it comes to building clean energy infrastructure. He points to federal data analyzed by the Brookings Institution that found permitting transmission lines can take seven years, while natural gas pipelines take less than half that time.

He was circumspect when asked about where the negotiations may lead.

"There is bipartisan interest in the topic," Podesta said. "Where any of that ends, I can't predict."

A deal could bolster Biden's political coalition by easing tension between environmentalists and labor unions, which have often been frustrated by objections to projects that would lead to jobs.

"They've unnecessarily taken food off the table of my members," said Sean McGarvey, president of the North America's Building Trades Unions.

The relationship with environmentalists "could turn into an alliance depending on how this process ends," he said, but "we've got to do some good business to see if we're inviting each other for barbecues and crab picks."

Other factions of the green movement have already expressed frustration.

Brett Hartl, government affairs director for the Center for Biological Diversity, said the administration made a mistake by allowing Manchin's proposal to be a starting point. The White House, he said, "negotiated away the game at the beginning and put the football on the 2-yard line."

He also criticized Podesta's approach to permitting.

"He's dogmatically saying that environmentalists are the problem here," he said. "It's easy to caricature environmental legislation as the boogeyman."

Historians trace the American regulatory system to a backlash against massive infrastructure initiatives in the middle of the 20th century, such as the interstate highway system and a series of dams. The projects raised concerns about environmental impacts and left local communities feeling steamrolled. More fears about ecological damage were sparked by an oil spill off the coast of Santa Barbara, California, and fires on the polluted Cuyahoga River in Ohio.

The result was the National Environmental Policy Act, signed by President Richard Nixon in 1970 to require federal agencies to consider the environmental ramifications of their decisions. State-level laws, such as the California Environmental Quality Act, proliferated at the same time.

"We have a system that works for what it was designed to do," said Christy Goldfuss, chief policy impact officer at the Natural Resource Defense Council. "What we're looking at doing is optimizing that system for the future we need. And that's a fundamentally different conversation than anything we've had before."

"It's an incredibly difficult shift to make for the environmental movement," she added. "And I don't think everybody is going to make it. Some organizations are going to continue to stand in the way of development."

And what about that transmission lines in the Southwest that Podesta was counting on?

The goal is to span about 520 miles, carrying electricity from a series of turbines in New Mexico that's being billed as the largest wind project in the hemisphere. The lines were rerouted to satisfy the Department of Defense, which tests weapons in the area, but local conservationists still say that natural habitats will be threatened by construction.

On Thursday, nearly two decades after the initial proposal, the federal government announced it had

approved the project.

Ukraine's Zelenskyy arrives in Hiroshima for G7 summit as world leaders sanction Russia

By FOSTER KLUG, ADAM SCHRECK and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

HIROSHIMA, Japan (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy arrived Saturday in Japan for talks with the leaders of the world's most powerful democracies, a personal appearance meant to galvanize global attention as the nations ratcheted up pressure on Moscow for its 15-month invasion of Ukraine.

Bolstering international support is a key priority as Ukraine prepares for what's seen as a major push to take back territory seized by Russia in the war that began in February last year. Zelenskyy's in-person visit to the G7 summit comes just hours after the United States agreed to allow training on potent American-made fighter jets, laying the groundwork for their eventual transfer to Ukraine.

Host nation Japan said Zelenskyy's inclusion stems from his "strong wish" to participate in talks with the bloc and other countries that will influence his nation's defense against Russia.

"Japan. G7. Important meetings with partners and friends of Ukraine. Security and enhanced cooperation for our victory. Peace will become closer today," Zelenskyy tweeted upon his arrival on a plane provided by France.

A European Union official, speaking on condition of anonymity to brief reporters on the deliberations, said Zelenskyy will take part in two separate sessions Sunday. One session will be with G7 members only and will focus on the war in Ukraine. Another will include the G7 as well as the other nations invited to take part in the summit, and will focus on "peace and stability."

U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan said that President Joe Biden and Zelenskyy would have direct engagement at the summit. On Friday, Biden announced his support for training Ukrainian pilots on U.S.-made F-16 fighter jets, a precursor to eventually providing those aircraft to Ukraine.

"It is necessary to improve (Ukraine's) air defense capabilities, including the training of our pilots," Zelenskyy wrote on his official Telegram channel after meeting Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, one of a number of leaders he talked to.

Zelenskyy also met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, their first face-to-face talks since the war, and briefed him on Ukraine's peace plan, which calls for the withdrawal of Russian troops from the country before any negotiations.

Russia's deputy defense minister, Alexander Grushko, accused Western countries of "continuing along the path of escalation," following the announcements that raised the possibility of sending F-16s to Kyiv.

The G7 vowed to intensify the pressure in its joint statement Saturday.

"Russia's brutal war of aggression represents a threat to the whole world in breach of fundamental norms, rules and principles of the international community. We reaffirm our unwavering support for Ukraine for as long as it takes to bring a comprehensive, just and lasting peace," the group said.

G7 leaders have faced a balancing act as they look to address a raft of global worries demanding urgent attention, including climate change, AI, poverty and economic instability, nuclear proliferation and, above all, the war in Ukraine.

China, the world's No. 2 economy, sits at the nexus of many of those concerns.

There is increasing anxiety that Beijing, which has been steadily building up its nuclear weapons program, could try to seize Taiwan by force, sparking a wider conflict. China claims the self-governing island as its own and regularly sends ships and warplanes near it.

The G7 on Saturday said they did not want to harm China and were seeking "constructive and stable relations" with Beijing, "recognizing the importance of engaging candidly with and expressing our concerns directly to China."

They also urged China to pressure Russia to end the war in Ukraine and "support a comprehensive, just and lasting peace."

North Korea, which has been testing missiles at a torrid pace, must completely abandon its nuclear

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bomb ambitions, "including any further nuclear tests or launches that use ballistic missile technology," the leaders' statement said.

The green light on F-16 training is the latest shift by the Biden administration as it moves to arm Ukraine with more advanced and lethal weaponry, following earlier decisions to send rocket launcher systems and Abrams tanks. The United States has insisted that it is sending weapons to Ukraine to defend itself and has discouraged attacks by Ukraine into Russian territory.

"We've reached a moment where it is time to look down the road again to say what is Ukraine going to need as part of a future force, to be able to deter and defend against Russian aggression as we go forward," Sullivan said.

Biden's decisions on when, how many, and who will provide the fourth-generation F-16 fighter jets will be made in the months ahead while the training is underway, Biden told leaders.

The G7 leaders have rolled out a new wave of global sanctions on Moscow as well as plans to enhance the effectiveness of existing financial penalties meant to constrain President Vladimir Putin's war effort. Russia is now the most-sanctioned country in the world, but there are questions about the effectiveness.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida separately held one-on-one talks with leaders, including Modi, who is hosting the gathering of G20 world leaders later this year.

India, the world's largest democracy, has been measured in its comments on the war in Ukraine, and has avoided outright condemnation of Russia's invasion. While India maintains close ties with the U.S. and its Western allies, it is also a major buyer of Russian arms and oil.

The latest sanctions aimed at Russia include tighter restrictions on already-sanctioned people and firms involved in the war effort. More than 125 individuals and organizations across 20 countries have been hit with U.S. sanctions.

The leaders began the summit with a visit to a peace park dedicated to the tens of thousands who died in the world's first wartime atomic bomb detonation. Kishida, who represents Hiroshima in parliament, wants nuclear disarmament to be a major focus of discussions.

The G7 leaders also discussed 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 group reiterated its aim to pull together up to \$600 billion in financing for the G7's global infrastructure development initiative, which is meant to offer countries an alternative to China's investment dollars.

Biden, who scrapped plans to travel on to Papua New Guinea and Australia after his stay in Japan so that he can get back to debt limit talks in Washington, is also meeting with leaders of the so-called Quad partnership, made up of Japan, Australia, India and the United States.

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, Elaine Kurtenbach and Mari Yamaguchi in Hiroshima, Japan, and Joanna Kozłowska in London contributed to this report.

Meet the influential new player on transgender health bills

By JEFF McMILLAN and KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

Do No Harm, a nonprofit that launched last year to oppose diversity initiatives in medicine, has evolved into a significant leader in statehouses seeking to ban gender-affirming care for transgender youths, producing model legislation that an Associated Press analysis found has been used in at least three states.

The nonprofit, not widely known outside conservative medical and political circles, describes itself on its website as a collection of doctors and others uniting to "protect healthcare from a radical, divisive, and discriminatory ideology."

Representatives of Do No Harm turned down opportunities to talk with The Associated Press and emailed a statement explaining the group's position.

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WHO IS BEHIND DO NO HARM?

Founder Dr. Stanley Goldfarb is a kidney specialist and a professor emeritus and former associate dean at the University of Pennsylvania's medical school. Goldfarb retired in 2021 and incorporated Do No Harm in January 2022.

Do No Harm initially focused on race in medical education and hiring. "The same radical movement behind 'Critical Race Theory' in the classroom and 'Defund the Police' is coming after healthcare, but hardly anyone knows it," it warns on its website.

Goldfarb declined to be interviewed by The Associated Press but said in an email that "Do No Harm works to protect children from extreme gender ideology through original research, coalition-building, testimonials from parents and patients who've lived through deeply troubling experiences, and advocacy for the rigorous, apolitical study of gender dysphoria."

Goldfarb has published a book, "Take Two Aspirin and Call Me By My Pronouns: Why Turning Doctors into Social Justice Warriors is Destroying American Medicine," along with a similar op-ed in the Wall Street Journal.

He told the New York Post in September 2022: "This focus on diversity means we're going to take someone with a certain skin color because we think they're OK, that they can do the work. But we're not going to look for the best and the brightest. We're going to look for people who are just OK to make sure we have the right mixture of ethnic groups in our medical schools."

The organization joined a civil rights lawsuit brought by two doctors and several states that challenged a federal rule allowing higher compensation for doctors who adopt an "anti-racism" plan. The lawsuit was dismissed.

The organization's executive director, Kristina Rasmussen, previously was chief of staff to former Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner, a Republican, and served as president of the Illinois Policy Institute, a conservative think tank, according to her LinkedIn profile.

WHERE IS DO NO HARM WORKING?

An AP analysis of statehouse bills to restrict gender-affirming care for youths found passages identical or nearly identical to Do No Harm's model legislation in Montana, Arkansas and Iowa.

The organization had lobbyists registered in 2022 in at least three states — Kansas, Missouri and Tennessee — and in Florida in 2023. People associated with the group have appeared as witnesses in statehouses, including Chloe Cole, 18, listed on its website as a "patient advocate" who has spoken to lawmakers about her gender-transition reversal.

In states including Idaho, New Hampshire, Tennessee and Ohio, Cole described her transition beginning at age 13, surgery to remove her breasts at 15, and stopping her transition a year later saying it was a mistake. Republican supporters of bills restricting or banning gender-affirming care often cite Cole's story.

Cole told the Kansas news outlet The Reflector this year that Do No Harm was reimbursing her travel expenses as she testified before state lawmakers. She and her lawyer did not respond to requests for comment from the AP.

IS DO NO HARM A LOBBYING GROUP?

Do No Harm originally organized as a charitable organization whose tax-exempt status would be endangered by substantial lobbying.

On March 9 this year, after the group had already made significant inroads in legislatures with its model bill, lobbyists and hearing witnesses, it incorporated Do No Harm Action as a separate nonprofit with a tax status that allows for more lobbying, according to records obtained from the Virginia Office of Charitable and Regulatory Programs.

Goldfarb did not respond directly to questions about Do No Harm's lobbying, nor did another representative for the organization.

In the application for nonprofit status obtained from the Virginia agency, Do No Harm projected revenues of \$910,000 in 2022, more than \$1.1 million in 2023 and over \$1.5 million in 2024.

The organization is so new that federal tax forms that typically reveal nonprofits' spending details have

been either not received or not processed.

It won a \$250,000 award last year called the Gregor Peterson Prize. Its previous recipients include the Center for American Liberty, led by Harmeet Dhillon, a lawyer who advised former President Donald Trump's 2020 reelection campaign and who is representing Cole in her lawsuit against Kaiser Permanente over gender-transition treatments she now says she regrets. The prize was announced in December at a summit held by the American Legislative Exchange Council, a prominent provider of conservative model legislation.

HOW IS THE GROUP'S WORK RECEIVED?

More than 150 Penn medical school alumni signed a letter criticizing Goldfarb in 2019 for his Wall Street Journal op-ed. And last year, he was the target of an online petition after he reacted to an article in a scientific journal about the academic success rates of medical students of color by suggesting in a tweet that they were just "less good at being residents."

Cole's testimony at the Tennessee statehouse was praised by House Majority Leader Lamberth, who said she "described much better than I can on why no child should be put through this." Lamberth, who sponsored the state's ban on gender-affirming care for minors, also thanked Cole for sharing "the most private things that can ever happen to somebody."

Its model legislation on gender-affirming care has been criticized for using technical medical terminology as political rhetoric to scare people.

"Every single line of this contains some sort of falsehood," said Dr. Meredith McNamara, an assistant professor of pediatrics at the Yale School of Medicine.

"My overall takeaway from this is that there are a lot of recycled false claims about gender dysphoria, standards of care, safety, evidence and medical authority which seems like it's right out of the disinformation playbook."

Associated Press writers Kavish Harjai and Amy Beth Hanson, along with AP News Researcher Rhonda Shafner, contributed to this report. Harjai is a corps member of the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

DeSantis super PAC tackles tricky task of organizing support for him in Iowa without the candidate

By THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

SIOUX CENTER, Iowa (AP) — LaTomah Hauff stopped at the red-draped table on her way into Dean's Classic Car Museum to jot her contact information on a sign-up sheet to hear more about Ron DeSantis.

The 75-year-old retired speech pathologist had driven an hour to hear the Florida governor speak in northwest Iowa last Saturday. She was one of more than 600 Iowa Republicans who filed into the exhibit hall and past the display's brochures about DeSantis and cards to sign pledging support for him in next year's Republican presidential caucuses.

The display, with all the earmarks of a presidential campaign, was the work of Never Back Down, a super political action committee promoting DeSantis while he moves toward a 2024 bid.

It was also an early glimpse of how this group — able to receive unlimited sums from wealthy donors, unlike a presidential campaign — plans to build a network of supporters necessary to compete in the caucuses.

Essentially, it's a caucus campaign that, for legal reasons, cannot attach itself explicitly to a candidate.

The novel approach, aimed at maximizing super PAC dollars, underscores the stakes in Iowa for DeSantis. He needs to show early that he is a viable threat to former President Donald Trump, whose team says it has already signed up thousands of Iowa volunteers and supporters before DeSantis has even declared his candidacy.

The effort comes with thorny challenges. The super PAC must essentially build a separate grassroots

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network to finagle commitments from Iowans to support DeSantis without coordinating with him.

"The biggest difficulty is the tightrope they are going to have to walk," said Marlys Popma, a veteran Iowa Republican campaign organizer and former top adviser to John McCain's 2008 presidential campaign. "Walking that line is going to be the most interesting thing, but I certainly see that it can be done and I think it's a really interesting approach."

About 240 miles southeast of the fundraiser DeSantis headlined in Republican-heavy Sioux County, the real work of Never Back Down was well under way.

In an office in Des Moines' western suburbs, Republican operatives had by mid-May conducted three five-day training sessions for classes of paid organizers, with three more scheduled for June. By early May, the group had hired more than a half-dozen seasoned political strategists and recruited volunteers from veteran statewide organizers, including former senior aides to Gov. Kim Reynolds and former Gov. Terry Branstad.

As of early May, the teams had canvassed at least 1,000 addresses, and planned to double that by Sunday.

The goal is to secure commitments to back DeSantis at the caucuses, which are expected to lead off the 2024 Republican voting season, in all of the 1,670 precincts where the party plans to hold them next year.

"When you talk about caucus organizing, there are a lot of layers. But our particular layer is trying to build a ground game, build a volunteer network," super PAC senior adviser David Polyansky said.

He said similar plans were in place in New Hampshire, South Carolina, Nevada and other early states.

Officials plan to make the Des Moines-area headquarters the training hub for more than 30 organizers the super PAC plans to hire and dispatch to the four early-contest states and more than a dozen others expected to hold their contests by next March 5, so-called Super Tuesday.

A spokeswoman for the super PAC declined to suggest a budget for the Iowa operation. But Never Back Down has raised more than \$30 million, and DeSantis has more than \$80 million in his gubernatorial campaign account that is expected to be transferred into the super PAC.

Advisers for Never Back Down are betting the money is better spent on staff, door-knocking and phone-banking than advertising.

Ad sellers are required by law to offer a candidate's campaign the cheapest rate, a legal distinction intended to make it easier for candidates to communicate to voters. That doesn't apply to super PACs, which often pay exorbitant rates.

Polyansky is among several GOP operatives with Iowa experience advising the super PAC. Like fellow senior adviser Jeff Roe and pollster Chris Wilson, he was part of Texas Sen. Ted Cruz's winning 2016 Iowa caucus campaign.

Organizing alone hardly guarantees success in Iowa, but it's essential in quirky contests that require voters to attend evening meetings in the dead of winter. PAC dollars can make a difference in pursuit of a comparatively small number of supporters.

In 2016, Cruz won Iowa amid record turnout of roughly 180,000 with fewer than 52,000 votes.

Barack Obama's 2008 campaign used the contact information his local organizing staff collected from the large crowds he drew to his Iowa events to draw huge numbers of first-time participants to his ranks, fueling his caucus victory.

Trump, too, packed venues during his 2016 Iowa campaign, but his senior advisers, who had little understanding of the caucuses, failed to follow up with thousands of Iowans, costing him the early win.

This time, Trump's top aides say they expect the former president to win Iowa in no small part by directing his audiences to a website tailored to connecting interested Iowans with local organizers.

They had expected to sign up thousands at an outdoor rally in Des Moines the same day DeSantis was in northwest Iowa, but the threat of severe storms prompted Trump to cancel. Trump's campaign expects to make up the event in June.

Even with its big budget and a potential army of staff canvassing Iowa, an organizing campaign without the candidate is at a disadvantage, said veteran Republican strategist Mike Murphy.

Murphy led a pro-Jeb Bush super PAC's effort to promote the former Florida governor's campaign for the

2016 Republican presidential nomination. With a \$100 million budget, Right to Rise emphasized messaging via advertising and direct mail.

But Bush fell from his perch as the field's early favorite, due in part to his failure to ignite enthusiasm and recognize Trump's viability.

A super PAC's strengths lies in echoing a candidate's messages or attacking opponents. Persuading voters to commit to attending caucuses almost necessarily requires the presence of the candidate, Murphy said.

"If you don't have the candidate — or a strong surrogate, like a spouse — to do the tour and meet people in a state with a culture of candidate interaction, it's hard to have a big organic impact, and that's what they are going to run into," Murphy said.

If last Saturday was any preview, the super PAC seemed ready to shadow DeSantis, with all the trappings of a local, organizing campaign, including "DeSantis '24" yard signs.

Hauff, the retired speech pathologist, will be a good test.

Though she signed up for more information, she stopped short of signing one of the caucus pledge cards next to the glossy brochures.

"I like what the man says. I like what he's done in Florida. But it's early," Hauff said. "I'm not ready to make a full commitment right now. I want to see how this is going to shake out. He's one of the names on my list."

'A day of joy': Brittney Griner makes WNBA season debut after being jailed in Russia

By BETH HARRIS AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Brittney Griner stood for the national anthem before her first regular-season WNBA game since being jailed in Russia.

Griner was outspoken for social justice in 2020 and didn't take the court during the pregame anthem. But nearly a year behind bars in Russia changed her.

"I was literally in a cage and could not stand the way I wanted to," she said. "Just being able to hear my national anthem and see my flag, I definitely want to stand."

Griner had 18 points, six rebounds and four blocked shots Friday night for the Phoenix Mercury in a 94-71 loss to the Los Angeles Sparks.

"Not good enough, didn't get the dub," said Griner, who nevertheless couldn't be down in defeat.

"I appreciate everything a little bit more, all of the small moments, like, 'Oh, I'm so tired I don't want to go to practice today,' that has changed, honestly," she said. "Tomorrow is not guaranteed, you don't know what it's going to look like. I feel a lot older somehow, too."

The 32-year-old center's immediate goal is to play an entire game by the All-Star break in mid-July. She played 25 minutes Friday.

"I hope to be exactly where I want to be," Griner said. "Just getting back to how I was before all this happened."

Griner made an immediate impact against the Sparks. She fired a pass to Moriah Jefferson, who hit a 3-pointer for Phoenix's first basket. Griner grabbed a couple of rebounds and scored twice in helping the Mercury to an early lead.

"How good did she just look? Unbelievable," WNBA commissioner Cathy Engelbert told reporters at halftime.

For the first time since last season, Phoenix coach Vanessa Nygaard opened her pregame comments without announcing how many days Griner had been jailed. Griner has been free since December when she was part of a high-profile prisoner swap.

"Until the day we got the news in the morning that she was on her way home, no one thought that it was going to happen," Nygaard said. "We did our jobs probably with less joy than professional athletes do. It was heavy every day."

Not anymore.

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"Today is a day of joy," Nygaard said. "An amazing, amazing thing has happened."

Griner and the Mercury were greeted with a standing ovation when they came on court for pregame warmups, although the biggest cheers were reserved for the Sparks.

"Just taking it in but staying focused because at the end of the day I'm at work," Griner said. "Can't get caught up in the moment. Kind of feel it, but put it to the side and feel it a little bit later."

Griner hugged Vice President Kamala Harris and first gentleman Doug Emhoff as they left the court after Harris was presented with a No. 49 Sparks jersey. Earlier, Harris posed for photos in the Mercury's locker room.

"It was nice to be able to see her face-to-face and thank her for everything," Griner said.

