

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Groton Community Calendar

### Friday, May 26

Senior Menu: Lemon chicken breast, creamy noodles, tomato spoon salad, banana bars, whole wheat bread.

Faculty In-Service

State Track Meet in Sioux Falls

### Saturday, May 27

State Track Meet in Sioux Falls

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

### Sunday, May 28

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

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

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

**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 kind of beauty I want most is the hard-to-get kind that comes from within-- strength, courage, dignity."

-RUBY DEE



## Groton Reservoir Update

Work continues on the 450,000 gallon reservoir. According to Water Superintendent Terry Herron, it looks like June 7th may be the date when full water restrictions will be lifted. There is still some painting that needs to be done, time for curing, filling the reservoir and then two water samples sent in to the state. It's all a process, but there is progress.

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

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m. (Kathy Gubin leading worship)

Legion Baseball: At Clark, 1 game, noon.

Jr. Legion Baseball: at Clark, 1:30 p.m., 1 game

## Weber Landscaping Greenhouse Now Open!

620 West Third Ave., Groton

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



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## The Bulletin by Newsweek

JANUARY 24, 2023

### World in Brief

12 years in prison.

A doctor who spoke publicly about providing an abortion for a 10-year-old rape victim from Ohio last year has been reprimanded by Indiana's medical licensing board, citing a violation of privacy laws.

CEOs Elon Musk of Tesla and Jim Farley of Ford Motor Company said that Ford customers will be able to utilize the Tesla Supercharger electric vehicle charging network in North America starting in early 2024.

The suspect in the shooting and stabbing incident that left four people dead in Nakano, Japan, has been arrested. The man with a hunting rifle and a knife opened fire before barricading himself in a building.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russia has begun moving nuclear weapons to Belarus, which shares a border with Ukraine. Meanwhile, at least one person has died and several others were injured in a missile strike on a hospital in the Ukrainian city of Dnipro.

### WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAY AHEAD

A flurry of economic data releases is scheduled ahead of the Memorial Day weekend. The Federal Reserve's closely watched PCE index, durable goods, and consumer sentiment figures are due from 8:30 a.m. ET.

The Louisiana State University Tigers Women's Basketball team and the University of Connecticut Huskies Men's Basketball team are expected to visit the White House today for ceremonies celebrating their NCAA Championship wins.

Disney's *The Little Mermaid* live-action movie hits theaters.

Poland's lower house of parliament is expected to vote on a divisive proposal to create a commission that would investigate Russia's influence within the country.

As House Republicans leave for a Memorial Day weekend recess, the White House and congressional Republicans inched closer to a deal that would raise the debt ceiling for two years but cap spending on discretionary programs. Credit rating agency Fitch has put America's AAA rating on a "negative watch."

Oath Keepers founder Stewart Rhodes was sentenced to 18 years in prison for seditious conspiracy, the longest sentence yet for a Capitol rioter. Kelly Meggs, another member of the far-right militia group, was sentenced to

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## First Round State Track and Field

The first round of the State Track Meet was held Thursday in Sioux Falls. The Groton Area Boys 4x100m relay team just missed getting into the finals with a second place finish in their heat. The winner of each heat plus the next five best times qualify for the finals. Groton Area placed 13th overall. The boys 4x800m relay team placed 10th, the boys sprint relay team placed 15th, the girls 4x800m relay team placed 12th and Aspen Johnson placed 18th in the triple jump.

**Girls Triple Jump:** 18, Aspen Johnson (12), 31-11½

**Girls 4x800 Meter Relay:** 12. (Faith Traphagen [10], Kella Tracy [8], Ashlynn Warrington [8], Taryn Traphagen [8]), 10:16.93

**Boys 1600m Sprint Relay:** 15. (Andrew