She patted her heart and applauded in return during a brief video welcoming her back to the WNBA.

"It was nice to be back on the court for a real game," she said. "The love from the fans when we came out was amazing. I definitely feel it."

Griner scored 10 points in 17 minutes in an exhibition loss to the Sparks last week. It was her first game action since she was arrested at a Moscow airport in February 2022 after Russian authorities said a search of her luggage revealed vape cartridges containing cannabis oil.

"We brought back this Black, gay woman from a Russian jail and America did that because they valued her and she's a female athlete and they valued her," Nygaard said.

"Just to be part of a group that values people at that level, it makes me very proud to be an American. Maybe there's other people that that doesn't make them proud, but for me, I see BG and I see hope and I see the future and I have young children and it makes me really hopeful about our country," the coach said.

Fans arriving early to Crypto.com Arena wore T-shirts with Griner's name and jersey number on them. The 6-foot-9 Griner stopped to photo-bomb a group of young girls posing courtside before the game.

Billie Jean King and wife Ilana Kloss, who are part-owners of the Sparks, were on hand for the opener, as was Magic Johnson, Pau Gasol, Byron Scott, Robert Horry, Los Angeles Lakers coach Darvin Ham and South Carolina women's coach Dawn Staley.

Since her release, Griner has used her platform to advocate for other Americans being detained abroad. She was already an LGBTQ+ activist since publicly coming out in 2013.

"She stands for so many people, so many different kind of people who can be undervalued in our society," Nygaard said. "She stands with pride and confidence and has never once has shied away from who she is."

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

"She's an amazing person on and off the court," Phoenix teammate Jefferson said. "I think her energy just inspires everybody every single day to show up and be the best version of themselves."

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

A year after Mariupol's fall, Azovstal survivor recalls surrender with pain and a sense of purpose

By MSTYSLAV CHERNOV ASSOCIATED PRESS

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Mikhailo Vershinin was a shadow of the burly Mariupol policeman he was when he emerged after four months in Russian captivity.

The head of Mariupol's Police Patrol, he was among hundreds to surrender from the Russian siege of the Azovstal steel mill on the orders of the Ukrainian president a year ago and was close to death on the day he was exchanged for Russian prisoners of war.

He experienced first-hand the day the final square of the besieged city fell and now recalls it with both deep sadness, but a sense of purpose for Ukraine's future.

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The air strikes had been relentless for weeks, but the skies fell silent while Russian and Ukrainian officers negotiated terms of surrender. At the time, Vershinin said, it seemed like the only chance for both the men and women with him underground – and for Mariupol.

Azovstal's last stand also became a rallying point for many countries hesitating about support for Ukraine. "Beginning with Mariupol, the world started to wake up in understanding what's going on," he said. "We knew perfectly well that we locked on ourselves lots of Russian forces. We were like a bone in the throat of Russia."

The group hoped for reinforcements that never came, then finally surrendered.

But Russia failed to keep its promises to treat the prisoners of war under the rules of the Geneva Convention. Torture, hunger, and illness stalked the group. More than 700 remain in captivity: winning their release has been a priority for the Ukrainian government, and for Vershinin, who was in a group exchanged for Russian prisoners of war last fall.

The men and women who fought to the last at Azovstal are heroes and martyrs across Ukraine, their faces on posters and giant banners.

At the time, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy explained the order to surrender because "Ukraine needs Ukrainian heroes to be alive. It's our principle."

But Vershinin said ill-treatment was routine as their Russian captors tried to turn men against each other and starve them into submission.

"Now I can say this: If we knew what awaited us in prison, many people would not go, would not surrender."

Jim Brown Appreciation: Remembering Hall of Fame running back's lasting impact on and off field

By TOM WITHERS AP Sports Writer

CLEVELAND (AP) — Jim Brown was both extraordinary and extraordinarily complicated.

One man. Many versions.

His greatness on the football field is beyond reproach. For generations, Brown, who died Thursday night peacefully at his home in Los Angeles, has long been the standard of excellence for running backs, a freakish blend of brute power and blazing speed who in many ways changed the NFL forever.

Cleveland's No. 32 is in a class by himself.

"He's (No.) 1," said Hall of Famer Emmitt Smith, the league's career rushing leader. "(Walter) Payton, two. I fall three."

But there is so much more than broken tackles and shattered records to Brown, who walked away from the game at his physical peak to pursue a film career, helping break barriers in Hollywood for Black actors.

There's the social activist and civil rights champion who used his platform to promote change during one of the most turbulent decades in U.S. history.

And there's a much less flattering personal side to Brown, who was accused of domestic violence during a time when women's cries for help were often completely ignored or muted.

Although he was arrested more than a half-dozen times, Brown was never convicted of a serious crime as many of his accusers refused to testify or he was cleared in court. Those transgressions, however, tarnished his image and made it tough for even the most loyal Browns fans to support him.

As a football player, he was nearly flawless.

An All-American at Syracuse, where he also starred in lacrosse, the 6-foot-2, 230-pound Brown, born in Georgia and raised on Long Island, was nothing like the NFL had ever seen when he burst on the scene in 1957.

Flattening tacklers with a deadly stiff arm, making them miss with a stutter step or simply outrunning them, he led the league in rushing as a rookie. He didn't stop there.

Over the next eight seasons, Brown racked up 12,312 yards rushing, scored 126 touchdowns and averaged 5.2 yards per carry. Despite playing in just 118 games — he never missed one — he still ranks among

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career leaders in average (third), rushing TDs (sixth) and rushing yards (11th).

But perhaps more significantly, Brown, who ran for a career-high 1,863 yards in 1963, became a sports symbol of Black excellence.

"Jim Brown really represented achievement for the Black community and he was so good that it didn't matter what color they were, they had to acknowledge him as the best in his field," NBA superstar Kareem Abdul-Jabbar said. "And that meant a lot to Black Americans in the 60s when anything that any Black person achieved was questioned.

"There were no question marks about Jim Brown."

Those would come later.

After he rushed for 1,544 yards, scored 17 TDs and won his third league MVP in 1965, Brown retired, informing the Browns while on the set of "The Dirty Dozen" in England. While his decision stunned the team and shocked sports world, it was vintage Brown.

He always did things his way.

During an era when athletes, especially Black athletes, were reluctant to speak their minds for fear of backlash or worse, Brown stepped forward.

While he was still playing, Brown founded the Negro Industrial and Economic Union, an organization focused on creating jobs and supporting Black entrepreneurs.

In 1967, Brown invited some of the nation's top Black athletes, including Boston Celtics star Bill Russell and Lew Alcindor (later to be known as Abdul-Jabbar), to the Economic Union office in Cleveland to support Muhammad Ali, who had been stripped of his title for refusing to be drafted in protest of the Vietnam War.

It was that sense of power, fearlessness that drove Brown and empowered generations that followed.

"I hope every Black athlete takes the time to educate themselves about this incredible man and what he did to change all of our lives," LeBron James posted shortly after Brown's death. "We all stand on your shoulders Jim Brown. If you grew up in Northeast Ohio and were Black, Jim Brown was a God."

James has emulated Brown, perhaps more than any other star athlete in the past 60 years. Growing up in Northeast Ohio, he learned about Jim Brown the football player before recognizing there was so much more to him.

"I really just thought of him as the greatest Cleveland Brown to ever play," James wrote on his Instagram page. "Then I started my own journey as a professional athlete and realized what he did socially was his true greatness. When I choose to speak out, I always think about Jim Brown. I can only speak because Jim broke down those walls for me."

As he readied for the opening tip of Game 3 in the 2015 NBA Finals in Cleveland, James noticed Brown sitting in a courtside seat. He turned toward the football icon, placed his hands together and bowed in respect, only to have Brown nod in return.

One year later, the two legends stood side by side on a stage after the Cavaliers ended the city's 52-year championship drought. Brown handed James the Larry O'Brien Trophy in a symbolic passing of the torch. He had already given him everything else.

AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/hub/nfl> and https://twitter.com/AP_NFL

Nevada Democrats scrap fentanyl bill, amend companion bill to adjust drug penalty proposal

By GABE STERN Associated Press/Report for America

CARSON CITY, Nev. (AP) — A bill that would enhance fentanyl penalties in Nevada did not pass after a hearing in an Assembly committee, while a companion bill was significantly amended in a last-minute shift for Nevada Democratic leadership's plans to send fentanyl legislation to the governor's desk.

The amended legislation starts low-level trafficking charges at 28 grams of possession for fentanyl, which was formerly proposed at 4 grams. The alteration came on Friday evening in the Assembly Judiciary Com-

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have had a relationship to resources since time immemorial. We operate at a place where resources are not stable. They are also often fragile. They're often exploited. Our relationship to them is exploitative."

Lokko tapped global stars like David Adjaye and Theaster Gates among 89 participants in the main show — more than half of them from Africa or the African diaspora. To reduce the Biennale's carbon footprint, Lokko encouraged the participating architects, artists and designers to be as "paper-thin" as possible with their exhibits, resulting in more drawings, film and projections as well as the reuse of materials from last year's contemporary art Biennale.

"This exhibition is a way of showing that this work, this imagination, this creativity, has been around for a very, very long time," Lokko said. "It's just that it hasn't found quite the right space, in the same way."

It is a fair question why an African-centric exhibition has been so long in coming to such a high-profile, international platform like Venice.

Okwui Enwezor, the late Nigerian art critic and museum director, was the first African to head the Venice Biennale contemporary art fair, which alternates years with the architectural show, in 2015. Lokko was the first Biennale curator selected by President Roberto Cicutto, who was appointed in 2020 during the global push for inclusion ignited by the killing of George Floyd in the United States.

"This is more for us than for them," Cicutto said, "to see the production, hear the voices we have heard too little, or heard in the way we wanted to."

Impediments in the West to inclusive events with a focus on the global south were evident in the refusal by the Italian embassy in Ghana to approve visas for three of Lokko's collaborators, which Lokko decried this week as "an old and familiar tale."

A refocusing of the North-South relationship is suggested in the main pavilion's facade: a corrugated metal roof cut into deconstructed images of the Venetian winged lion. The material is ubiquitous in Africa and other developing regions, and here offers free shade. The lion, native to Africa and for centuries a symbol of Venice, serves as a reminder of how deeply cultural appropriation runs.

"I don't see any lions around here," Lokko said wryly.

Inside, Adjaye's studio exhibits architectural models created "outside the dominant canon," like the Thabo Mbeki Presidential Library in South Africa that takes inspiration from pre-colonial buildings. Ghanaian artist Ibrahim Mahama explores the colonial exploitation in the installation, "Parliament of Ghosts."

And Olalekan Jeyifous, a Brooklyn-based Nigerian national, creates a sprawling retro-futuristic narrative around the fictional formation of a united African Conservation Effort, something he imagines would have been constructed a decade after African decolonization in an alternative 1972.

His is no utopia. This new global Africa he imagines is flattened, at the expense of local traditions.

"It's never utopia/dystopia. Such binary Western terms, that I'm really interested in operating outside of," he said. "It's not just: We've solved all the problems now. Everything's fantastic. It's never that simple."

More than in previous editions, the 64 national participants responded to Lokko's themes with pavilions that found a natural echo with the main show and its focus on climate change issues and an expanded, more-inclusive dialogue.

Denmark offered practical solutions for coastal areas to work with nature to create solutions to rising seas, proposing Copenhagen islands that invite the sea in to form canals, not unlike Venice's. The strategy contrasts with Venice's own underwater barriers, which, underscoring the urgency of the issue, had to be raised during the Biennale preview week outside the usual flood season and for the first time ever in May.

Decolonization was a natural theme at the Brazilian pavilion, where curators Gabriela de Matos and Paulo Tavares show the architectural heritage of indigenous and African Brazilians, and challenge the "hegemonic" narrative that the capital, Brasilia, was built in the "middle of nowhere."

"Decolonization is really a practice," Tavares said. "It's an open word, like freedom, like democracy."

The U.S. Pavilion looked at ubiquitous plastic, invented and propagated in the United States, and how to cope with its durability, under the title "Everlasting Plastic." In one of the five exhibits, Norman Teague, a Chicago-based African American artist, designer and furniture-maker, used recycled plastics from such everyday items as Tide laundry detergent bottles to create one-off baskets, referencing weaves from

Senegal and Ghana.

Teague said he was inspired by Lokko's themes to consider "how I could really think about the lineage between the continent and Chicago."

Ukraine returns to the Biennale with two installations that, in the gentlest possible way, serve as a reminder that war continues to rage in Europe. The pavilion in the Arsenale has been decked out in black-out materials to represent ad-hoc, if futile protective measures ordinary Ukrainians are taking against the threat of Russian bombardment.

In the center of the Giardino, curators Iryna Miroshnykova, Oleksii Petrov and Borys Filonenko have recreated earthen mounds that served as barriers against 10th century invaders. Though long abandoned, overtaken by modern farming and sprawl, they proved effective against Russian tanks last spring.

Despite their serious message, the curators said they hope visitors will come to lounge, and that children will be left to roll down the grassy hills.

"These spaces, the fortifications, are a place to be quiet, to chill. But it is also kind of a reminder that somewhere, someone is fearing for their safety," Filonenko said.

Debt limit talks start, stop as Republicans, White House face 'serious differences'

By LISA MASCARO, FARNOUSH AMIRI and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Debt limit talks between the White House and House Republicans stopped, started and stopped again Friday at the U.S. Capitol, a dizzying series of events in high-stakes negotiations to avoid a potentially catastrophic federal default.

President Joe Biden's administration is reaching for a deal with Republicans led by House Speaker Kevin McCarthy as the nation faces a deadline as soon as June 1 to raise the country's borrowing limit, now at \$31 trillion, to keep paying the nation's bills. Republicans are demanding steep spending cuts the Democrats oppose.

Negotiations came to an abrupt standstill earlier in the day when McCarthy said it's time to "pause" talks. But the negotiating teams convened again in the evening only to quickly call it quits for the night.

Biden, attending the Group of Seven summit in Japan, continued to express optimism that an agreement will be reached, saying that negotiating happens "in stages."

"I still believe we'll be able to avoid a default and get something done," he said.

His press secretary, Karine Jean-Pierre, earlier had acknowledged the difficulty of the talks.

"There's no question we have serious differences," she said, without outlining any of them.

Top Republican negotiators for McCarthy said after the evening session that they were uncertain on next steps, though it's likely discussions will resume over the weekend. The White House publicly expressed optimism that a resolution could be reached if parties negotiated in "good faith."

"We reengaged, had a very, very candid discussion, talking about where we are, talking about where things need to be, what's reasonably acceptable," said Rep. Garret Graves, R-La., a top McCarthy ally leading the talks for his side.

Another Republican negotiator, Rep. Patrick McHenry of North Carolina, was asked if he was confident an agreement over budget issues could be reached with the White House. He replied, "No."

As the White House team left the nighttime session, counselor to the president Steve Ricchetti, who is leading talks for the Democrats, said he was hopeful. "We're going to keep working," he said.

Biden had already planned to cut short the rest of his trip and is expected to return to Washington Sunday night.

Earlier in the day, McCarthy said resolution to the standoff is "easy," if only Biden's team would agree to some spending cuts Republicans are demanding. The biggest impasse was over the fiscal 2024 top-line budget amount, according to a person briefed on the talks and granted anonymity to discuss them. Democrats staunchly oppose the steep reductions Republicans have put on the table as potentially harmful to Americans, and are insisting that Republicans agree to tax hikes on the wealthy, in addition to spend-

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ing cuts, to close the deficit.

"We've got to get movement by the White House and we don't have any movement yet," McCarthy, R-Calif., told reporters at the Capitol. "So, yeah, we've got to pause."

White House communications director Ben LaBolt said Saturday that "Any serious budget negotiation must include discussion both of spending and of revenues, but Republicans have refused to discuss revenue."

He added: "President Biden will not accept a wishlist of extreme MAGA priorities that would punish the middle class and neediest Americans and set our economic progress back."

Jean-Pierre insisted Biden was not negotiating on raising the borrowing limit, despite the clear linkage in talks between securing a budget deal and raising the debt ceiling.

"It is not negotiable — we should not be negotiating on the debt," she said.

Wall Street turned lower as negotiations came to a sudden halt. Experts have warned that even the threat of a debt default would could spark a recession.

Republicans argue the nation's deficit spending needs to get under control, aiming to roll back spending to fiscal 2022 levels and restrict future growth. But Biden's team is countering that the caps Republicans proposed in their House-passed bill would amount to 30% reductions in some programs if Defense and veterans are spared, according to a memo from the Office of Management and Budget.

Any deal would need the support of both Republicans and Democrats to find approval in a divided Congress and be passed into law. Negotiators are eyeing a more narrow budget cap deal of a few years, rather than the decade-long caps Republicans initially wanted, and clawing back some \$30 billion of unspent COVID-19 funds.

Still up for debate are policy changes, including a framework for permitting reforms to speed the development of energy projects, as well as the Republican push to impose work requirements on government aid recipients that Biden has been open to but the House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries has said was a "nonstarter."

"Look, we can't be spending more money next year," McCarthy said at the Capitol. "We have to spend less than we spent the year before. It's pretty easy."

McCarthy faces pressures from his hard-right flank to cut the strongest deal possible for Republicans, and he risks a threat to his leadership as speaker if he fails to deliver. Many House Republicans are unlikely to accept any deal with the White House.

The internal political dynamics confronting the embattled McCarthy leave the Democrats skeptical about giving away too much to the Republicans and driving off the support they will need to pass any compromise through Congress.

Biden is facing increased pushback from Democrats, particularly progressives, who argue the reductions will fall too heavily on domestic programs that Americans rely on.

Some Democrats want Biden to invoke his authority under the 14th amendment to raise the debt ceiling on his own, an idea that raises legal questions and that the president has so far said he is not inclined to consider.

Pressure on McCarthy comes from the conservative House Freedom Caucus, which said late Thursday there should be no further discussions until the Senate takes action on the House Republican plan. That bill approved last month would raise the debt limit into 2024 in exchange for spending caps and policy changes. Biden has said he would veto that Republican measure.

In the Senate, which is controlled by majority Democrats, Republican leader Mitch McConnell has taken a backseat publicly, and is pushing Biden to strike a deal directly with McCarthy.

"They are the only two who can reach an agreement," McConnell said in a tweet. "It is past time for the White House to get serious. Time is of the essence."

Miller reported from Hiroshima, Japan. Associated Press Business Writer Stan Choe and writers Kevin Freking, Seung Min Kim, Stephen Groves and Mary Clare Jalonick in Washington and Josh Boak in Hiroshima, Japan, contributed to this report.

End of an era? GOP walkout shows political chasm where 'The Oregon Way' once meant bipartisan trust

By ANDREW SELSKY Associated Press

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — Oregon has long been seen as a quirky state whose main city was satirized in a TV comedy, where rugged country folk and urban hipsters could get along and political differences could be settled over a pint or two of craft beer.

But with a Republican walkout in the Democrat-controlled Oregon Senate in its third week, Oregonians these days are wistfully recalling "The Oregon Way," when politicians of different stripes forged agreements for the common good. Famous examples include establishing the nation's first recycling program, ensuring public beach access for the entire coastline and limiting urban sprawl in a pioneering land-use program.

A quarter-century ago, former Republican U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith and current Democratic U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden championed legislation together in Congress and even jointly appeared at town halls across the state, said Kerry Tymchuk, who was Gordon's chief of staff back then. That spirit of cooperation was mirrored in the Legislature, he said.

"There were moderate Republicans in the Legislature who represented suburban Portland. There were conservative Democrats who represented some of the rural districts," said Tymchuk, currently the executive director of the Oregon Historical Society. "And now there are no more Democrats in the rural districts. There are no more moderate Republicans."

The crisis in Oregon's statehouse is a microcosm of the deeply partisan politics playing out nationwide, often pitting urban against rural areas, and the growing divide in Oregon shows the Pacific Northwest state is not immune.

The gridlock in the state Capitol in Salem comes as Oregon grapples with homelessness, mental health issues, a fetid open-air drug market in Portland and gun violence in the state's main city, where some businesses are fleeing, including outdoor gear retailer REI.

Elsewhere, a campaign by conservative activists in rural eastern Oregon counties to secede and join neighboring Idaho has gained steam amid growing complaints about the state's progressive politics.

"There is no turning back now," Republican Sen. Daniel Bonham said of the GOP boycott.

"We are in it for the long haul. Oregon is in a leadership crisis," he emailed his constituents, who live mostly east of Portland along the Columbia River and along the flanks of snow-capped Mount Hood.

The drumbeat of political discord has been building in Oregon for some time: Republicans walked out in 2019, 2020 and 2021. A breach of the state Capitol in December 2020 was an eerie predictor of the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection.

In 2001, Democrat House members, then in the minority, walked out over redistricting. There was even a walkout in 1860, a year after statehood, with six senators hiding for two weeks in a barn to prevent a quorum.

The departure this year of an unpopular governor and the success of several bipartisan bills on affordable housing, homelessness and mental health funding early this session buoyed hopes that this year, things might be different — until this month.

The GOP boycott, which began May 3, now threatens to derail hundreds of pending bills, approval of a biennial state budget and the boycotters' own political futures. Neither side seems willing to give an inch over a bill on abortion rights and transgender health care and another measure on guns.

This year's standoff has disqualified nine Republican senators and one Independent from serving as lawmakers in the next term under a ballot measure approved overwhelmingly by boycott-weary voters last November. After 10 or more unexcused absences, a lawmaker can't take office in the Legislature, even if the secretary of state's elections division allows them on the ballot and they win.

A disqualified lawmaker running for reelection could disrupt Oregon's election system, already shaken by the resignation of Secretary of State Shemia Fagan this month for secretly moonlighting as a highly paid

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consultant to a marijuana business. Striking Republican lawmakers have pointed to Fagan's actions as a sign of corruption among Democratic politicians.

Senate President Rob Wagner, new to the job after his predecessor, Peter Courtney — the longest-serving Senate president in Oregon history — retired last year, accused GOP lawmakers of undermining democracy.

"This walkout must end," Wagner said from the rostrum Thursday as he gaveled closed another session because of a lack of quorum. "The people of Oregon desire it. Democracy demands it."

In Oregon, two-thirds of the 30 members of the Senate must be present for a quorum for floor sessions. In recent days, 18 senators showed up but most Republicans and the lone Independent didn't.

Democratic and Republican leaders in the statehouse have met to end the boycott, but talks have repeatedly failed amid social media sparring, grandstanding to supporters and emailed accusations.

Republicans accuse Democrats of ignoring a long-forgotten 1979 law that says summaries of bills need to be written at an eighth-grade level — a law resurrected this month by the GOP. The boycotters also say they won't return unless "extreme" bills, like the ones on abortion, gender-affirming care and gun safety, are scrapped.

Wagner has said House Bill 2002 on abortion and gender-affirming care is nonnegotiable. Republicans object, in particular, to a provision that would allow doctors to provide an abortion to anyone regardless of age and bar them in certain cases from disclosing that to parents.

The last day of Oregon's legislative session is June 25. Democratic Gov. Tina Kotek has signed a bill to keep funds flowing to state agencies until September if no budget has become law by July 1 and says she doesn't think the state "is in crisis mode yet."

She could call a special legislative session in the summer to get a budget approved and hasn't ruled out ordering the Oregon State Police to haul the protesters to the Senate. Such an order was issued in 2019 but not carried out.

Despite all the rancor, Tymchuk doesn't believe The Oregon Way is dead.

"I still remain hopeful and optimistic that Oregon will find its way back," he said.

North Carolina GOP gubernatorial field expects former congressman Mark Walker to join

KERNERSVILLE, N.C. (AP) — Former U.S. Rep. Mark Walker is expected to formally join next year's race for North Carolina governor this weekend, entering a Republican primary already filled with the standing lieutenant governor and state treasurer.

Walker, a former pastor, scheduled a Saturday morning announcement at a Christian K-12 school in Kernersville to reveal his plans for the governor's race. A spokesperson for a political consulting firm advising Walker said last month that the Guilford County Republican was preparing to enter the race.

Walker, who served six years in Congress through 2020, finished a distant third in the 2022 Republican U.S. Senate primary to eventual general election winner Ted Budd.

Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson and State Treasurer Dale Folwell announced their gubernatorial bids earlier in the spring. On the Democratic side, Attorney General Josh Stein announced his gubernatorial bid in January. Primary elections are scheduled for March.

Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper is barred by the state constitution from seeking a third consecutive term in the nation's ninth-largest state.

While Republicans hold veto-proof majorities in the Legislature and hold the most seats on the state Supreme Court, they have only held the governor's job four years since 1993. The only election victory during that period happened in 2012 with Pat McCrory.

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mittee, hours before the deadline for most bills to pass out of their second committee.

For months, harm reduction experts and some Democrats have warned the legislation starting at 4 grams would repeat “war on drug” policies that criminalized low-level users. Those concerns animated bill hearings and back-door discussion, which were pushed by Democratic leadership but questioned by many rank-and-file Assembly members.

Fentanyl trafficking charges in Nevada currently start at 100 grams of possession, a result of a sweeping 2019 criminal justice reform law that Republican Gov. Joe Lombardo promised to walk back among his campaign pledges.

Lombardo wants to make fentanyl possession in any amount a category B felony, which is on par with trafficking penalties. Democratic leadership members, including Senate Majority Leader Nicole Cannizzaro, have indicated they have no plans to hear his landmark public safety bills. Cannizzaro sponsored the Democratic bill that did not pass.

Democratic Attorney General Aaron Ford presented the amended fentanyl bill and answered lawmakers’ questions in two hearings. Ford’s office described the last-minute adjustments as a “compromise between the many groups with an interest in this issue” in a tweet following the hearings.

The bill promoted by Ford includes a provision giving legal protection to people seeking medical assistance for someone experiencing an overdose. The proposal also would create medication-assisted treatment programs in jails and prisons for people with substance-use disorders, if funding is available.

Fentanyl is often mixed into supplies of other drugs, including cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine. Some users seek it out. Others don’t know they’re taking it.

Ingesting 2 milligrams of fentanyl can be fatal, while 1 gram — about the weight of a paper clip — could contain 500 lethal doses.

Imposing longer prison sentences for possessing smaller amounts of drugs represents a shift in states that in recent years have rolled back drug possession penalties. State legislatures including Oregon, West Virginia, South Carolina and Alabama have debated or passed harsher penalties for lower amounts of fentanyl.

The bill also directs a committee to study the cost of upgrading the state’s crime labs to test the amount of fentanyl in a drug mixture.

Harm reduction advocates and some lawmakers have voiced concerns about the state’s labs, which test only for the presence of fentanyl, not the exact proportion in a drug mixture.

In hearings, they said a few milligrams of fentanyl mixed into larger quantities of other drugs could cause defendants to be subject to more strict fentanyl trafficking penalties under the state’s testing protocols, regardless of whether they were aware the drugs were laced with fentanyl.

Stern is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms. Follow Stern on Twitter: @gabestern326.

Venice Architectural Biennale gives overdue voice to long-silenced Africa

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

VENICE, Italy (AP) — Scottish-Ghanaian architect Lesley Lokko is giving a platform to voices that have long been silenced at this year’s Venice Architecture Biennale, which opens Saturday, the first ever curated by an African, featuring a preponderance of work by Africans and the African diaspora.

The 18th architectural Biennale, titled “The Laboratory of the Future,” explores decolonization and decarbonization, topics about which Africans have much to say, Lokko said, citing the long exploitation of the continent for both human and environmental resources.

“The Black body was Europe’s first unit of energy,” Lokko told The Associated Press this week. “We

Jimmy Butler scores 27, Miami beats Boston 111-105 to take 2-0 lead in East finals

By JIMMY GOLEN AP Sports Writer

BOSTON (AP) — Jimmy Butler went forehead-to-forehead with the Boston Celtics, and the Heat are heading back to Miami with an opportunity to advance to the NBA Finals.

Butler scored 27 points, hitting back-to-back buckets to tie the game and give Miami the lead, and the eighth-seeded Heat left Boston with a 111-105 victory Friday night and a 2-0 lead in the Eastern Conference finals.

Butler also provided eight rebounds, six assists and an emotional spark after Boston's Grant Williams started jawing with him: Butler stared down Williams, with both players drawing technical fouls for the double head-butt.

Then "Jimmy Buckets" scored and scored some more — nine points in all during a 23-9 run that turned a nine-point deficit into a 105-100 lead.

"I knew that was going to be good for us," said Caleb Martin, who came off the bench to score 25 points. "We'll take mad Jimmy at any time. You could kind of see it in his eyes he was ready to go after that."

Bam Adebayo had 22 points, 17 rebounds and nine assists for Miami, which returns home with a chance to sweep and become just the second No. 8 seed to reach the NBA Finals.

Game 3 is Sunday night.

"He's going to have to make every single tough shot the rest of the series," Williams said. "And I'm not going to turn and look otherwise because I respect him as an (expletive) player."

Jayson Tatum had 34 points, 13 rebounds and eight assists for Boston. But the Celtics star went 0 for 3 with two turnovers in the fourth quarter, when Boston blew an 89-77 lead en route to a second home loss in three nights.

After finishing 13 games ahead of the Heat in the regular-season -- and then watching top-seeded Milwaukee fall to Miami in the first round -- the Celtics have stumbled on what appeared to be a clear path to their second straight NBA Finals.

"It's tough. It's a challenge. But there's no point being up here sad and (stuff)," Tatum said. "They came in and won two games. They played well; you give them credit. But we're not dead or anything. We've got a great opportunity. I still have the utmost confidence. Everybody has the utmost confidence. We've just got to get ready for Game 3."

Jaylen Brown scored 16 points on 7-for-23 shooting; he went 1 for 5 with a turnover in the final quarter, when Miami outscored Boston 36-22.

"We've got some dogs, and I love it. I love every bit of it," Butler said on the postgame TV broadcast. "Guys never quit. We never give up. We love playing with one another. We've got so much faith and trust in one another."

The Celtics led by 11 in the third quarter and made it a dozen early in the fourth. Williams made a 3-pointer to make it 96-87 and was talking to Butler on the way back down the court. Butler scored at the other end and was fouled by Williams; the two players leaned into each other — drawing double technicals — before Butler hit the ensuing free throw.

"Some healthy competition. I ain't going to lie to you. Healthy competition. And I love it. I'm always here to compete. I like to talk, at times," Butler said. "As long as we get the win, I'm good with it."

Asked if Boston "poked the bear" by getting Butler angry, Brown said, "Next question." But Butler said there was no doubt that the attempt to get him off his game actually fired him up.

"Yes it did," Butler said. "But that's just competition at its finest. He hit a big shot and started talking to me. But I like that. It's just competition. It pushes that will to win. It makes me smile. ... I just don't know if I was the best person to talk to."

After Tatum missed from long distance — one of three missed 3s in the fourth quarter — Butler drove to the basket to make it a four-point Boston lead. Miami trailed 98-96 when Butler was called for an offensive foul, kicking Marcus Smart after landing on a missed 3-pointer.

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Heat coach Erik Spoelstra challenged, but lost.

Butler responded.

He made a 17-footer to tie it 100-all, and then a short fadeaway to give Miami the lead. After Max Strus made one of two free throws, Adebayo scored on a putback dunk to make it 105-100 with less than a minute to play.

"I love that gnarly version of Jimmy," Spoelstra said. "But you get that regardless. I think now people are just paying more attention. ... Jimmy is just a real competitor."

Boston used a 21-2 run to turn an eight-point, first-quarter deficit into an 11-point lead.

TIP-INS

Brown was 1 for 7 in the first quarter, when Tatum scored 12. Derrick White, who made a single 3-pointer, was the only player other than Tatum who scored more than 2 points in the first. ... Adebayo and Butler each grabbed five rebounds in the first quarter. ... Lowry and Grant Williams did a little shoving after Williams fouled Adebayo with nine minutes left in the second quarter, with no repercussions.

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

Uvalde families dig in for new test of gun industry protections

By PAUL J. WEBER and JAKE BLEIBERG Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — After Mayah Zamora was shot and wounded at Robb Elementary School, her family did what many mass shooting survivors do: They sued.

They sued the store off Main Street in Uvalde, Texas, that sold the teenage gunman his AR-style rifle. They sued the gun maker. And they sued police who waited 77 minutes outside Mayah's fourth-grade classroom before stopping the shooting that killed 19 children and two teachers.

"Mainly what we are looking for is some sort of justice," said Christina Zamora, Mayah's mother.

As the grim frequency of gun violence continues, both the U.S. government and gun manufacturers have reached large settlements in recent years following some of the nation's worst mass shootings. In April, the Justice Department announced a \$144 million settlement with relatives and families of a 2017 Texas church attack, which was carried out by a former U.S. airman with a criminal history.

The lawsuits, relatives and victims of mass shootings say, are an effort to get accountability and prevent more attacks — by forcing reforms, hurting the gun industry's bottom line and strengthening background checks after lapses failed to stop gunmen from buying weapons.

But despite two high-profile settlements in the last year involving gun manufacturers, and Democrat-led states rolling back some industry protections, not only do high hurdles remain for lawsuits to succeed, but in some places the hurdles are growing taller.

On May 11, Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee signed a new law that further shields gun manufacturers from lawsuits, weeks after a shooter at a Nashville school killed six people.

It comes as attorneys say the narrow path for victims to bring lawsuits has begun to widen, including for families in Uvalde, who on Wednesday will mark the one year since the most deadly school shooting in Texas history.

"I think there are more opportunities for accountability than maybe there were five to 10 years ago," said Eric Tirschwell, executive director for Everytown for Gun Safety, which for years has brought lawsuits against the gun industry and is also involved in the Uvalde case.

The track record for lawsuits following mass shootings is mixed. The gun industry remains largely protected from liability under a federal law, known as the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act, though it does not completely exempt or immunize gun manufacturers from lawsuits.

Over the last decade, courts have tossed numerous lawsuits, many of which did not target the gun industry but instead brought negligence claims against the government or the places where the attacks took place. In 2020, the casino company MGM Resorts International and its insurers agreed to an \$800 million settlement over a shooting on the Las Vegas Strip that killed 58 people and injured hundreds more.

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Last year, the maker of the rifle used in the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary shooting settled with families for \$73 million over a lawsuit that accused Remington of targeting younger, at-risk males in marketing. In Tennessee, the GOP sponsor of the state's new law waved to what happened in Connecticut in defending the need to further shield the industry: "Few companies can survive a \$73 million settlement," state Rep. Monty Fritts said in February.

In Uvalde, victims have also accused Daniel Defense, the maker of the weapon used in the attack, of dangerous marketing. The company has denied that in court, and gun industry groups have broadly rejected the argument since the Sandy Hook settlement.

"The commercial speech is still protected speech," said Mark Oliva, managing director for public affairs at the National Shooting Sports Foundation.

The lawsuits in Uvalde are still in the early stages and not all families sued. For the Zamoras, they decided to join only after Mayah was released from the hospital, which was not until more than two months after the shooting and dozens of surgeries. Next year, her parents say, they hope she can return to school in person.

After the Uvalde shooting, Sandy and Lonnie Phillips drove to the town and shared with families their own experiences of suing the gun industry: a decision that ended with them declaring bankruptcy after losing and a court ordering them to pay more than \$200,000 to the defendants' attorneys.

Their daughter, Jessica, was killed in the 2012 movie theater shooting in Aurora, Colorado. Last month, the couple joined Colorado Gov. Jared Polis as the Democrat signed laws aimed at making it easier to sue the gun industry, one of which prevents plaintiffs from having to pay if their lawsuits are dismissed.

"They're not aware of what's coming down the pike," Lonnie Phillips said of victims who bring lawsuits. "They only know that they lost their child and somebody has to pay."

Bleiberg reported from Dallas. Associated Press writer Jonathan Mattise in Nashville, Tennessee, contributed to this report.

2024 Republican hopefuls rush to defend Marine who put NYC subway rider in fatal chokehold

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis urged the nation to show Daniel Penny that "America's got his back." Former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley called for New York's governor to pardon Penny, and biotech entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy donated \$10,000 to his legal defense fund.

Republican presidential hopefuls have lined up to support Penny, a 24-year-old U.S. Marine veteran who was caught on video pinning an agitated fellow subway passenger in New York City to the floor in a chokehold. The passenger, 30-year-old Jordan Neely, later died from compression of the neck, according to the medical examiner.

Penny has been charged with manslaughter. His attorneys say he acted in self-defense.

He's already become a hero to many Republicans, who have trumpeted Penny as a Good Samaritan moving to protect others in a Democrat-led city that has seen crime rates rise. The support has been unwavering, despite the fact that Neely, who was Black, never got physical with anyone on the train before he was placed in the chokehold for several minutes by Penny, who is white.

The rush to back Penny recalls how then-President Donald Trump and other top Republicans fiercely supported Kyle Rittenhouse during the 2020 presidential election. Rittenhouse, a white teenager who killed two men and wounded a third during a tumultuous night of protests in Wisconsin over a Black man's death, was acquitted.

More recently, Texas Republican Gov. Greg Abbott vowed to pardon Daniel Perry, a white Army sergeant who was sentenced to 25 years in prison for fatally shooting an armed man during a 2020 Black Lives Matter protest in the state's capital of Austin.

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Top Republicans have tried to make rising crime rates a political liability for Democrats. The Republican-controlled House Judiciary Committee traveled to New York City last month — before Neely was killed — for a hearing examining “victims of violent crime in Manhattan.”

Democrats and racial justice advocates counter that GOP messaging around restoring “law and order” plays on deep-seated racism.

“They have a playbook of winning elections that is based on really tapping into the worst parts of human nature and really driving it home with division and fear,” said Jumaane Williams, a Democrat who is New York City’s public advocate. “And, if there’s race and class played into it, then it’s like Christmastime for them.”

Neely, known by some commuters as a Michael Jackson impersonator, had a history of mental illness and had frequently been arrested in the past. Bystanders said he had been shouting at passengers, begging for money and acting aggressively, but didn’t touch anyone aboard the train.

Christopher Borick, director of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion, said GOP presidential candidates see Penny’s cause as a way to excite their party’s base.

“There’s very little downside within the Republican electorate, given that it overlays so nicely with the issues that are incredibly salient among Republican voters in terms of law and order and fitting this narrative about the degeneration of urban life,” Borick said. “That’s the message — Trump’s and his bloc of Republicans’ message — that the ‘crazies’ are a threat, and we have to do what we can to protect ‘Americans’ any way we can.”

But the GOP defense of white people after Black people are killed is often very different from incidents in which white people are killed. A key example is Ashli Babbitt, the white former Air Force veteran who was shot to death by a Black police officer while trying to climb through a broken window at the U.S. Capitol during the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection.

Trump called Babbitt an “innocent, wonderful, incredible woman” and labeled the Black officer who shot her a “thug.” Other Republicans have mourned her as a martyr.

Adrienne Shropshire, executive director of Black PAC, said the issue goes beyond the presidential race, noting that some Republican-controlled legislatures passed measures after the wave of protests in 2020 against institutional racism and police brutality, seeking to more severely punish demonstrators.

Shropshire, whose group works to increase African American political engagement and voter turnout, said the issue reinforces the GOP’s long-standing commitment to “protecting whiteness, which is what this is fundamentally about.”

As for Democrats, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York tweeted before charges were filed that Neely’s “murderer” was being “protected” while “many in power demonize the poor.” New York Mayor Eric Adams called Neely’s death a “tragedy that never should have happened” but warned against irresponsible statements before all the facts are known.

Rafael Mangual, head of research for policing and public safety at the Manhattan Institute, a conservative New York think tank, said the case features deep legal ambiguity that many people from both parties are overlooking.

“I’ve been very put off to the degree by which politicians on the left have decried Daniel Penny a murderer and politicians on the right have come out and said, ‘This is what we need to do,’ Mangual said. “I don’t want to live in a world in which maintaining public order falls to everyday straphangers.”

There was no such hesitation from Georgia Republican Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, who called Penny a “hero,” or Florida Republican Rep. Matt Gaetz, who dubbed Penny a “Subway Superman” and once offered an internship to Rittenhouse.

Trump, now running for president for a third time, said this week that he hadn’t seen the video but told The Messenger that he thought Penny “was in great danger and the other people in the car were in great danger.”

Helping fuel Republican anger is the fact that Penny’s case is being handled by Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, who is leading the prosecution of Trump on charges he paid hush money to cover up an affair during his 2016 presidential campaign.

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"We must defeat the Soros-Funded DAs, stop the Left's pro-criminal agenda, and take back the streets for law abiding citizens," tweeted DeSantis, who is preparing to announce his 2024 presidential bid, repeating false claims that billionaire investor and philanthropist George Soros orchestrated Trump's indictment.

"We stand with Good Samaritans like Daniel Penny," DeSantis wrote, including a link to a fundraising page for Penny. "Let's show this Marine... America's got his back."

Former ambassador Haley told Fox News Channel that New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, a Democrat, should pardon Penny. Ramaswamy donated to the defense fund for Penny via GiveSendGo, a site that also raised funds to support the insurrectionists who attacked the Capitol on the day Babbitt was killed. It has collected around \$2 million in donations for Penny.

During Neely's funeral Friday, the Rev. Al Sharpton offered an indirect response to Penny's supporters, saying that "a Good Samaritan helps those in trouble, they don't choke them out."

Williams, an ombudsman who can investigate citizen complaints about agencies and services, said prominent Republicans have been capitalizing politically on violence with racial overtones since 1988 political ads featuring Willie Horton, a Black murderer who raped a white woman while on a weekend furlough from prison. He also noted that many of the people now contributing to Penny's defense fund also are likely to have supported cutting social programs that might have benefited people like Neely.

"These folks are not saying, 'Let's let it play out, see what happens,'" Williams said. "They're immediately making someone a hero who killed someone on a train who was screaming and yelling about being hungry."

Associated Press writer Luke Sheridan contributed to this report from New York.

Low-income tenants lack options as old mobile home parks are razed

By ANITA SNOW Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Alondra Ruiz Vazquez and her husband were comfortable in Periwinkle Mobile Home Park for a decade, feeling lucky to own their mobile home and pay about \$450 a month for their lot in a city with spiraling rents.

But now they and dozens of other families have until May 28 to leave the Phoenix park, which nearby Grand Canyon University purchased seven years ago to build student housing. Two other mobile home communities are also being cleared this spring for new developments in a city where no new parks have been built in more than 30 years.

"I'm here, well, because I have nowhere to go," said Isabel Ramos, who lives at Periwinkle with her 11-year-old daughter. "I don't know what's going to happen."

The razing of older mobile home parks across the United States worries advocates who say bulldozing them permanently eliminates some of the already limited housing for the poorest of the poor. Residents may have to double up with relatives or live in their cars amid spiking evictions and homelessness, they warn.

"Mobile homes are a much bigger part of our affordable housing stock than people know," said Mark Stapp, who directs Arizona State University's master's degree program in real estate development. "Once it's gone, a lot of people will have no place to go."

A recent survey by the National Low Income Housing Coalition showed a U.S.-wide shortage of 7.3 million affordable rental homes for extremely low-income renters, defined in Arizona as a three-member household making \$28,850 or less.

Industry groups estimate that more than 20 million people live in some 43,000 mobile home parks across the United States.

"We are in the deepest affordable housing crisis we've ever experienced," said Joanna Carr, acting head of the Arizona Housing Coalition. "Housing for many people is getting completely out of reach. It's very dire."

Ken Anderson, president of the Manufactured Housing Industry of Arizona, said trying to bring an old park up to modern standards can be cost-prohibitive for owners, requiring replacement of electrical and sewage infrastructure for newer homes.

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At least six such communities have been torn down in Arizona in the last 18 months, he said, adding that Grand Canyon University "bent over backwards" to help residents more than other park owners.

"A lot of these parks are 70 years old," said Anderson, noting an uptick in demolitions of older communities for redevelopment. "It's going to be a big problem down the line."

Efforts under way to revitalize old mobile homes have limits. Despite their name, most aren't truly mobile, and moving them can be very costly. The oldest homes are often too decrepit to move at all.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development recently announced \$225 million in grants to governments, tribes and nonprofits to preserve mobile homes, but the money can only be used to replace, not repair dwellings built before 1976, which are common at older parks.

Vermont earlier this year announced a mobile home improvement program to be funded by \$4 million in federal money. It aims to help park owners prepare vacant or abandoned lots for new mobile homes, and help mobile homeowners install new foundations and make their dwellings more habitable.

In Riverdale, Utah, the last of about 50 families at Lesley's Mobile Home Park must leave by the end of May for construction of new apartments and townhouses.

"The state laws don't protect us," said Jason Williams, who sold his mobile home for half what he asked for and will now live in a motorhome.

Some old parks weren't originally envisioned as permanent housing.

Florida City Campsite and RV Camp was built decades ago for vacationers headed to the Florida Keys or the Everglades.

But the dilapidated park eventually became home to retirees on fixed incomes and young families on government assistance. Florida City, the southernmost municipality in Miami-Dade County, sold it two years ago for a new townhouse project.

Cities often don't like older parks because unlike other housing they don't generate property taxes for municipal services. Rundown parks can also be eyesores, depressing the worth of nearby properties even as the value of the land the mobile homes sit on has increased exponentially.

In Phoenix, Grand Canyon University said in a statement it "waited as long as it could" to build new student housing after buying Periwinkle in 2016. "Now, with the need to expand, the University has raised funds to provide multiple layers of assistance to tenants at Periwinkle."

The university said it initially gave residents six months to leave, then extended the deadline to 13 months. It offered free rent for the first five months of this year, early departure compensation, relocation assistance and some household goods.

Many park residents are Spanish-speaking immigrants earning minimum wage as landscapers or restaurant workers. There are also retirees living on Social Security.

"We haven't found anything under \$1,800. That's way above what we can afford," Ruiz Vazquez said of apartment rents. She said the couple's mobile home is too old to move and must be abandoned.

"It's really taken a toll on our health, mental state of mind."

Maricopa County, home to Phoenix, has a housing shortfall of more than 74,000 units. Zillow.com currently lists the median monthly rental price for all bedrooms and property types in Phoenix at \$2,095.

More than 20 families have moved out of Periwinkle in recent months, leaving behind weed-strewn lots. The rusting hulks of several mobile dwellings with rotting wooden stairs were left behind.

Residents wanted an additional 18-month eviction moratorium or a zoning change to stave off their departure indefinitely.

The Phoenix City Council this spring decided to let the eviction proceed, but set aside \$2.5 million in federal funds for the housing nonprofit Trellis to assist Periwinkle and other mobile home park residents facing eviction.

Trellis CEO Mark Traylor, who once headed the Arizona Department of Housing, said the nonprofit is working to help Periwinkle families find apartments and arrange to move mobile homes that can be moved.

Still, Phoenix activist Salvador Reza said most families face uncertain futures.

"Some of them might move in with another family, with an uncle or aunt," said Reza. "Some might go

out into the streets and become part of the homeless.”

A new law in Arizona recently increased state funds for owners forced to move their mobile homes because of redevelopment to \$12,500 for a single-section dwelling and \$20,000 for a multi-section.

Those who must abandon their home because of precarious condition can now get \$5,000 for a single-section home and up to \$8,000 for a multi-section.

Periwinkle resident Graciela Beltran said it's not enough.

“They want my house?” she asked, her voice cracking. “Give me a house that is equal to mine. I am not asking for anything more.”

Mother of 8-year-old girl who died in Border Patrol custody says pleas for hospital care were denied

By VALERIE GONZALEZ Associated Press

McALLEN, Texas (AP) — The mother of an 8-year-old girl who died in Border Patrol custody said Friday that agents repeatedly ignored pleas to hospitalize her medically fragile daughter as she felt pain in her bones, struggled to breathe and was unable to walk.

Agents said her daughter's diagnosis of influenza did not require hospital care, Mabel Alvarez Benedicks said in an emotional phone interview. They knew the girl had a history of heart problems and sickle cell anemia.

“They killed my daughter, because she was nearly a day and a half without being able to breathe,” the mother said. “She cried and begged for her life and they ignored her. They didn't do anything for her.”

The girl died Wednesday on what her mother said was the family's ninth day in Border Patrol custody. People are to be held no more than 72 hours under agency policy, a rule that is violated during unusually busy times.

The account is almost certain to raise questions about whether the Border Patrol properly handled the situation, the second child fatality in two weeks after a rush of illegal border crossing severely strained holding facilities.

Roderick Kise, a spokesperson for the Border Patrol's parent agency, Customs and Border Protection, said he could not comment beyond an initial statement because the death was the subject of an open investigation. In that statement, CBP said the girl experienced “a medical emergency” at a station in Harlingen, Texas, and died later that day at a hospital.

Alvarez Benedicks, 35, said she, her husband and three children, aged 14, 12 and 8, crossed the border to Brownsville, Texas, on May 9. After a doctor diagnosed the 8-year-old, Anadith Tanay Reyes Alvarez, with influenza, the family was sent to the Harlingen station on May 14. It was unclear why the family was held so long.

Anadith woke up her first day in the Harlingen station with a fever and had a headache, according to her mother, who said the station was dusty and smelled of urine.

When she reported her daughter's bone pain to an agent, she said he responded, “Oh, your daughter is growing up. That's why her bones hurt. Give her water.”

“I just looked at him,” Alvarez Benedicks said. “How would he know what to do if he's not a doctor?”

She said a doctor told her the pain was related to influenza. She asked for an ambulance to take her daughter to the hospital for breathing difficulties but was denied.

“I felt like they didn't believe me,” she said.

Anadith received saline fluids, a shower and fever medication to reduce her temperature, but her breathing problems persisted, her mother said, adding that a sore throat prevented her from eating and she stopped walking.

At one point, a doctor asked the parents to return if Anadith fainted, Alvarez Benedicks said. Their request for an ambulance was denied again when her blood pressure was checked Wednesday.

An ambulance was called later that day after Anadith went limp and unconscious and blood came out of her mouth, her mother said. She insists her daughter had no vital signs in the Border Patrol station

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before leaving for the hospital.

The family is staying at a McAllen, Texas, migrant shelter and seeking money to bring their daughter's remains to New York City, their final destination in the U.S.

Anadith, whose parents are Honduran, was born in Panama with congenital heart disease. She received surgery three years ago that her mother characterized as successful. It inspired Anadith to want to become a doctor.

Her death came a week after a 17-year-old Honduran boy, Ángel Eduardo Maradiaga Espinoza, died in U.S. Health and Human Services Department custody. He was traveling alone.

A rush to the border before pandemic-related asylum limits known as Title 42 expired brought extraordinary pressure. The Border Patrol took an average of 10,100 people a day into custody over four days last week, compared to a daily average of 5,200 in March.

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

Custody capacity is about 17,000, according to a government document last year, and the administration has been adding temporary giant tents like one in San Diego that opened in January with room for about 500 people.

On Sunday, the average time in custody was 77 hours.

Associated Press writer Elliot Spagat in San Diego contributed to this report.

Mexico moving migrants away from borders to relieve pressure

By MARÍA VERZA and EDGAR H. CLEMENTE Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico is flying migrants south away from the U.S. border and busing new arrivals away from its boundary with Guatemala to relieve pressure on its border cities.

In the week since Washington dropped pandemic-era restrictions on seeking asylum at its border, U.S. authorities report a dramatic drop in illegal crossing attempts. In Mexico, officials are generally trying to keep migrants south away from that border, a strategy that could reduce crossing temporarily, but experts say is not sustainable.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security reported Friday that in the week since the policy change, Border Patrol averaged 4,000 encounters a day with people crossing between ports of entry. That was down dramatically from the more than 10,000 daily average immediately before.

Between the migrants who rushed to cross the border in the days before the U.S. policy change and Mexico's efforts to move others to the country's interior, shelters in northern border cities currently find themselves below capacity.

In southern Mexico, however, shelters for migrants are full and the government is busing hundreds of migrants more than 200 miles north to relieve pressure in Tapachula near Guatemala. The government has also said it deployed hundreds of additional National Guard troops to the south last week.

Segismundo Doguín, Mexico's top immigration official in the border state of Tamaulipas, across from Texas, said last week that the government would fly as many migrants away from border cities of Reynosa and Matamoros as necessary.

The transfers were "lateral movements to other parts of the country" where there were not so many migrants, Doguín said. He called them "voluntary humanitarian transfers."

The Associated Press confirmed Mexican flights from Matamoros, Reynosa and Piedras Negras carrying migrants to the interior over the past week. A Mexican federal official, who was not authorized to speak publicly but agreed to discuss the matter if not quoted by name, said approximately 300 migrants were being transferred south each day.

Among them were at least some of the 1,100 migrants from Venezuela, Nicaragua, Haiti and Cuba that the U.S. returned to Mexico in the week since the policy change.

"So the northern part of the migrant route is emptied out a bit, but the southern and middle parts re-

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main extremely full and filling up all the time," said Adam Isacson, director for defense oversight and a close observer of the border at WOLA, a Washington-based human rights organization. "Obviously, that's an equilibrium that can't hold for very long."

Mexico has moved migrants south in the past when there was concern about northern border cities' capacity, but this time there are additional factors.

While the country's shelters for migrants in the south are full, Mexico's National Immigration Institute has closed its smaller migrant detention centers around the country and has undertaken a review of its large ones after 40 migrants died in a fire at a small detention facility in the border city of Ciudad Juarez in March.

The federal official said Mexico's largest immigration detention centers are mostly empty. Two other federal officials, who also spoke on condition of anonymity, said Friday that "Siglo XXI," Mexico's largest detention center, was empty.

Tonatiuh Guillén, former head of Mexico's National Immigration Institute, said Mexico's actions are contradictory — on one hand telling the United States it will contain migrants in the south, but on the other detaining fewer.

One morning this week, several hundred migrants waited on the outskirts of the southern city of Tapachula for government buses that would carry them to Tuxtla Gutierrez some 230 miles north.

Guillén said the document Mexico is issuing now to some migrants in Tuxtla Gutierrez — an expulsion order that gives migrants days or a couple of weeks to leave the country — does not give them other options, making it harder for them to seek international protection.

Edwin Flores of Guatemala had been trying to get to the U.S. on his own, but when he heard about the government buses from Tapachula he decided to give it a try.

"They haven't told us exactly what permit they're going to give us, only that we have to continue the paperwork process there in Tuxtla Gutierrez," Flores said. Other migrants reported arriving there, but not receiving any document.

"We have heard on the news about all the changes to the law they have made, and the massive deportations from the United States," Flores said. But it didn't change his plans, "because the goal is to arrive and see for yourself what is happening."

He said he wanted to get an appointment with U.S. authorities to make his case for asylum. He said he was a private security guard in Guatemala and gangs tried to recruit him as their eyes in the street.

On Wednesday, the United Nations refugee agency in Mexico said it was worried about the pressure on migrant shelters in southern Mexico and Mexico City. "In addition to the people arriving from the south, some shelters have already received Venezuelans deported from the U.S.," the agency said via Twitter.

A Venezuelan, who gave only his first name, Pedro, to avoid repercussions, said this week that he had entered the U.S. illegally last week just before the policy change, but was returned back to Mexico at Piedras Negras.

"They put us on a bus, gave us a snack and took us to the airport," said the 43-year-old, who had previously obtained legal residency in Mexico. He spoke from a migrant shelter known as "The 72" in Tenosique near the Guatemalan border. "They left us in an industrial area of Villahermosa. There they let us go and I came here defeated."

Amid all of the movement, migrants are easy targets. Gangs have kidnapped them from the streets of border cities and entire busloads in north-central Mexico.

This week, a busload of migrants disappeared near the border of San Luis Potosi and Nuevo Leon states. The migrants said a drug cartel abducted them when their bus stopped at a gas station. They had been travelling from the southern state of Chiapas.

Bus company officials first reported the abduction on Tuesday, and told local media they had received demands for \$1,500 apiece to release the migrants.

In the days after their abduction, 49 were found — Hondurans, Haitians, Venezuelans, Salvadorans and Brazilians among them — but authorities weren't entirely sure how many of them had been on the bus

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to begin with.

"In whose hands are the people migrating?" asked Alejandra Conde, who works at "The 72" migrant shelter in Tenosique, one of the largest in southeast Mexico. It's like "a Machiavellian strategy between authorities and organized crime."

Clemente reported from Tapachula, Mexico. Associated Press writer Christopher Sherman in Mexico City contributed to this report.

Sanctions against Russia and what the G7 may do to fortify them

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

HIROSHIMA, Japan (AP) — The Group of Seven advanced economies are expected to announce a new set of sanctions against Russia to try to further hinder its war effort in Ukraine during their summit in Hiroshima, Japan.

In traveling to Japan, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will help to drive home the need to better enforce measures meant to stifle Moscow's war machine.

Russia is now the most-sanctioned country in the world, but there are questions about their effectiveness. EU Council President Charles Michel said the plan was to close loopholes and ensure the sanctions are painful for Russia, not for the countries enforcing them.

Here's a look at what may be next, the sanctions so far, and the impact they have had on Russia's economy and military effort.

WHAT THE G7 MIGHT DO

Michel said the 27-nation EU was focused on "shutting the door on loopholes and continuing to cut Russia off from critical supplies." It is working on a plan to restrict trade in Russian diamonds and trace the trade to prevent Russia from skirting the restrictions. Russia exports about \$4 billion worth of rough diamonds a year, nearly a third of the world's total, and the lion's share are cut and polished in India. The new sanctions follow an online summit in February where G7 leaders pledged to intensify enforcement through their sanctions watchdog Enforcement Coordination Mechanism to improve information sharing and enforcement. It has pledged to impose "severe costs" on other countries that evade or undermine them. "We will starve Russia of G7 technology, industrial equipment and services that support its war machine," Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, said.

CHINA ON THE LIST?

Some Chinese companies that are thought to be supplying components to Russia that can be used for military equipment are on the list of entities that might be sanctioned, an EU official said Saturday. China has so far not joined other countries in announcing any restrictions on trade with Russia, but it also has refrained from providing weapons or other materiel.

WHAT THE G7 AND OTHER WESTERN NATIONS HAVE DONE SO FAR

The list is long and growing longer.

On Friday, the United Kingdom announced new sanctions targeting Russian seizures of Ukrainian grain, advanced military technology and Moscow's remaining revenue sources. It froze assets of 86 more individuals and entities including companies connected to Rosatom that support President Vladimir Putin's war effort. Russian sovereign assets will stay frozen until "Russia agrees to pay for the damage it has caused in Ukraine," the British Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office said in a statement.

The U.S. began by targeting members of Putin's inner circle and their families and banks considered crucial to the Kremlin and Russia's military. The U.S. also moved to limit Russia's power to raise money abroad. Sanctions are imposed on individuals listed on a Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List through the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control. The list has expanded to include people and companies around the globe allegedly involved in supporting Russia's military. It works with the Russian Elites, Proxies, and Oligarchs Task Force, a multi-agency group that cooperates with other countries to investigate and prosecute oligarchs and others allied with Putin.

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On Friday, the Department of State announced new sanctions on more than 200 entities, individuals, vessels and aircraft, targeting Russia's energy, military, technology, and metals and mining sectors. They also focused on entities and people involved in unlawful deportation of Ukrainian children and seizures of Ukrainian grain.

The EU has enforced sanctions largely in line with those imposed by the U.S., Britain and Canada. Since all 27 of its members must agree unanimously, the process can be a bit slower, officials say. The EU has imposed 10 rounds of sanctions on Russia since President Vladimir Putin ordered his forces into Ukraine on Feb. 24. Banks, companies and the energy sector have been hit. Well over 1,000 officials are subject to asset freezes and travel bans.

Japan stepped up its sanctions in February, freezing assets of Russians and Russian companies and suspending visas for some. It froze the assets of some financial institutions and banned exports of items that can be used for military purposes, dual-use goods, some commodities and semiconductors.

Canada has sanctioned dozens of Russians and Russian companies, including leaders of Russian state-owned energy company Gazprom and six energy sector entities.

WHY THEY SAY MORE SANCTIONS ARE NEEDED

G7 officials say they are seeing more and more evasion of sanctions. "High tech exports to third countries, from micro-processors and sensors for Russian cruise missiles to chips in military communications equipment, make their way onwards to Russia and end up in weapons used against Ukraine on the battlefield. We must put a stop to this," von der Leyen said Friday.

THE IMPACT OF SANCTIONS SO FAR

Western sanctions have hit Russian banks, wealthy individuals and technology imports. Initially, the ruble plunged, foreign businesses fled and prices soared. A top Treasury Department official said U.S. sanctions and export controls have degraded Russia's ability to replace more than 9,000 pieces of military equipment lost in the war. But economic life for ordinary Russians hasn't changed much.

Russia's exports to China, India and Turkey have surged since sanctions were imposed following the invasion of Ukraine, while those to Western countries and their allies Japan and South Korea have fallen sharply. The sanctions on Russian fossil fuels — such as the price cap on oil — have worked but their impact has been blunted by surging exports to China and India. Russia has managed to continue importing computer chips and other high tech items from the U.S. that have been routed through other transit points like Hong Kong and Taiwan.

World leaders warn China and North Korea on nukes as Ukraine's Zelenskyy travels to G7 summit

By FOSTER KLUG, ADAM SCHRECK and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

HIROSHIMA, Japan (AP) — Leaders of the world's most powerful democracies warned China and North Korea against building up their nuclear arsenals, pivoting to major northeast Asian crises ahead of the arrival later Saturday of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

The focus on Asia at the Group of Seven summit comes as leaders tighten sanctions meant to punish Moscow and change the course of its 15-month invasion of Ukraine. Japan confirmed that Zelenskyy's decision to attend the G7 in person stemmed from his "strong wish" to participate in talks that will influence his nation's defense against Russia.

U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said that President Joe Biden and Zelenskyy would have direct engagement at the summit, a day after Biden announced his support for training Ukrainian pilots on U.S.-made F-16 fighter jets, a precursor to eventually providing those aircraft to Ukraine's Air Force.

World leaders have faced a high-stakes balancing act in Hiroshima as they look to address a raft of global worries demanding urgent attention, including climate change, AI, poverty and economic instability, nuclear proliferation and, above all, the war in Ukraine.

China, the world's No. 2 economy, sits at the nexus of many of those concerns.

There is increasing anxiety in Asia that Beijing, which has been steadily building up its nuclear bomb

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program, could try to seize Taiwan by force, sparking a wider conflict. China claims the self-governing island as its own and regularly sends ships and warplanes near it.

The G7 leaders issued a statement warning that China's "accelerating build-up of its nuclear arsenal without transparency (or) meaningful dialogue poses a concern to global and regional stability."

North Korea, which has been testing missiles at a torrid pace in an attempt to perfect a nuclear program meant to target the mainland United States, must completely abandon its nuclear bomb ambitions, the leaders said, "including any further nuclear tests or launches that use ballistic missile technology. North Korea cannot and will never have the status of a nuclear-weapon State under" international nuclear treaties, the statement said.

The green light on F-16 training is the latest shift by the Biden administration as it moves to arm Ukraine with more advanced and lethal weaponry, following earlier decisions to send rocket launcher systems and Abrams tanks. The United States has insisted that it is sending weapons to Ukraine to defend itself and has discouraged attacks by Ukraine into Russian territory.

"We've reached a moment where it is time to look down the road again to say what is Ukraine going to need as part of a future force, to be able to deter and defend against Russian aggression as we go forward," Sullivan said.

An EU official, speaking on condition of anonymity to brief reporters on the deliberations, said Zelenskyy will take part in two separate sessions Sunday. The first session will be with G7 members only and will focus on the war in Ukraine. The second session will include the G7 as well as the other nations invited to take part in the summit, and will focus on "peace and stability."

The G7 leaders also used their summit to roll out a new wave of global sanctions on Moscow as well as plans to enhance the effectiveness of existing financial penalties meant to constrain President Vladimir Putin's war effort.

"Our support for Ukraine will not waver," the G7 leaders said in a statement released after closed-door meetings. They vowed "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.

Zelenskyy has consistently called for the supply of Western fighter jets to bolster his country's defenses against Russia's invasion, but has until now faced skepticism from the United States that they would turn the tide in the war.

Now, as Ukraine has improved its air defenses with a host of Western-supplied anti-aircraft systems and prepares to launch a counteroffensive against Russia, officials believe the jets could become useful in the battle and essential to the country's long-term security.

Biden's decisions on when, how many, and who will provide the fourth-generation F-16 fighter jets will be made in the months ahead while the training is underway, Biden told leaders.

The F-16 training is to be conducted in Europe and will likely begin in the coming weeks. That's according to two people who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss Biden's private conversations with allies.

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

The latest sanctions aimed at Russia include tighter restrictions on already-sanctioned people and firms involved in the war effort. More than 125 individuals and organizations across 20 countries have been hit with U.S. sanctions. The financial penalties have been primarily focused on sanctions evaders connected to technology procurement for the Kremlin. The Commerce Department also added 71 firms to its own list.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said the Friday sanctions "will further tighten the vise on Putin's ability to wage his barbaric invasion and will advance our global efforts to cut off Russian attempts to evade sanctions."

In addition, new reporting requirements were issued for people and firms that have any interest in Russian Central Bank assets. The purpose is to "fully map holdings of Russia's sovereign assets that will remain immobilized in G7 jurisdictions until Russia pays for the damage it has caused to Ukraine," the

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U.S. Treasury Department said.

Russia is now the most-sanctioned country in the world, but there are questions about the effectiveness. Maria Snegovaya, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said going into the summit that while G7 countries "deserve credit" for their sanctions, "Russia still maintains capacity to fight this war in the long term."

She added that war's costs are "easily manageable for Russia in the next couple of years at least, and the cumulative effect of sanctions is just not strong enough to radically alter that."

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

World leaders Friday visited a peace park dedicated to the tens of thousands who died in the world's first wartime atomic bomb detonation. Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who represents Hiroshima in parliament, wants nuclear disarmament to be a major focus of discussions.

The peace park contains reminders of Aug. 6, 1945, when a U.S. B-29 dropped an atomic bomb over Hiroshima, a city that has become synonymous with anti-nuclear peace efforts.

Biden, who scrapped plans to travel on to Papua New Guinea and Australia after his stay in Japan so that he can get back to debt limit talks in Washington, arranged to meet Saturday on the G-7 sidelines with leaders of the so-called Quad partnership, made up of Japan, Australia, India and the U.S.

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.

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 G7 leaders are also 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.

A U.S. official said the leaders on Saturday would issue a joint communique outlining new projects in the G7's global infrastructure development initiative, which is meant to offer countries an alternative to China's investment dollars.

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, Elaine Kurtenbach and Mari Yamaguchi in Hiroshima, Hanna Arhirova in Kyiv, Ukraine, and Fatima Hussein in Washington contributed to this report.

Japan says Zelenskyy will visit Hiroshima to join G7 summit session on Ukraine

HIROSHIMA, Japan (AP) — Japan announced Saturday that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will travel to Japan to join Group of Seven leaders in a session on Ukraine.

Zelenskyy is expected to arrive in Hiroshima, the site of the world's first atomic attack in western Japan, later Saturday.

He will join leaders of the G7 wealthy nations at a session on Ukraine on Sunday. He was originally scheduled to join a session online on Friday, but that plan changed after Zelenskyy expressed a "strong wish" to participate in person, the Japanese Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Japan had earlier refused to confirm Zelenskyy's visit and insisted until late Friday night that he would only participate online.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida will hold talks with Zelenskyy during his Hiroshima visit, the ministry statement said.

Search for 4 kids missing after deadly Amazon plane crash leaves Colombia on edge

By EDUARDO HERNÁNDEZ undefined
BOGOTÁ, Colombia (AP) —

Colombians were on edge Friday as authorities searched for four Indigenous children who were on a small plane that crashed in the Amazon jungle this month but have not been found. The three adults aboard died.

The crash happened in the early hours of May 1 when the Cessna single-engine propeller plane with six passengers and a pilot declared an emergency due to an engine failure. The small aircraft fell off radar a short time later and a frantic search for survivors began.

Colombian troops found the wreckage Tuesday along with the bodies of the pilot, a guide and the children's mother. But there was no sign of the youngsters.

The children, members of the Uitoto Indigenous community, were identified as Lesly Jacobombaire Mucutuy, 13; Soleiny Jacobombaire Mucutuy, 9; Tien Noriel Ronoque Mucutuy, 4; and Cristin Neriman Ranoque Mucutuy, 11 months.

On Wednesday, there appeared to be a breakthrough when Colombian President Gustavo Petro took to Twitter to announce that the four children had been found alive. But any elation was deflated hours later when Petro deleted the tweet, acknowledging that the children had in fact not been found.

"I have decided to delete the tweet because the information provided by the ICBF (Colombian Institute of Family Welfare) could not be confirmed," Petro wrote. "I regret what happened. The Military Forces and the Indigenous communities will continue in their tireless search to give the country the news it is waiting for."

Dozens of military personnel, supported by Indigenous people from nearby communities, have been searching the area where the plane crashed.

Colombians have been debating various finds in the search and whether they might be linked to the children — including a baby bottle discovered one day and a pair of scissors found the next day in what seemed to be a makeshift shelter of leaves.

In addition, the company that owned the plane said in a statement that one of its pilots who was in the area had heard from some members of a local Indigenous community that the children were on their way to a village on a riverboat. But they never showed up there.

Another report said the children had boarded a boat on the Apaporis River heading toward the village of Cachiporro. But the children were not on board when the boat arrived.

This version corrects that there were six passengers on board the plane, not seven.

Japan's Toyota discloses improper crash tests at Daihatsu subsidiary

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Toyota has found improper crash tests for a model and suspended shipments, in the latest in a series of embarrassing woes plaguing Japan's top automaker.

The latest problem, disclosed late Friday, affects 56,111 Toyota Raize hybrid vehicles produced by Daihatsu Motor Co., a manufacturer specializing in small models that is wholly owned by Toyota.

It also affects 22,329 vehicles sold as the Daihatsu Rocky, according to the automakers. The vehicles were all sold in Japan.

In the faulty crash tests, results for a pole used to measure impact on the left side were used for the right, when both sides had to be tested, Daihatsu said.

Just a week ago, Toyota Motor Corp. acknowledged there had been a data breach at its online Con-

nected service, run by a group company. The breach spanned a decade, meaning that drivers' information on more than 2 million vehicles had been at risk for leaks. No breaches were reported.

Last month, a separate crash test problem for Daihatsu models sold abroad was disclosed, affecting 88,123 vehicles. A further review found wrongdoing in the Japan market as well, according to the automakers.

The earlier problem affected the Toyota Yaris ATIV sold in Thailand, Mexico and some Gulf countries, Perodua Axia sold in Malaysia and Toyota Agya in Ecuador.

Daihatsu apologized at that time and set up a third-party team to investigate. It did not issue a recall, noting the vehicles were safe to drive, but it expressed deep remorse it had violated inspection standards.

The Toyota models were supplied by Daihatsu under the OEM system, common in the industry, in which products manufactured by another company get sold with another nameplate.

Toyota, which sells about 10 million vehicles every year, boasts a record for pristine quality, centered around a production system that empowers the individual worker.

The latest problems don't involve recalls. But Toyota went through a period of announcing recall after recall over several years more than a decade ago, covering a wide range of defects, including faulty floor mats, sticky gas pedals and glitches in braking software, affecting millions of vehicles.

The recall fiasco in 2009 and 2010 had Toyota paying \$48.8 million in fines in the U.S. for its slow response. Toyota officials have repeatedly promised to be quicker and more transparent.

Management has renewed its "commitment to manufacturing with integrity," the company based in Toyota city, central Japan, said in its latest statement.

"All our group companies, including Toyota, have begun a thorough review to work toward a complete reaffirmation of our governance system. We will work with Daihatsu to tackle this issue," it said.

Yuri Kageyama is on Twitter <https://twitter.com/yurikageyama>

Truck driver arrested in multi-vehicle freeway crash that killed 7 in Oregon

ALBANY, Ore. (AP) — The driver of a semitruck that slammed into a passenger van on Interstate 5 in western Oregon, killing 7 people in one of the state's deadliest crashes in recent years, was arrested Friday on suspicion of manslaughter, DUI and other charges, police said.

Eleven people were in the van when it was struck, authorities said. Six people died at the scene, one more died after being airlifted to a hospital and four were injured, according to Oregon State Police.

State police said the names of the victims would not be made public until their families have been notified. Authorities have not released information about the condition of the four injured passengers.

Lincoln Clayton Smith, 52, of North Highlands, California, was arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence of intoxicants, reckless driving, manslaughter and assault, police said.

Smith was arraigned in the afternoon and was being held without bail in Marion County Jail. It wasn't clear whether his case had been assigned to the state public defender's office or a specific attorney. The office didn't immediately respond to a message asking about that, and a lawyer whose name appears in court documents said she had not formally been assigned the case and could not comment.

At the arraignment, a district attorney said Smith refused a field sobriety test and was unable to focus and answer basic questions, the Salem Statesman Journal reported. The prosecutor also said Smith acknowledged taking "speed" the day before the crash and was in possession of methamphetamine, according to the paper.

The husband of one of the dead passengers said their 1-year-old son had asked for his mother on Friday. "My future is destroyed," he was quoted as saying, through an interpreter, by the Statesman Journal, which published a photo of victims' relatives and friends outside the Marion County Court annex after the arraignment.

Two semitrucks and the van were involved in the Thursday afternoon crash near Albany, in an agricultural area in the Willamette Valley.

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The truck driven by the suspect left the northbound lanes of I-5 and hit the van as it was parked on the roadside, according to police. The van was then pushed into the back of another truck parked in front of it.

Witnesses said the first truck had been weaving on and off the road and hit the van without braking first, according to comments by the DA as reported by the Statesman Journal.

The northbound lanes of I-5 were closed for hours as experts investigated but reopened Thursday night, state transportation officials said.

Bodies were seen covered in plastic in a nearby field after the crash, the Albany Democrat-Herald reported. Police and fire officials put a blue tarp on the wrecked van and placed a barrier near one of the trucks to block the view of the scene, according to the news outlet.

Life Flight Network confirmed that one of its emergency medical helicopters transported one patient to a Salem-area hospital.

Witness Adrian Gonzalez told the Statesman Journal the van was mangled by the force of the impact.

"Judging by the damage, it looked like the van was sandwiched," he said. "It got hit very hard."

The crash is one of the deadliest in Oregon in recent years.

A head-on collision on a remote road in Harney County in eastern Oregon in August 2018 killed a family of seven, including five young children. Eight people died in total.

In December 2012, nine people died after a tour bus careened on an icy Interstate 84 and crashed through a guardrail, plunging several hundred feet down a steep embankment. The bus was carrying about 40 people when the accident occurred in an area near Pendleton called Deadman Pass.

Another crash in 1988, also near Albany on I-5, killed 7 people and injured 37 more. Two infants were among those killed in the fiery 23-vehicle pileup.

Albany lies between Salem and Eugene and is about 70 miles (113 kilometers) south of Portland. I-5 is the main north-south interstate highway on the West Coast.

Adidas to start selling stockpile of Yeezy sneakers later this month

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Adidas said Friday that it will begin selling its more than \$1 billion worth of leftover Yeezy sneakers later this month, with the proceeds to be donated to various anti-racism groups.

The German sportswear brand said recipients will include the Anti-Defamation League, which fights antisemitism and other forms of discrimination, and the Philonise & Keeta Floyd Institute for Social Change, run by social justice advocate Philonise Floyd, the brother of George Floyd.

"After careful consideration, we have decided to begin releasing some of the remaining Adidas Yeezy products," said Adidas CEO Bjorn Gulden in a statement. "Selling and donating was the preferred option among all organizations and stakeholders we spoke to. There is no place in sport or society for hate of any kind and we remain committed to fighting against it."

Yeezy products have been unavailable to shoppers since Adidas terminated its partnership with Ye, formerly known as Kanye West, in October 2022 following his antisemitic comments on social media and in interviews.

The items to be sold include existing designs as well as designs that were in the works in 2022 for sale this year, Adidas said.

At Adidas' annual shareholders meeting earlier this month, Gulden said the company had spent months trying to find solutions before deciding against destroying the items and to rather sell them to benefit various charities that were harmed by what Ye said.

The company said Friday that the move has no immediate impact on the company's current financial guidance for 2023.

Police officer charged with lying about leaks to Proud Boys leader

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN, LINDSAY WHITEHURST and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

A Washington, D.C. police officer was arrested Friday on charges that he lied about leaking confidential information to Proud Boys extremist group leader Enrique Tarrío and obstructed an investigation after group members destroyed a Black Lives Matter banner in the nation's capital.

An indictment alleges that Metropolitan Police Department Lt. Shane Lamond, 47, of Stafford, Virginia, warned Tarrío, then national chairman of the far-right group, that law enforcement had an arrest warrant for him related to the banner's destruction.

Tarrío was arrested in Washington two days before Proud Boys members joined the mob in storming the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. Earlier this month, Tarrío and three other leaders were convicted of seditious conspiracy charges for what prosecutors said was a plot to keep then-President Donald Trump in the White House after he lost the 2020 election.

A federal grand jury in Washington indicted Lamond on one count of obstruction of justice and three counts of making false statements. A magistrate judge ordered Lamond's release from custody after he pleaded not guilty to the charges during his initial court appearance Friday.

The indictment accuses Lamond of lying to and misleading federal investigators when they questioned him in June 2021 about his contacts with Tarrío. The indictment also says Tarrío provided Lamond with information about the Jan. 6 attack.

"Looks like the feds are locking people up for rioting at the Capitol. I hope none of your guys were among them," Lamond told Tarrío in a Telegram message two days after the siege.

"So far from what I'm seeing and hearing we're good," Tarrío replied.

"Great to hear," Lamond wrote. "Of course I can't say it officially, but personally I support you all and don't want to see your group's name and reputation dragged through the mud."

Lamond was placed on administrative leave by the police force in February 2022.

Lamond, who supervised the intelligence branch of the police department's Homeland Security Bureau, was responsible for monitoring groups like the Proud Boys when they came to Washington.

Lamond declined to comment. His attorney, Mark Schamel, released a statement Friday saying, "Lt. Lamond is a decorated officer whose position required contact with extremist groups who sought to undermine our democracy on January 6th, yet he does not, nor has he ever, supported their views."

Schamel added that "the jury will see the fallacy of these unfairly levied allegations when the evidence is presented."

Schamel has previously said that Lamond's job was to communicate with a variety of groups protesting in Washington, and his conduct with Tarrío was never inappropriate. His lawyer told The Associated Press in December that Lamond is a "decorated veteran" of the police department and "doesn't share any of the indefensible positions" of extremist groups.

The Metropolitan Police Department said Friday that it would do an internal review after the federal case against Lamond is resolved.

"We understand this matter sparks a range of emotions, and believe the allegations of this member's actions are not consistent of our values and our commitment to the community," the department said in a statement.

Lamond's name repeatedly came up in the Capitol riot trial of Tarrío and other Proud Boys leaders. Tarrío's defense sought to use messages showing that Tarrío was informing Lamond of the Proud Boys plans in Washington in order to support Tarrío's claims that he was looking to avoid violence, not create it.

Text messages introduced at Tarrío's trial appeared to show a close rapport between the two men, with Lamond frequently greeting the extremist group leader with the words "hey brother."

Tarrío's lawyers had wanted to call Lamond as a witness, but were stymied by the investigation into Lamond's conduct and his lawyer's contention that Lamond would claim Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination. The defense accused the Justice Department of trying to bully Lamond into keeping quiet because his testimony would hurt their case — a charge prosecutors vehemently denied.

The indictment is the latest sign the Justice Department is moving forward in cases against people whose alleged conduct was uncovered in the massive Jan. 6 investigation, beyond the rioters themselves. More than 1,000 people have been charged with participating in the attack on the Capitol, but investigators have also been examining broader efforts by Trump and his allies to undermine the 2020 election.

Prosecutors say Lamond and Tarrío communicated at least 500 times across several platforms about things like the Proud Boys' planned activities in Washington over a roughly year and a half.

Tarrío is expected to be sentenced in August. His lawyer, Nayib Hassan, declined to comment Friday on Lamond's indictment, but said he was "shocked and disgusted" that the government used information in the case against Lamond that Tarrío's defense was not allowed to show jurors at trial.

Lamond began using the Telegram messaging platform to give Tarrío information about law enforcement activity around July 2020, about a year after they started talking, according to prosecutors. By November of that year, he was talking about meeting Tarrío during a night out.

In December 2020, Lamond told Tarrío about where competing antifascist activists were expected to be. Lamond, whose job entailed sharing what he learned with others in the department, asked Tarrío whether he should share the information Tarrío gave him about Proud Boys activities, prosecutors said.

Jurors who convicted Tarrío heard testimony that Lamond frequently provided the Proud Boys leader with internal information about law enforcement operations in the weeks before other members of his group stormed the Capitol.

Less than three weeks before the Jan. 6 riot, Lamond warned Tarrío that the FBI and U.S. Secret Service were "all spun up" over talk on an Infowars internet show that the Proud Boys planned to dress up as supporters of President Joe Biden on the day of the inauguration.

In a message to Tarrío on Dec. 25, 2020, Lamond said police investigators had asked him to identify Tarrío from a photograph. Lamond warned Tarrío that police may be seeking a warrant for his arrest.

Later, on the day of his arrest, Tarrío posted a message to other Proud Boys leaders that said, "The warrant was just signed."

Durkin Richer contributed to this story from Worcester, Massachusetts.

Massachusetts US Attorney Rachael Rollins formally resigns in wake of ethics probes

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and ERIC TUCKER

WASHINGTON (AP) — Massachusetts U.S. Attorney Rachael Rollins formally resigned Friday after wide-ranging investigations by two federal watchdog agencies found she sought to use her position to influence a local election and lied to investigators.

In a letter to President Joe Biden obtained by The Associated Press, Rollins thanked the White House for supporting her during her contentious nomination process and said she wishes the administration "the best of luck in the months and years ahead."

Her resignation comes two days after the release of scathing reports from the Justice Department's inspector general and another watchdog outlined a litany of alleged misconduct by the top federal law enforcement officer in Massachusetts.

The AP first reported Tuesday that Rollins would be stepping down from the prestigious federal post that has occasionally served as a springboard to higher office. Her lawyer, Michael Bromwich, a former Justice Department inspector general, said she "understands that her presence has become a distraction."

The AP revealed in November that the Justice Department's inspector general had opened an ethics investigation into Rollins after she was photographed last July at a Democratic National Committee fundraiser featuring first lady Jill Biden. The probe quickly expanded to explore other issues, including her use of her personal cellphone for Justice Department business.

It's a stunning downfall for Rollins, who was praised by powerful Democrats and seen as a rising progressive star when she was nominated for the post in 2021. She served as U.S. attorney for just 16 months

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and was under federal investigation for almost a year.

Less than two hours before her resignation, a judge ordered a Massachusetts Air National Guard member to remain behind bars while he awaits trial in one of the most high-profile cases the Massachusetts U.S. attorney's office has brought in years. Jack Teixeira is charged with leaking highly classified military documents.

Among those who attended Teixeira's court hearing Friday was Rollins' former deputy Josh Levy, who will now lead the office as acting U.S. attorney.

Rollins was the first woman of color to be elected a district attorney in Massachusetts and the first Black woman to serve as the state's U.S. attorney. She was elected district attorney for Suffolk County, which includes Boston, in 2018 on a promise to decline prosecution for certain low-level crimes, drawing the ire of police and business groups.

She was vigorously supported by Massachusetts' U.S. senators and twice needed Vice President Kamala Harris to break a tie in the Senate to win confirmation as U.S. attorney amid stiff opposition from Republicans, who slammed her progressive policies as district attorney as radical and dangerous.

The allegations against Rollins are particularly striking because Attorney General Merrick Garland has said that one of his top priorities was to ensure prosecutors would be politically independent. After Rollins' attendance at the fundraiser became public, Garland barred political appointees from attending fundraisers and other campaign events at all.

The most stunning allegation in the inspector general's report — and another by the Office of Special Counsel — was that Rollins leaked information to the media last year in the hopes of sabotaging the campaign of her successor as Suffolk County district attorney, Kevin Hayden.

Investigators said Rollins tried to meddle in the district attorney race by providing information to the media that suggested Hayden was possibly under federal investigation. After Hayden beat the candidate Rollins was supporting in the primary — Ricardo Arroyo — she leaked to The Boston Herald a memo detailing her office's recusal from any possible investigation into Hayden, investigators found.

She initially denied being the federal source in the Herald story when asked under oath about it by investigators, but later admitted to being the leaker, the inspector general's report said. The inspector general's office referred the allegation to the Justice Department for possible prosecution for false statements, but officials declined prosecution, according to the report.

The special counsel also found multiple violations of the Hatch Act, a law that limits political activity by government workers. Special Counsel Henry Kerner described them in a letter to Biden as among the "most egregious" transgressions his agency has ever investigated.

Investigators said that after Rollins got the invitation to the Democratic National Committee fundraiser, she got official advice that she could ethically do a brief meet and greet with Jill Biden outside the home where the fundraiser was held before leaving. Instead, the report said Rollins went inside, joined a receiving line and posed for photos with the hosts and other guests, including a U.S. senator.

Rollins told investigators she had not been aware she wasn't supposed to go inside the home. She believed that as long as she left before the formal fundraising event began, she wouldn't be violating the Hatch Act, her attorney told the Office of Special Counsel.

The inspector general also found that Rollins accepted payment for travel expenses for two different trips without proper approval and flouted federal record-keeping rules by routinely using her personal cellphone to communicate with staff about Justice Department business.

The inspector general's report also accused Rollins of violating ethics rules by soliciting 30 free tickets to an April 2022 Boston Celtics game for youth basketball players. She also accepted a pair of free tickets to the game for herself, writing to the Celtics staffer who sent them: "Amazing! Yes. Received. Thank you!!!"

Richer reported from Worcester, Mass.

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Jim Brown, all-time NFL great and social activist, dead at 87

By TOM WITHERS AP Sports Writer

CLEVELAND (AP) — Jim Brown was virtually unstoppable in every arena.

Whether on the field, as a Hollywood film hero or civil rights advocate, Brown was a force.

One of the greatest players in NFL history, Brown, who retired at the peak of his playing career to pursue acting and remained in the public spotlight as an activist — and due to off-field transgressions that included allegations of violence against women — has died. He was 87.

A spokeswoman for Brown's family said he died peacefully in his Los Angeles home on Thursday night with his wife, Monique, by his side.

"To the world, he was an activist, actor, and football star," Monique Brown wrote in an Instagram post. "To our family, he was a loving husband, father, and grandfather. Our hearts are broken."

One of pro football's first superstars, Brown was a wrecking ball while leading the league in rushing for eight of his nine seasons with the Cleveland Browns. He never missed a game, playing in 118 straight before his sudden retirement in 1965 — after being named Most Valuable Player.

Brown led the Browns to their last championship in 1964 before quitting football in his prime at age 30 to make movies. He appeared in more than 30 films, including "Any Given Sunday" and "The Dirty Dozen."

A powerful runner with speed and endurance, Brown's arrival sparked the game's burgeoning popularity on television and he remained an indomitable figure well after his playing days ended.

Brown was also a champion for Black Americans and used his platform and voice to fight for equality.

"I hope every Black athlete takes the time to educate themselves about this incredible man and what he did to change all of our lives," NBA star LeBron James said. "We all stand on your shoulders Jim Brown. If you grew up in Northeast Ohio and were Black, Jim Brown was a God."

In June 1967, Brown organized "The Cleveland Summit," a meeting of the nation's top Black athletes, including Bill Russell and Lew Alcindor, who later became Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, to support boxer Muhammad Ali's fight against serving in Vietnam.

In later years, he worked to curb gang violence in LA and in 1988 founded Amer-I-Can, a program to help disadvantaged inner-city youth and ex-convicts.

On the field, there was no one like Brown, who would blast through would-be tacklers, refusing to let one man take him down before sprinting away from linebackers and defensive backs. He was also famous for using a stiff arm to shed defenders in the open field or push them away like they were rag dolls.

Indeed, Brown was unlike any back before him, and some feel there has never been anyone better than Cleveland's No. 32. At 6-foot-2, 230 pounds, he was relentless, fighting for every yard, dragging multiple defenders along or finding holes where none seemed to exist.

After Brown was tackled, he'd slowly rise and walk even more slowly back to the huddle — then dominate the defense when he got the ball again.

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell offered his condolences on behalf of the league.

"Jim Brown was a gifted athlete — one of the most dominant players to ever step on any athletic field — but also a cultural figure who helped promote change," Goodell said. "During his nine-year NFL career, which coincided with the civil rights movement here at home, he became a forerunner and role model for athletes being involved in social initiatives outside their sport."

Off the field, Brown was a contentious, complicated figure.

While he had a soft spot for those in need, he also was arrested a half-dozen times, mostly on charges of hitting women.

In June 1999, Brown's wife called 911, saying Brown had smashed her car with a shovel and threatened to kill her. During the trial, Monique Brown recanted. Jim Brown was acquitted of a charge of domestic threats but convicted of misdemeanor vandalism. A Los Angeles judge sentenced Brown to six months in jail when he refused to attend domestic violence counseling.

He also feuded with Browns coach Paul Brown and later with the team's management, although he played his entire career with Cleveland.

When his playing days ended, Brown set off for Hollywood and eventually settled there. Brown advised Cleveland coach Blanton Collier of his retirement while the team was in training camp and he was on the

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set of "The Dirty Dozen" in England.

Among his films were "100 Rifles," "Mars Attacks!" Spike Lee's "He Got Game," Oliver Stone's "Any Given Sunday," and "I'm Gonna Git You Sucka," which parodied the blaxploitation genre. In 2002, Brown was the subject of Lee's HBO documentary "Jim Brown: All-American."

In recent years, Brown's relationship with the Browns was inconsistent. He served as an adviser to owner Randy Lerner and was hired to counsel the team's younger players. However, in 2010, Brown parted ways with the team after having his role reduced by incoming team president Mike Holmgren. Brown felt slighted by the perceived demotion — when the club unveiled a "Ring of Honor" inside its downtown stadium, Brown didn't attend the ceremony in protest.

The Browns erected a statue of Brown outside their stadium in 2016.

Brown made only a few public appearances in recent years. In February, he attended the NFL Honors ceremony when the league announced it had renamed its league rushing title as The Jim Brown Award.

Brown was an eight-time All-Pro and went to the Pro Bowl in each of his nine years in the league. When he retired, he held the league's records for yards (12,312) and touchdowns (126).

"He told me, 'Make sure when anyone tackles you he remembers how much it hurts,'" said Hall of Fame tight end John Mackey. "He lived by that philosophy and I always followed that advice."

Born on Feb. 17, 1936, in St. Simons Island, Georgia, Brown was a multisport star at Manhasset High School on Long Island. He averaged 14.9 yards per carry in football and once scored 55 points in a game.

A two-sport star at Syracuse — some say he is the best lacrosse player in NCAA history — Brown endured countless racist taunts while playing at the virtually all-white school at the time. Still, he was an All-American in both sports and lettered in basketball.

Brown was the sixth overall pick of the 1957 draft, joining a team that routinely played for the title. He was the Offensive Rookie of the Year that season.

Running behind an offensive line featuring Hall of Fame tackles Lou Groza and Mike McCormack, Brown set a league mark with 1,527 yards and scored 17 TDs on his way to the league's Most Outstanding Player award — a precursor to the MVP — in 1958. Over the next three seasons, he never ran for less than 1,257 yards before finishing with 996 in 1962.

He led the NFL in rushing eight times, gaining a career-best 1,863 yards in 1963. He averaged 104 yards per game, scored 106 rushing touchdowns and averaged an astounding 5.2 yards per carry. A dangerous receiver as well, Brown finished with 262 catches for 2,499 yards and another 20 TDs.

"I've said many times, and I will always say, Jim Brown is the best," Hall of Fame running back Gale Sayers once said, "and he will still be the best long after all his records are broken."

Brown's No. 32 was retired by the Browns in '71, the same year he entered the Hall of Fame. But he rarely visited Cleveland during the 1970s and '80s. He and Cleveland owner Art Modell were at odds over his sudden retirement; the two later patched up their differences and remained friends.

Brown supported Modell's decision to move Cleveland's franchise to Baltimore in 1995. It was both a reflection of his loyalty to Modell and another sign of his fierce independence. Brown was one of the few former Browns players not angry with Modell for moving the team.

Many modern players couldn't appreciate Brown or his impact on American sports.

"They have grown up in a different era," former Browns coach Romeo Crennel said. "He's one of the greatest players in NFL history and what he was able to accomplish in his time was tremendous. I don't know that anybody could do what he did, the way he did it, under the circumstances that he had to operate and the things that he had to endure.

"And for him to go out on top, that's something that not many guys are able to appreciate either."

Brown is survived by his wife and son, Aris; daughter, Morgan, son, Jim Jr.; daughter, Kimberly; son, Kevin; daughter, Shellee; and daughter, Kim. He was preceded in death by his daughter, Karen Ward.

How the US helping Ukraine acquire F-16s shows that for military aid, 'no' can become 'yes'

By LOLITA C. BALDOR and TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. has once again buckled under pressure from European allies and Ukraine's leaders and agreed to provide more sophisticated weapons to the war effort. This time it's all about F-16 fighter jets.

Ukraine has long begged for the sophisticated fighter to give it a combat edge as it battles Russia's invasion, now in its second year. And this new plan opens the door for several nations to supply the fourth-generation aircraft and for the U.S. to help train the pilots. President Joe Biden laid out the agreement to world leaders meeting in Hiroshima, Japan, on Friday, according to U.S. officials.

So far, however, the U.S. has provided no details and said decisions on when, how many, and who will supply the F-16s will be made in the months ahead while the training is underway. Details on the training are equally elusive. U.S. officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss decisions not yet made public.

Still, with this decision, the Biden administration has made a sharp reversal, after refusing to approve any transfer of the aircraft or conduct training for more than a year due to worries that it could escalate tensions with Russia. U.S. officials also have argued against the F-16 by saying that learning to fly and logistically support such an advanced aircraft would be difficult and take months.

Here is a look at the fighters, why the U.S. has been reluctant to provide them to Ukraine and what is known and not known yet about the decision.

WHY DOES UKRAINE WANT F-16 FIGHTER JETS?

Ukraine has pressed for Western jets since the very earliest stages of the war, insisting that the sophisticated aircraft would give them a leg up in the war and allow them to strike Russian forces.

Nearly a year ago, two Ukrainian fighter pilots who asked to be identified by their callsigns "Moonfish" and "Juice" met with reporters in Washington to argue for getting the F-16 Fighting Falcons, which have more advanced radars, sensors and missile capabilities.

In February, Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov held up a picture of a warplane when he was asked in Brussels what military aid his country needed. And earlier this month Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said during a visit to Germany that he was pushing for allies to forge a "fighter jet coalition" that would provide Ukraine with the combat planes it needs to counter Russia's air dominance.

Ukraine's leaders have argued that the F-16 is far superior to their existing fleet of Soviet-era warplanes. In response to those pleas, the U.S. has found ways to deliver some of the advanced capabilities without providing the actual jets.

For example, Air Force engineers found ways to modify the HARM air-to-surface anti-radiation missile so that it could be carried and fired by Ukrainian-flown MiGs. The missile and its targeting system enable the jet to identify enemy ground radars and destroy them.

WHY HAS THE U.S. BALKED?

Repeatedly for months senior U.S. officials — from Biden on down — had flatly rejected sending F-16s to Ukraine, when asked publicly. And the U.S. had so far declined to allow other countries to export their U.S.-made Falcons to Ukraine.

As recently as Monday, after Zelenskyy reiterated his desire for F-16s and other jets, National Security Council spokesman John Kirby was asked if the U.S. had in any way changed its position on F-16s not being the right focus for military aid. Kirby said, "No."

Asked similar questions in recent months, Biden also declined to approve the F-16s. In one instance earlier this year he was asked why he opposed sending them, and he responded, "Because we should keep them here."

U.S. officials at the Pentagon have insisted that the military aid the U.S. was providing to Ukraine was based on what the country needed most to fight the war. So the emphasis has been on sending air defense systems and millions of rounds of rockets, missiles and other ammunition — as Ukraine prepares for a much expected spring offensive.

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The other key reason, however, is the ongoing concern that sending fighter jets to Ukraine would enrage the Russians, provoke President Vladimir Putin and possibly escalate or broaden the war.

WELL, ON SECOND THOUGHT

Despite all the concerns, the U.S. has proven again and again during the war that it can change its mind. Early on the U.S. balked at sending Patriot missile batteries, longer-range missiles or tanks. And in each case, it eventually succumbed to pressure from allies and agreed to send the increasingly advanced weapons.

Of note was the recent turnabout on M1A1 Abrams tanks. For months the U.S. had said the Abrams was too complicated and required too much logistical support for Ukrainian troops. Under escalating pressure from European nations that wanted to send Ukraine their own tanks, the U.S. finally agreed to send 31 Abrams to Ukraine. Training is expected to begin soon.

The F-16 approval has been a long, slow slog. Despite public insistence — for months — that there was no movement on the F-16s, the Pentagon in March brought two Ukrainian Air Force pilots to the Morris Air National Guard Base in Tucson, Arizona, to familiarize them with the F-16 and learn how pilots are trained.

U.S. officials refused to discuss the event publicly, but privately they said the two pilots flew F-16 simulators and got a feel for the training. The U.S. Air Force, meanwhile, got insight into how long it would take for an experienced Ukrainian fighter pilot to learn the F-16's more advanced systems. Officials determined that realistically it could be done in about four months, if the pilots were already trained to fly their own Soviet-era fighters.

WHAT WE STILL DON'T KNOW

According to U.S. officials, Biden told leaders in Japan that the U.S. will participate in the F-16 training, and that decisions on providing the jets will come later.

Officials said it's still not clear if the U.S. will simply allow other nations to send F-16s to Ukraine, or if the U.S. will also send some. And there are no estimates on how many of the jets will be provided or when. Officials acknowledge that it will not be in time for the anticipated spring offensive.

And while officials said the training will begin soon, it isn't yet clear where it will be, how many pilots will be trained and how long it will take.

The U.S. Air Force has two F-16 air wings in Europe: the 31st Fighter Wing at the Aviano Air Base in Italy and the 52nd Fighter Wing at Spangdahlem Air Base in Germany. The U.S. also routinely sends F-16 fighters in and out of Europe on a rotational basis in smaller groups.

Famed R&B group The Spinners donate performance outfits to Motown Museum in Detroit

By COREY WILLIAMS Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — Henry Fambrough had a musical homecoming of sorts Friday at "Hitsville U.S.A."

Fambrough, one of the founding members of the iconic R&B group The Spinners, took a tour of Motown's Studio A in Detroit as part of a ceremony that included the donation to the Motown Museum of 375 outfits worn by the group during performances.

It "was a long time ago," Fambrough said of the 1960s, when he first walked into the studio. "I used to dream about this place."

He told reporters that he had to convince his wife that the studio was where he was going for 3 a.m. rehearsals and recording sessions with other members of the group. Their first big hit for Motown was "It's A Shame," which peaked at No. 14 on Billboard's Hot 100 chart in 1970.

The Spinners would later sign with Atlantic Records and turn out a string of hits that included "Could It Be I'm Falling In Love," "Then Came You," "The Rubberband Man" and "Mighty Love."

"Then Came You," which featured singer Dionne Warwick, reached No. 1 in 1974 on the Billboard Hot 100.

Their songs have received six Grammy Award nominations, and they've earned 18 Platinum and Gold Albums, according to The Spinners website. The Rock & Roll Hall of Fame announced this month that The Spinners are among its 2023 inductees.

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Along with Fambrough, Billy Henderson, Pervis Jackson, Bobby Smith, Philippé Wynne and John Edwards are listed as inductees.

Originally called The Domingoes, the group was formed in 1954 just north of Detroit in Ferndale. In 1964, The Spinners joined Motown Records.

Fambrough and G.C. Cameron, who joined The Spinners during their time at Motown and sang lead vocals on "It's A Shame," signed a deed of gift Friday formally turning over the outfits to the museum. The group also donated more than 200 pairs of shoes.

"It's of utmost importance for us to continue to grow our expansive collection and curate artifacts from Motown alumni who shaped the Motown legacy," said Robin Terry, Motown Museum chair and chief executive.

"We're incredibly honored and proud to welcome the iconic Spinners home to Detroit to celebrate their rich history and accept these uniforms," Terry added. "Their legacy will live on at Motown Museum and be displayed for fans from all over the world to see."

Cameron said that "love was the nucleus" of Motown.

"The world beats as the heartbeat of music," Cameron said Friday. "Everyone at Motown was on the same thought pattern."

Cameron remained at Motown when The Spinners signed with Atlantic Records. Although a new lineup continues to record and tour as The Spinners, Fambrough has retired from performing.

Berry Gordy Jr. founded Motown Records in 1959 and kickstarted the careers of Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, the Supremes, the Temptations, the Four Tops, the Jackson Five, Stevie Wonder and others.

The Motown Museum currently is expanding to a 50,000-square-foot (4,645-square-meter) entertainment and tourist destination called Hitsville NEXT.

Diplomatic tour by Ukraine's Zelenskyy highlights Putin's stark isolation

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — While the world awaits Ukraine's spring battlefield offensive, its leader, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, has launched a diplomatic one. In the span of a week, he's dashed to Italy, the Vatican, Germany, France and Britain to shore up support for defending his country.

On Friday, he was in Saudi Arabia to meet with Arab leaders, some of whom are allies with Moscow.

President Vladimir Putin, meanwhile, was in the southern Russian city of Pyatigorsk, chairing a meeting with local officials, sitting at a large table at a distance from the other attendees.

The Russian president has faced unprecedented international isolation, with an International Criminal Court arrest warrant hanging over his head and clouding the prospects of traveling to many destinations, including those viewed as Moscow's allies.

With his invasion of Ukraine, "Putin took a gamble and lost really, really big time," said Theresa Fallon, director of the Brussels-based Centre for Russia Europe Asia Studies. "He is an international pariah, really."

It was only 10 years ago when Putin stood proudly among his peers at the time — Barack Obama, Angela Merkel and Shinzo Abe — at a Group of Eight summit in Northern Ireland. Russia has since been kicked out of the group, which consists of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Britain and the United States, for illegally annexing Crimea in 2014.

Now it appears to be Ukraine's turn in the spotlight.

There were conflicting messages from Kyiv whether Zelenskyy would attend the G7 in Japan on Sunday. The secretary of Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council said on national television the president would be there, but the council later walked back those remarks, saying Zelenskyy would join via video link. The president's office would not confirm either way for security reasons.

But whether in person or via video, it would be of great symbolic and geopolitical significance.

"It conveys the fact that the G7 continues to strongly support Ukraine," said Nigel Gould-Davies, senior

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fellow for Russia and Eurasia at the International Institute for Strategic Studies. "It's a visible marker of the continued commitment of the most highly industrialized and highly developed countries in the world."

It also comes at a time when the optics are just not in the Kremlin's favor.

There's uncertainty over whether Putin can travel to South Africa in August for a summit of the BRICS nations of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Moscow has long showcased the alliance as an alternative to the West's global dominance, but this year it is already proving awkward for the Kremlin. South Africa, the host of the summit, is a signatory to the ICC and is obligated to comply with the arrest warrant on war crimes charges.

South Africa has not announced that Putin will definitely come to the summit but has been planning for his possible arrival. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa has appointed an inter-ministerial committee, led by Deputy President Paul Mashatile, to consider South Africa's options with regard to its ICC commitment over Putin's possible trip.

While it is highly unlikely the Russian president would be arrested there if he decides to go, the public debate about whether he can is in itself "an unwelcome development whose impact should not be underestimated," according to Gould-Davies.

Then there are Moscow's complicated relations with its own neighbors. Ten days ago, Putin projected the image of solidarity, with leaders of Armenia, Belarus and Central Asian states standing beside him at a Victory Day military parade on Red Square.

This week, however, the leaders of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan flocked to China and met with leader Xi Jinping at a summit that highlighted the erosion of Russia's influence in the region as Beijing seeks to make economic inroads into Central Asia.

Xi is using the opportunity "of a weakened Russia, a distracted Russia, almost a pariah-state Russia to increase (China's) influence in the region," Fallon said.

Putin's effort this month to shore up more friends in the South Caucasus by scrapping visa requirements for Georgian nationals and lifting a four-year ban on direct flights to the country also didn't appear to go as smoothly as the Kremlin may have hoped.

The first flight that landed Friday in Georgia was met with protests, and the country's pro-Western president has decried the move as a provocation.

Zelenskyy's ongoing world tour can be seen as a success on many levels.

Invitations from other world leaders is a sign they think Ukraine is "going to come out of the war in good shape," said Phillips P. O'Brien, professor of strategic studies at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland.

Otherwise, "it simply wouldn't be happening," he said. "No one would want to be around a leader they think is going to be defeated and a country that's going to collapse."

By contrast, the ICC warrant might make it harder for leaders even to visit Putin in Moscow because "it's not a good look to visit an indicted war criminal," Gould-Davies said.

European leaders promised him an arsenal of missiles, tanks and drones, and even though no commitment has been made on fighter jets – something Kyiv has wanted for months – a conversation about finding ways to do it has begun.

His appearance Friday at the Arab League summit in Jeddah, a Saudi Arabian port on the Red Sea, highlighted Kyiv's effort to spread its plight for support far and wide, including in some countries whose sympathies are with Russia.

In addition to Zelenskyy, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman also welcomed Syrian President Bashar Assad at the summit after a 12-year suspension – something analysts say aligns with Moscow's interests.

Anna Borshchevskaya, a senior fellow at the Washington Institute who focuses on Russia's policy in the Middle East, called it "another testament to the fact that Russia is not isolated globally for its invasion of Ukraine, that the Middle East is one part of the world where Russia is able to find avenues to avoid global isolation – both ideological isolation but also economic isolation."

She added that Zelenskyy and his government deserve credit for "in recognizing that they need to reach out more to improve their diplomatic efforts in this part of the world and other parts of the world where

the Russian narrative resonates.”

Kyiv could expect that “this is the beginning of a larger shift in perception that could eventually translate into potential support,” Borshchevskaya said.

Similarly, the Ukrainian president’s participation in the G7 summit is “a message to the rest of the world, to Russia and beyond, and the so-called Global South,” Gould-Davies believes.

There is a concern in the West over the extent to which some major developing economies – Brazil, South Africa and, to a degree, India – “are not criticizing, not condemning Russia and indeed in various ways are helping to mitigate the impact of sanctions on Russia,” he said.

“Collectively, economically, they matter. So there is, I think, this felt need for a renewed diplomatic campaign to bring some of these most important states into the kind of the Western way of looking at these things,” Gould-Davies said.

Associated Press writers Danica Kirka in London and Gerald Imray in Cape Town, South Africa, contributed.

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

Guardman Jack Teixeira, Pentagon leak suspect, to remain jailed as he awaits trial

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WORCESTER, Mass. (AP) — A Massachusetts Air National Guard member charged with leaking highly classified military documents will remain behind bars while he awaits trial, a federal magistrate judge ruled Friday.

U.S. Magistrate Judge David Hennessy said releasing 21-year-old Jack Teixeira would pose a risk that he would attempt to flee the country or obstruct justice. The judge cited Teixeira’s “fascination with guns,” disturbing online statements and admonitions by Teixeira’s military superiors about his handling of sensitive information before his arrest.

The ruling comes after prosecutors revealed that Teixeira had a history of violent rhetoric, and was caught by fellow military members months before his arrest taking notes on classified information or viewing intelligence not related to his job.

Teixeira is accused of sharing classified military documents on Discord, a social media platform popular with people playing online games. The stunning breach exposed to the world unvarnished secret assessments on Russia’s war in Ukraine, the capabilities and geopolitical interests of other nations and other national security issues.

The judge said the case represented “a profound breach of the defendant’s word that he would protect information related to the security of the United States.”

“Who did he put at risk? I mean, you could make a list as long as a phone book,” Hennessy said, including military personnel, medical workers overseas and Ukrainian citizens.

The judge indicated that he found persuasive prosecutors’ arguments that U.S. adversaries who might be interested in mining Teixeira for information could facilitate his escape.

“Foreign countries know that this defendant was disloyal to the United States,” the judge said. “It doesn’t seem implausible at all that a foreign government would make an overture to this defendant to get information.”

Teixeira appeared to show no emotion as he was lead out of the courtroom in handcuffs and orange jail clothes. He smiled at his father sitting in the front as he walked into the hearing in Worcester, Massachusetts, federal court.

Teixeira can appeal the judge’s ruling, and Hennessy told him “another judge could come to a different conclusion.” The judge said the support of Teixeira’s family — who have attended every court hearing — is a compelling reason to release the man, but his concerns outweigh that.

In a statement after the hearing, Teixeira’s family said it was disappointed with the outcome but “we

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realize there is a long road ahead of us all, and Jack's wellbeing and safety is our priority right now. As a family, we are as committed as ever and remain steadfast and determined in our complete support of Jack as we continue to wade through this process."

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

Teixeira has been behind bars since his April 13 arrest on charges, under the Espionage Act, of unauthorized retention and transmission of classified national defense information. He has not yet entered a plea.

Prosecutors had urged the judge to keep Teixeira jailed, in part because of his arsenal of weapons and history of online statements, including one social media post from last November saying that, if he had his way, he would like to kill a "ton of people" because it would be "culling the weak minded."

His lawyers had pressed the judge to release him to his father, saying he has no criminal history and strong family support to ensure he shows up in court. His lawyer said last month that he has "nowhere to flee" and "will answer the charges" against him.

Prosecutors have detailed a troubling history going back to high school, where Teixeira was suspended in 2018 when a classmate overheard him discussing Molotov cocktails and other weapons as well as racial threats. His initial application for a firearms identification card that same year was denied due to police concerns over those remarks.

He regularly made statements about violence and murder on social media, and also used his government computer to research past mass shootings and standoffs with federal agents, according to prosecutors. Prosecutors said he also kept his gun locker within reach of his bed and in it were handguns, bolt-action rifles, shotguns, an AK-style high-capacity weapon and a gas mask.

Teixeira's father told the judge that he removed all the guns from his home and would ensure that his son followed his pretrial conditions if he were released. Teixeira's lawyer argued that despite the statements highlighted by prosecutors he was not a danger to the community or a flight risk.

Prosecutors revealed in court papers filed this week that Teixeira's superiors had raised concerns in the months before his arrest about his mishandling of classified information.

He was twice admonished by superiors in September and October, and was 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 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 the potential lack of response to them were among the areas the inquiries would examine.

Tucker reported from Washington.

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 Native American heritage. Whether she could was up to her Oklahoma high school. Administrators told her no.

Yanchick settled for wearing beaded earrings to 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

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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, a Native American policy advocate and a former intern with 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 Native American 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 ancestral land of Kiowa, Apache and Comanche.

“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 Jr. 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.

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Kia, Hyundai settle class-action lawsuit after a rash of thefts due to security flaw

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hyundai Motor America and Kia America said Friday they have reached a settlement to resolve a class-action lawsuit prompted by a surge in vehicle thefts.

The settlement could be valued at \$200 million and covers about 9 million 2011-2022 model year Hyundai and Kia vehicles in the U.S., the companies said.

The cars are not equipped with push-button ignitions and immobilizing anti-theft devices. That has allowed thieves to easily steal them using just a screwdriver and a USB cord, creating a recent rash of auto thefts across the country.

The settlement will provide cash compensation to customers who suffered theft-related losses or damage not covered by insurance — as well as reimbursement for insurance deductibles, increased insurance premiums and other losses, Kia and Hyundai said.

A software upgrade will also be provided to eligible owners. For customers with vehicles that cannot accommodate the software upgrade, the agreement will provide a reimbursement of up to \$300 for anti-theft devices.

Kia and Hyundai have also given impacted customers tens of thousands of free steering wheel locks through local law enforcement and direct shipments, the companies said.

The total settlement amount will depend on how many customers participate.

"Hyundai and Kia failed to sell cars equipped with fundamental anti-theft features, and that was not a victimless act," attorney Elizabeth A. Fegan of Fegan Scott, one of the law firms representing the plaintiffs, said in a statement. "We are pleased with the settlement reached and its immediate ability to hinder thieves, as well as compensate victims of thefts that have already occurred."

The proposed settlement is expected to be reviewed in court for preliminary approval in July.

The wave of Hyundai and Kia thefts began in 2021 and spread nationally, with a spike last summer, fueled by instructional videos posted on TikTok and other social media sites. Some police departments report continued thefts despite the automakers' unveiling of anti-theft software nearly three months ago.

Both Jason Erb, Hyundai Motor North America's chief legal officer, and John Yoon, Kia America's chief legal officer, stressed that the companies are committed to customer safety.

"We appreciate the opportunity to provide additional support for our owners who have been impacted by increasing and persistent criminal activity targeting our vehicles," Erb said.

Jordan Neely, NYC subway rider choked to death, is mourned at Manhattan church

By DEEPTI HAJELA Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — In the polarizing wake of Jordan Neely's chokehold death at the hands of a fellow New York City subway rider, there has been a "distortion of values," Rev. Al Sharpton said Friday in eulogizing the former subway performer at his funeral.

Neely, who had been struggling with mental illness and homelessness in recent years, "was screaming for help," Sharpton told a crowd of relatives, friends and elected officials. They gathered at Harlem's Mount Neboh Baptist Church to mourn the 30-year-old man, whose May 1 death set off a debate about vigilantism, homelessness and public safety.

People having mental health problems "don't need abuse," he said, chastising people including Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who has spoken out in support of Daniel Penny, the man who put him in the chokehold. The potential Republican presidential candidate has called Penny a "good Samaritan" and shared a fund-raising link for Penny's legal defense, which has raised more than \$2 million.

Sharpton said the Biblical parable of the good Samaritan is about coming to the aid of someone in need. "A good Samaritan helps those in trouble," Sharpton said. "They don't choke him out."

Sharpton added, "What happened to Jordan was a crime and this family shouldn't have to stand by

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themselves.”

Elected officials including Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and New York Lt. Gov. Antonio Delgado were among the mourners attending the funeral, held at the same church where Neely’s mother, Christie Neely, was eulogized after she was murdered when Neely was 14.

Neely’s last moments were recorded on video by an onlooker who said he had been yelling at other passengers as he begged for money, but hadn’t attacked anyone.

Daniel Penny was charged with manslaughter by the Manhattan district attorney last week. Penny’s lawyers say he was acting to protect himself and other passengers after Neely made threatening statements.

Neely’s death and Penny’s subsequent arrest divided New Yorkers and people beyond, with some saying Penny, who is white, was too quick to use deadly force on a Black man who posed no real threat, and others saying the 24-year-old U.S. Marine Corps veteran shouldn’t be punished for trying to protect people on the train.

The criminal justice system has also come under criticism for Penny initially being released after Neely’s death. Sharpton said that if the races of the men had been reversed, with a white man dying at a Black man’s hands, authorities “would not have let that Black guy leave the precinct that night.”

While Neely had a history of disruptive behavior — he had been arrested many times and pleaded guilty this year to assaulting a stranger — friends and relatives said they don’t believe he would have harmed anyone had Penny just left him alone.

Sharpton, standing in front of a white casket with a flower arrangement on top, also condemned government policies and social service systems that he said had let Neely down and needed to be reformed.

“When they choked Jordan, they put their arms around all of us,” he said. “All of us have the right to live.”

Millions ditched cars for bikes during the pandemic. These cities want the habit to stick

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 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.

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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 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

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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.

NASA picks Bezos' Blue Origin to build lunar landers for moonwalkers

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Jeff Bezos' rocket company has won a NASA contract to land astronauts on the moon, two years after it lost out to SpaceX.

Blue Origin received a \$3.4 billion contract Friday to lead a team to develop a lunar lander named Blue Moon. It will be used to transport astronauts to the lunar surface as early as 2029, following a pair of crew landings by Elon Musk's SpaceX.

NASA will get astronauts to lunar orbit using its own rockets and capsules, but wants private companies to take over from there.

NASA Administrator Bill Nelson said the agency wants different landing options as it seeks a return to the moon more than a half-century after the end of the Apollo moonshots.

Blue Origin is kicking in billions of dollars, on top of the NASA contract, to help establish a permanent presence on the moon.

"We have a lot to do before we successfully land and return astronauts," said John Couluris, a Blue Origin vice president.

Two years ago, Blue Origin sued after NASA awarded SpaceX the contract for the first lunar landing. A federal judge upheld the space agency's decision.

NASA's Artemis program, which follows the 1960s and 1970s Apollo moonshots, kicked off with a successful test flight late last year. Launched atop NASA's new moon rocket, an empty Orion capsule went into lunar orbit before returning home.

The next Artemis flight will come late next year when one Canadian and three U.S. astronauts fly to

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the moon and back, but not land. Two Americans would descend to the lunar surface aboard a SpaceX Starship on the mission after that, no earlier than late 2025.

Like SpaceX, Blue Origin plans to practice landing on the moon without a crew, before putting astronauts on board.

While the shiny, stainless steel Starship has a science fiction look, Blue Moon resembles more of a traditional capsule perched atop a tall compartment with legs. The latter will stand 52 feet (16 meters) on the moon.

Both companies' landers are meant to be reusable.

Blue Origin will use its still-in-development New Glenn rocket to launch its lunar missions from Cape Canaveral. Starship, the world's largest rocket, made its debut last month from South Texas; the test flight ended in an explosive fireball a few minutes into flight.

Blue Origin's team includes five partners: Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Draper, Astrobotic Technology and Honeybee Robotics.

Only one other bid was submitted for the contract competition, according to NASA.

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COVID emergency orders are among 'greatest intrusions on civil liberties,' Justice Gorsuch says

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court got rid of a pandemic-related immigration case with a single sentence.

Justice Neil Gorsuch had a lot more to say, leveling harsh criticism of how governments, from small towns to the nation's capital, responded to the gravest public health threat in a century.

The justice, a 55-year-old conservative who was President Donald Trump's first Supreme Court nominee, called emergency measures taken during the COVID-19 crisis that killed more than 1 million Americans perhaps "the greatest intrusions on civil liberties in the peacetime history of this country."

He pointed to orders closing schools, restricting church services, mandating vaccines and prohibiting evictions. His broadside was aimed at local, state and federal officials — even his colleagues.

"Executive officials across the country issued emergency decrees on a breathtaking scale," Gorsuch wrote in an eight-page statement Thursday that accompanied an expected Supreme Court order formally dismissing a case involving the use of the Title 42 policy to prevent asylum seekers from entering the United States.

The policy was ended last week with the expiration of the public health emergency first declared more than three years ago because of the coronavirus pandemic.

From the start of his Supreme Court tenure in 2017, Gorsuch, a Colorado native who loves to ski and bicycle, has been more willing than most justices to part company with his colleagues, both left and right.

He has mainly voted with the other conservatives in his six years as a justice, joining the majority that overturned *Roe v. Wade* and expanded gun rights last year.

But he has charted a different course on some issues, writing the court's 2020 opinion that extended federal protections against workplace discrimination to LGBTQ people. He also has joined with the liberal justices in support of Native American rights.

When the omicron variant surged in late 2021 and early 2022, Gorsuch was the lone justice to appear in the courtroom unmasked even as his seatmate, Justice Sonia Sotomayor, who has diabetes, reportedly did not feel safe in close quarters with people who were not wearing masks.

So Sotomayor, who continues to wear a mask in public, did not take the bench with the other justices in January 2022. The two justices denied reports they were at odds over the issue.

The emergency orders about which Gorsuch complained were first announced in the early days of the

pandemic, when Trump was president, and months before the virus was well understood and a vaccine was developed.

The thrust of his complaint is not new. He has written before in individual cases that came to the court during the pandemic, sometimes dissenting from orders that left emergency decrees in place.

The justices intervened in several COVID-related cases.

With Gorsuch and five other conservatives in the majority, they ended the eviction moratorium and blocked a Biden administration plan to require workers at larger companies to be vaccinated or wear a mask and submit to regular testing. Once Amy Coney Barrett joined the court, after Ruth Bader Ginsburg died, they ended restrictions on religious services in some areas.

By a 5-4 vote from which Gorsuch and three conservative colleagues dissented, the court allowed the administration to require many health care workers to be vaccinated.

But on Thursday, Gorsuch gathered his complaints in one place, writing about lessons he hoped might be learned from the past three years.

"One lesson might be this: Fear and the desire for safety are powerful forces. They can lead to a clamor for action —almost any action — as long as someone does something to address a perceived threat. A leader or an expert who claims he can fix everything, if only we do exactly as he says, can prove an irresistible force," he wrote.

Another possible lesson, he wrote: "The concentration of power in the hands of so few may be efficient and sometimes popular. But it does not tend toward sound government."

He also had strong words for the Republican-led states that tried to keep the Title 42 policy in place, and the five conservative justices whose votes extended the policy five months beyond when it would have otherwise ended in late December.

"At the very least, one can hope that the Judiciary will not soon again allow itself to be part of the problem by permitting litigants to manipulate our docket to perpetuate a decree designed for one emergency to address another," Gorsuch wrote.

In the final paragraph of his statement, Gorsuch acknowledged, but only grudgingly, that emergency orders sometimes are necessary. "Make no mistake — decisive executive action is sometimes necessary and appropriate. But if emergency decrees promise to solve some problems, they threaten to generate others," he wrote.

In Cannes, Harrison Ford bids adieu to Indiana Jones

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

CANNES, France (AP) — As the Cannes Film Festival crowd stood in rapturous applause, a visibly moved Harrison Ford stood on the stage, trying to keep his emotions in check.

The warmth of the audience and a clip reel that had just played had left Ford shaken.

"They say that when you're about to die, you see your life flash before your eyes," he said. "And I just saw my life flash before my eyes — a great part of my life, but not all of my life."

If last year's Cannes was partially defined by its tribute to "Top Gun Maverick" star Tom Cruise, this year's has belonged to Ford. This time, it's been far more poignant. Ford, 80, is retiring Indiana Jones, saying goodbye to the iconic swashbuckling archeologist more than 40 years after he first debuted, with fedora, whip and a modest snake phobia.

It's been a moving farewell tour — most of all for Ford, who has teared up frequently along the way. Speaking to reporters Friday, Ford was asked: Why give up Indy now?

"Is it not evident?" he replied with a characteristically sheepish grin. "I need to sit down and rest a little bit. I love to work. And I love this character. And I love what it brought into my life. That's all I can say."

"Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny," the fifth Indiana Jones film, premiered Thursday night in Cannes, bringing an affecting coda to the franchise begun with 1981's "Raiders of the Lost Ark." While that film and the next three were all directed by Steven Spielberg from a story by George Lucas, Ford's final chapter is directed and co-written by James Mangold, the "Ford vs. Ferrari" filmmaker.

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The gala, one of the most sought-after tickets at Cannes this year, also included an honorary Palme d'Or given to Ford. The next day, Ford was still struggling to articulate the experience of unveiling his final turn as Indiana Jones.

"It was indescribable. I can't even tell you," said Ford. "It's just extraordinary to see a kind of relic of your life as it passes by."

Following the disappointment of 2008's little-loved "Indiana Jones and the Crystal Skull," the possibilities for a fifth film lingered for years and went through many iterations. Ford said he was intent on seeing a different, less youthful version of Jones. "Dial of Destiny" is set in the 1960s and finds Indiana as a retiring professor whose long-ago exploits no longer seem so special in the age of space exploration.

"I wanted to see the weight of life on him. I wanted to see him require reinvention and support. And I wanted him to have a relationship that was not a flirty movie relationship," said Ford, who stars alongside Phoebe Waller-Bridge. "I wanted an equal relationship."

Ford is clearly deeply pleased with the movie. He was especially complimentary of his castmates and Mangold, whom he said did more than "fill the shoes that Steven left for us."

"Everything has come together to support me in my old age," said Ford with a wry grin.

The movie begins with an extended sequence set back in the final days of WWII. In those scenes, Ford has been de-aged to appear much younger. Lucasfilm chief Kathleen Kennedy was quick to say that an AI-crafted Ford won't be used by the company in the future. Ford called the employment of a de-aged version of him "skilled and assiduous" — and didn't make him jealous.

"I don't look back and say I wish I was that guy. I'm real happy with age," said Ford. He then added, with an expletive, that it could be worse. "I could be dead."

Ford isn't retiring from acting. He has two ongoing TV series ("Shrinking," "1923") and he said he remains committed to working.

"My luck has been to work with incredibly talented people and find my way into this crowd of geniuses and not get my ass kicked out," said Ford. "And I've apparently still got a chance to work and I want that. I need that in my life, that challenge."

Ford, like Indiana, isn't departing without his hat. He's kept one, Ford said, but he more prizes the experience of making the films. "The stuff is great but it's not about the stuff."

And Ford can still turn heads. One female reporter declared that the 80-year-old was "still hot" and asked Ford — who briefly appears shirtless in the movie — how he stays fit. After a few chuckles and some mention of his avid cycling, Ford answered with mock pomposity.

"I've been blessed with this body," he replied. "Thanks for noticing."

Follow AP Film Writer Jake Coyle on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/jakecoyleAP>

For more on this year's Cannes Film Festival, visit: <https://apnews.com/hub/cannes-film-festival>

First Mission scratched from Preakness by vet 36 hours before Triple Crown race

By STEPHEN WHYNO AP Sports Writer

BALTIMORE (AP) — Brad Cox-trained First Mission has been scratched from the Preakness on the advice of veterinarians, taking one of the top contenders out of the Triple Crown race 36 hours before post time.

Owner Godolphin and the Maryland Jockey Club announced the scratch early Friday, saying vets identified an issue with First Mission's left hind ankle. The withdrawal comes in the aftermath of five scratches for the Kentucky Derby and one horse who was scheduled to run being among the seven who died of various causes at Churchill Downs over a 10-day span.

Godolphin USA bloodstock director Michael Banahan said examination of First Mission at Pimlico Race Course "was sort of inconclusive."

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"They thought that he was maybe not quite 100% on his left hind and tried to figure that out, do some diagnostics, something on the track there, which was difficult to do," Banahan told The Associated Press in a phone interview. "The veterinary scrutiny is very heightened on the big days. Obviously they saw something that they were concerned about. ... Brad is conservative and cautious, as well. When they thought that there was maybe a little issue, we said we'd just have to collaborate with them and go with their advice."

First Mission is set to go to Kentucky to be evaluated further next week by Dr. Larry Bramlage at Rood & Riddle Equine Hospital in Lexington.

"We decided the best thing for the welfare of the horse was not to take any chances and get him evaluated fully and see where we are and see what we need to do to get him back on track again," Banahan said. "Our utmost concern from an owner perspective, and the same with Brad from a trainer's perspective is the best care of the horse and the welfare of the horse. And when there was a little bit of a concern there, we felt what we needed to do was pull him from the race and get him evaluated fully and see what we have."

The removal of First Mission leaves seven horses in the field for the \$1.65 million race. He was the early second choice at odds of 5-2 behind only 8-5 favorite Mage, who won the Kentucky Derby.

"You don't like to see that," said Hall of Famer trainer Bob Baffert, who is back at a Triple Crown race for the first time in two years with contender National Treasure. "We still have another day to go. Trainers, we don't relax until we get the saddle on. Until I get the saddle on the horse, then you can just relax completely. It's one of those things where you don't want to wish any bad luck on anyone because we've all been there."

It's an all-too-familiar feeling this spring after the defections from the Derby left 18 to run instead of the usually full field of 20.

That included favorite Forte hours before, when Kentucky racing officials expressed concern about a bruised right front foot. Forte landed on the state's vet list, grounding him from racing for at least 14 days, and trainer Todd Pletcher was suspended 10 days for Forte failing a postrace drug test in New York in September.

Racing officials who own and operate tracks in Maryland have increased testing and veterinary review procedures for horses running in the Preakness and other top stakes races this weekend at Pimlico Race Course as preventative measures to limit injuries. That includes multiple independent doctors examining horses, with each one needing to be cleared before racing.

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

What to stream this weekend: Jack Harlow's acting debut, Kesha, Scott brothers on HGTV

By The Associated Press undefined

This week's new streaming options include rapper Jack Harlow's acting debut, the return of Kesha and new projects for an heart-warming HGTV show.

Here's a collection curated by The Associated Press' entertainment journalists of what's arriving on TV, streaming services and music and video game platforms this week.

NEW MOVIES TO STREAM

— Three decades after Wesley Snipes and Woody Harrelson mixed it up on the black top, a new "White Men Can't Jump" has next. A remake of that 1992 film teams Sinqua Walls and rapper Jack Harlow as a pair of basketball players who hustle hoops for money and compete in a lucrative three-on-three tournament. The film, which debuts Friday on Hulu, is directed by Calmatic and co-written by Kenya Barris ("black-ish"). In it, Harlow makes his acting debut. (Read AP's review.)

— Anna Nicole Smith gets the Netflix documentary treatment in "Anna Nicole Smith: You Don't Know

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Me." The film, debuting Tuesday, chronicles Smith's life as a model, Playboy playmate and reality star. Smith died in 2007 at the age of 39 from an accidental overdose. "You Don't Know Me" includes home video of Smith, whose birth name was Vickie Lynn Hogan.

— Cristian Mungiu's "R.M.N." is one of the cinematic highlights of the first half of 2023. The latest from the acclaimed Romanian filmmaker ("4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days") is a powerful microcosm of a migrant drama that has played out all around the world. A mountainous Transylvania village is increasingly torn apart by violent nationalist impulses that course through the town's civic life in response to a handful of foreign workers. Mungiu, the pioneering filmmaker of the Romanian New Wave, crafts an unflinching societal portrait both gripping and grim. Currently playing in theaters, "R.M.N." is available on-demand beginning Friday.

— AP Film Writer Jake Coyle
NEW MUSIC TO STREAM

— Check out Keshá's new album for what "post-pop" sounds like. That's what the ever-changing pop star is calling her Rick Rubin-produced record "Gag Order." Single "Fine Line" is an introspective, beatless ballad with the lyric "Am I bigger than Jesus/Or better off dead?/There's a fine line between genius and crazy." There's also "Eat the Acid," an experimental, mournful number. Her team says the album excavates "the deepest recesses of her soul to date."

— Def Leppard are following in the footsteps of Metallica, the Scorpions and Bring Me the Horizon with an orchestral reworking of their catalogue. "Drastic Symphonies," features their greatest tracks reimagined by The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Fifteen of the hard rockers' hits like "Animal," "Love Bites," "Hysteria" and "Pour Some Sugar on Me" have a new sound. Some songs — "Rock of Ages," "Photograph" and "Let's Get Rocked" — didn't work and were left off.

— May turns out to be a great month for 11-time Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter Brandy Clark. Her Broadway musical "Shucked" was nominated for best original score and she's got a new self-titled album out Friday. Produced by Brandi Carlile, the album showcases Clark's tenderness, with the 11 songs including the heartbreaking "Buried," a celebration of her home in "Northwest" and a loving tribute to her grandma with "She Smoked in the House."

— Ahead of their first post-pandemic album, Dave Matthews Band has released two strong singles, including the nostalgia-drenched "Monsters," with the lyrics "Chutes and ladders/Pick up sticks/Counting cards and counting bricks/Driving past that old five and dime/Can't get nothing for a nickel since a long long time." The first single, "Madman's Eyes," leans into Middle Eastern rhythms for a darker song about the madness of violence. Both songs will be on the album "Walk Around the Moon," out Friday and the band says it "is as much a reflection on the current times as it is an urge to find common ground."

— AP Entertainment Writer Mark Kennedy
NEW SERIES TO STREAM

— Stock up on tissues because home renovation twins Drew and Jonathan Scott's series "Celebrity IOU" is back with new episodes on HGTV. Each episode features a Hollywood star who dreams up a home renovation project for someone they want to give back to. Enter the Scott brothers who use their knowledge of construction to make it happen. The episodes follow each project from start to finish with a heart-warming, emotional presentation at the end. This batch of eight episodes features Heidi Klum, Kristin Chenoweth, Glenn Close, Taraji P. Henson, Emma Roberts, Jay Leno, Derek Hough, Kristin Davis and Emma Roberts. "Celebrity IOU" returns Monday.

— If you watched the "To All the Boys" movies, you probably remember scene-stealer Anna Cathcart as the confident, chatty kid sister, Kitty, to Lana Condor's Lara Jean. Cathcart has landed her own spinoff series called "XO, Kitty." Created by "To All the Boys" author Jenny Han, Kitty travels to Korea to attend an elite boarding school that her long-distance boyfriend is a student at. It's also the same school where her late mother went as a teen. Kitty imagines a seamless transition to a new school in a new country and a romantic reunion with her boyfriend but quickly realizes life doesn't always go as planned. All 10 episodes drop Thursday on Netflix.

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— Wilderness expert and adventure-seeker Bear Grylls has never encountered a mountain he won't climb or a random creature he won't eat for fuel. We've seen him on TV venture into the great outdoors with celebrities but now he's taking everyday people out of their comfort zone in a new show, "I Survived Bear Grylls." With the help of comedian co-host Jordan Conley, Grylls uses simulated challenges to test contestants on their survival skills, physicality, and gross-out tolerance. Get ready for the hardest, the dirtiest, the most disgusting day of your life," Grylls says in the trailer. "I Survived Bear Grylls" debuts Thursday on TBS.

— Alicia Rancilio

NEW VIDEO GAMES TO PLAY

— The Lego brand encompasses all sorts of pop culture icons, from "Star Wars" to "Seinfeld." But sometimes you just want to build a Lego car and take it for a spin. In 2K Games' Lego 2K Drive, you can assemble a high-speed racer brick-by-brick, then compete against your friends to find out who's got the zippiest monster on the track. If you want to go off-road, you can turn your car into an all-terrain vehicle, a boat or even an aircraft. Visual Concepts, the studio behind the NBA 2K franchise, is promising a huge open world in which you can take your driver from rookie to world champion — or just tool around smashing into things. Your Lego garage opens for business Friday on PlayStation 5/4, Xbox X/S/One, Nintendo Switch and PC.

— "I awoke one morning to find I was a dog" is a heck of a way to open a video game. Humanity gets weirder from there. The dog is a glowing Shiba Inu, and his mission is to guide the human masses toward salvation at the end of the world. Sounds heavy, but the result is the sort of hypnotic puzzle game you'd expect from Enhance, the developers responsible for Tetris Effect and Rez Infinite. It's reminiscent of the 1990s classic Lemmings in that you're trying to steer crowds of mindless creatures away from a gruesome demise, but once the hordes start fighting each other, this pup's got a whole new set of problems. With 90-plus levels and the tools for users to build their own, Humanity could last for an eternity. The herding begins Tuesday on PlayStation 5/4 and PC.

— Lou Kesten

Catch up on AP's entertainment coverage here: <https://apnews.com/apf-entertainment>.

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

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,

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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.

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.

Threatening 22 million people, Mexico’s Popocatepetl is a very closely watched volcano

By MARÍA VERZA Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico’s Popocatepetl volcano rumbled to life again this week, belching out towering clouds of ash that forced 11 villages to cancel school sessions.

The residents weren’t the only ones keeping a close eye on the towering peak. Every time there is a sigh, tic or heave in Popocatepetl, there are dozens of scientists, a network of sensors and cameras, and a roomful of powerful equipment watching its every move.

The 17,797-foot (5,426-meter) volcano, known affectionately as “El Popo,” has been spewing toxic fumes, ash and lumps of incandescent rock persistently for almost 30 years, since it awakened from a long slumber in 1994.

The volcano is 45 miles (72 kilometers) southeast of Mexico City, but looms much closer to the eastern fringes of the metropolitan area of 22 million people. The city also faces threats from earthquakes and sinking soil, but the volcano is the most visible potential danger — and the most closely watched. A severe eruption could cut off air traffic, or smother the city in clouds of choking ash.

Ringed around its summit are six cameras, a thermal imaging device and 12 seismological monitoring stations that operate 24 hours a day, all reporting back to an equipment-filled command center in Mexico City.

A total of 13 scientists from a multidisciplinary team take turns staffing the command center around the clock. Being able to warn of an impending ash cloud is key, because people can take precautions. Unlike earthquakes, warning times can be longer for the volcano and in general the peak is more predictable.

On a recent day, researcher Paulino Alonso made the rounds, checking the readings at the command center run by Mexico’s National Disaster Prevention Center, known by its initials as Cenapred. It is a complex task that involves seismographs that measure the volcano’s internal trembling, which could indicate hot rock and gas moving up the vents in the peak.

Monitoring gases in nearby springs and at the peak — and wind patterns that help determine where the ash could be blown — also play a role.

The forces inside are so great that they can temporarily deform the peak, so cameras and sensors must monitor the very shape of the volcano.

How do you explain all of this to 25 million non-experts living within a 62-mile (100-kilometer) radius who have grown so used to living near the volcano?

Authorities came up with the simple idea of a volcano “stoplight” with three colors: green for safety, yellow for alert and red for danger.

For most of the years since the stoplight was introduced, it has been stuck at some stage of “yellow.” The mountain sometimes quiets down, but not for long. It seldom shoots up molten lava: instead it’s more the “explosive” type, showering out hot rocks that tumble down its flanks and emitting bursts of gas and ash.

The center also has monitors in other states; Mexico is a country all too familiar with natural disasters.

For example, Mexico’s earthquake early alert system is also based at the command center. Because the city’s soil is so soft — it was built on a former lake bed — a quake hundreds of miles away on the Pacific

coast can cause huge destruction in the capital, as happened in 1985 and 2017.

A system of seismic monitors along the coast sends messages that race faster than the quake's shock waves. Once the sirens start blaring, it can give Mexico City residents up to half a minute to get to safety, usually on the streets outside.

British climber scales Everest for 17th time, the most by a non-Sherpa guide

By BINAJ GURUBACHARYA Associated Press

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — A British mountain guide returned to Nepal's capital on Friday after scaling Mount Everest for a 17th time, breaking his own record for the most ascents of the world's highest mountain by a non-Sherpa guide.

Kenton Cool first climbed Mount Everest in 2004 and has been doing it almost every year since then.

"I really don't think records belong on the mountains. Mountains are bigger than records," Cool said at Kathmandu airport after getting off the helicopter that brought him back from Everest. "I am just happy we had a great climb and that we are back."

Only Nepali Sherpa guides have scaled the peak more times than Cool. Veteran Sherpa guide Kami Rita climbed the mountain this week for a record 27th time. Another Sherpa guide, Pasang Dawa, has scaled it 26 times. Both Kami Rita and Pasang Dawa are still on the 8,849-meter (29,032-foot) mountain with their climbing groups and there is a chance they could reach the summit again before the spring climbing season finishes at the end of this month.

Hundreds of climbers and their local guides are currently on Everest and a rush for the summit is expected in the next few weeks. Nepalese authorities issued about 470 permits to climb Everest this season.

Nine people have died on Everest this year, including four Sherpa guides.

Cool was unable to climb Everest in 2014 because the season was canceled after 16 Sherpa guides were killed in an avalanche, and again in 2015 when an earthquake triggered an avalanche that killed 19 people. The 2020 climbing season was canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic.

In El Salvador, transgender community struggles for rights and survival

By MARÍA TERESA HERNÁNDEZ Associated Press

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (AP) — Fabricio Chicas knows exactly what will happen. As soon as he hands in his ID, the employee on the other side of the counter will look at him with suspicion, asking why he carries a document that identifies him as female.

Whether it is a bank, a hospital or a human resources office, the 49-year-old Salvadoran provides the same answer: I am a transgender man who has not been able to change his name and gender on his ID.

His fate is shared by many transgender people in El Salvador, a Central American country where the influence of Catholicism and evangelicalism is pervasive, abortion is banned, and the legalization of same-sex marriage seems unlikely for now.

In 2022, the country's Supreme Court determined that the inability of a person to change their name because of gender identity constitutes discriminatory treatment. A ruling ordered the National Assembly to enact a reform that facilitates that process, but the deadline expired three months ago, and the lawmakers did not comply.

"It is part of a much broader pattern of weakening the rule of law and judicial independence," said Cristian González Cabrera, LGBTQ rights researcher at Human Rights Watch. "Since President Nayib Bukele's party won a supermajority in the Assembly after the 2021 elections, democratic institutions have been under attack by him and his allies."

In recent years, a transgender man and woman pursued name and gender modifications via the judicial system. The judges ruled in their favor, but municipal employees refused to change their birth certificates

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and filed an appeal at the Supreme Court, avoiding compliance with the ruling. Neither of the plaintiffs know what will happen next.

When he was little, Chicas' mother agreed to dress him in masculine clothes and called him "my boy." Things changed when he turned 9.

"I was abused, and my mom started to overprotect me," he said.

Perhaps feeling that treating Chicas as a boy exposed him to harm, she dressed him again in girl's clothing and braided his hair. "I was so depressed I didn't want to live," he recalled.

When he turned 15, he met a transgender man who advised him to get hormonal injections and start his physical transformation. The man also suggested pressing his breasts with an iron to prevent them from growing.

Chicas ended up in the hospital, with an infection produced by hematomas, and his mother made him swear he would never alter his body to look like a man.

Though he said yes, he promised something to himself: I'll grow up, find a job and leave.

Early in a transition, lack of support from one's own family is often the biggest challenge, said Mónica Linares.

The 43-year-old transgender woman left her home when she turned 14 and started her transition. She currently works as an activist at the organization ASPIDH Arcoiris Trans.

"It hasn't been easy, but when you really have an identity and you want to defend what you really want, you are willing to lose everything," Linares said.

For more than 15 years, she was a sex worker. She lost friends to transphobic killings and saw others migrate because of gangs.

Part of her current work is collaborating with other organizations to support LGBTQ rights, especially pressuring lawmakers who show little interest in reviewing a gender identity bill that was presented by transgender representatives in 2021.

The bill would comply with the Supreme Court's ruling from 2022 and go a step further, allowing trans people to change not only their names but also their gender on official paperwork.

The lack of IDs that are consistent with the gender identity of transgender Salvadoreans can make their daily life troublesome. Sometimes these inconveniences are hurtful.

Some employees of internet companies refuse to resolve complaints made by phone, alleging that the voice of the person issuing the complaint does not match the gender they have on file.

Insurers don't allow transgender people to register their partners as beneficiaries in the event of death, since their guidelines state that couples must consist of a man and a woman.

Chicas has had problems collecting remittances that his sister sends from the United States. He said banks have denied him loans, and some employers have not hired him because his applications reveal that he is a transgender man.

In hospitals, he said, nurses have made fun of him. Since Chicas still requires gynecological consultations, health personnel often call him by the female name on his ID or have delayed his appointments, claiming that they cannot treat "people like him."

In this religious country, discrimination against transgender people goes beyond paperwork.

Three decades ago, Chicas tried to join the Jehovah's Witnesses. He attended their temples, read their texts, interacted with their elders.

"I admire that they are a family that takes care of each other, that they are very loving," he said.

His mother warned him, saying that Jehovah's Witnesses don't welcome sexual diversity. But Chicas wanted to be part of the congregation so much that he put away his pants, bought a skirt and allowed his hair to grow.

He spent time preaching alongside them, but always felt monitored.

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"In a meeting, they started talking about the black herd and the white herd and I said, "Well, I am the black herd, but I don't hurt anyone,"" he recalled.

One day, while toying with the idea of being baptized, the elders advised him as if he were a criminal. "You must reread the Bible ... Close your bedroom doors when your nieces are visiting." They also wanted him to date another church member.

When he did not agree to date a man, he said, the congregation began to ignore him. Soon after, they denied him access to the worship hall, and he ran home to cry.

I told you so, his mother said to him.

"So I stopped going. I had to let go. I went back to dressing like a man. I went back to the world, rejected by Jehovah's Witnesses."

A report that Human Rights Watch and COMCAVIS TRANS published in 2022 details how transgender people in El Salvador suffer violence and discrimination.

"Security forces, gangs, and victims' families and communities are perpetrators; harm occurs in public spaces, homes, schools, and places of worship," the report states.

Latin American countries such as Chile, Argentina, Cuba, Colombia and Mexico have issued laws that protect some rights of the LGBTQ community and allow transgender people to modify their official documents to match their gender identity. In El Salvador, though, since Bukele came into power in 2019, there have been setbacks for LGBTQ people.

Among other actions, the government dissolved the Ministry for Social Inclusion, which conducted training on gender identity and investigated LGBTQ issues nationwide, and it restructured an educational institute for addressing sexual orientation in schools.

Bukele has said that he will never legalize same-sex marriage and the Catholic Church has backed his position. The archdiocese's office did not respond to multiple AP requests for comment.

Socially conservative organizations such as Fundación Vida SV also reject a change in legislation.

"The state cannot change the biological reality of a person," said its founder, Sara Larín.

Violence against trans women in the country has increased in the last two years, said Rina Montti, director of investigations at the human rights organization Cristosal.

"The most dramatic thing is the impunity with which many state officials, particularly police officers, are operating," she said. "Trans women are assaulted when they feel like it, they can abuse them, they can hire them and then not pay for their services."

Victims who have shared their cases with Cristosal have said that if they go to the prosecutor's office, authorities make them wait all day and never take their statement.

"The level of impunity and humiliation is much deeper, because they are not even taken as people who can complain," Montti said.

A spokesperson for the presidency did not respond to several requests to interview a police representative or other government officials.

In the backyard of Chicas' house, Pongo and Polar Bear wave their tails and hop like kangaroos.

Behind the dogs comes Elizabeth López, Chicas' partner for the last seven years. The couple met soon after Chicas' mother died, when he decided to use hormones and start his transition.

At first, López seems distrustful. Too many strangers have hurt them beyond words.

She bitterly remembers a guard who ordered them to leave a public pool after Chicas said he was unable to remove his shirt, given that his physical transition was incomplete. They both recall the time when he had emergency surgery and health personnel forbid her to visit, alleging that they were both "women," so they could never marry or become a family.

Chicas disagrees. Family, he said, are not the ones who share blood; they are the ones who support each other.

The couple has been sharing their home with a young transgender man who left his own home. Chicas

offers care and advice.

Recently, the young man came home accompanied by his girlfriend and approached Chicas to introduce them. He told his girlfriend: "Meet my old man."

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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 the history of either franchise, 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.

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 Lomberg 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 Lomberg'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

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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.

Follow Aaron Beard on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/aaronbeardap>

AP NHL Playoffs: <https://apnews.com/hub/stanley-cup> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Today in History: May 20, Lindbergh takes off

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, May 20, the 140th day of 2023. There are 225 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 20, 1956, the United States exploded the first airborne hydrogen bomb over Bikini Atoll in the Pacific.

On this date:

In 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act, which was intended to encourage settlements west of the Mississippi River by making federal land available for farming.

In 1916, the Saturday Evening Post published its first Norman Rockwell cover; the illustration shows a scowling boy dressed in his Sunday best, dutifully pushing a baby carriage past a couple of boys wearing baseball uniforms.

In 1927, Charles Lindbergh took off from Roosevelt Field on Long Island, New York, aboard the Spirit of

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St. Louis on his historic solo flight to France.

In 1932, Amelia Earhart took off from Newfoundland to become the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic. (Because of weather and equipment problems, Earhart set down in Northern Ireland instead of her intended destination, France.)

In 1948, Chiang Kai-shek (chang ky-shehk) was inaugurated as the first president of the Republic of China (Taiwan).

In 1959, nearly 5,000 Japanese-Americans had their U.S. citizenships restored after choosing to renounce them during World War II.

In 1961, a white mob attacked a busload of Freedom Riders in Montgomery, Alabama, prompting the federal government to send in U.S. marshals to restore order.

In 1969, U.S. and South Vietnamese forces captured Ap Bia Mountain, referred to as "Hamburger Hill" by the Americans, following one of the bloodiest battles of the Vietnam War.

In 1985, Radio Marti, operated by the U.S. government, began broadcasting; Cuba responded by attempting to jam its signal.

In 2009, in a rare, bipartisan defeat for President Barack Obama, the Senate voted overwhelmingly, 90-6, to keep the prison at Guantanamo Bay open for the foreseeable future and forbid the transfer of any detainees to facilities in the United States.

In 2015, four of the world's biggest banks — JPMorgan Chase, Citigroup's banking unit Citicorp, Barclays and the Royal Bank of Scotland — agreed to pay more than \$5 billion in penalties and plead guilty to rigging the currency markets.

In 2020, President Donald Trump threatened to hold up federal funds for two election battleground states (Michigan and Nevada) that were making it easier to vote by mail during the pandemic.

Ten years ago: An EF5 tornado struck Moore, Oklahoma, killing at least 24 people and flattening 1,100 homes. Former general Thein Sein (thayn sayn) became the first president of Myanmar in 47 years to visit the White House, where President Barack Obama said he appreciated the Asian leader's efforts to lead the country in "a long and sometimes difficult" path toward democracy. Ray Manzarek, 74, a founding member of the 1960s rock group the Doors, died in Rosenheim, Germany.

Five years ago: Venezuelan officials declared socialist leader Nicolas Maduro the easy winner of the country's presidential election; his leading challenger questioned the legitimacy of a vote marred by irregularities. Lava flowing from fissures on Kilauea, Hawaii, reached the Pacific Ocean, critically injuring one person. The Vegas Golden Knights reached the Stanley Cup Finals, becoming the first NHL expansion team to achieve the feat since 1968.

One year ago: President Joe Biden opened a six-day trip to Asia by touring a South Korean computer chip factory that would be the model for a plant in Texas, holding it out as an illustration of how deeper ties with the Indo-Pacific could fuel technological innovation and foster vibrant democracies. Newly discovered emails show that Virginia "Ginni" Thomas, wife of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, was more deeply involved in baseless efforts to overturn the 2020 election than previously known. Longtime New Yorker writer and editor Roger Angell, who contributed hundreds of essays and stories to the magazine over a 70-year career, died at age 101.

Today's Birthdays: Actor-author James McEachin is 93. Actor Anthony Zerbe is 87. Actor David Proval is 81. Singer-actor Cher is 77. Actor-comedian Dave Thomas is 75. Rock musician Warren Cann is 73. Sen. Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, is 72. Former New York Gov. David Paterson is 69. Delaware Gov. John Carney is 67. Actor Dean Butler is 67. TV-radio personality Ron Reagan is 65. Rock musician Jane Wiedlin (The Go-Go's) is 65. Actor Bronson Pinchot is 64. Singer Susan Cowsill is 64. Actor John Billingsley is 63. Actor Tony Goldwyn is 63. Singer Nick Heyward is 62. TV personality Ted Allen is 58. Actor Mindy Cohn is 57. Rock musician Tom Gorman (Belly) is 57. Actor Gina Ravera is 57. Actor Timothy Olyphant is 55. Former race car driver Tony Stewart is 52. Rapper Busta Rhymes is 51. Actor Daya Vaidya is 50. Actor Matt Czuchry (zoo-KREE') is 46. Actor Angela Goethals is 46. Actor-singer Naturi Naughton is 39. Country singer Jon Pardi is 38.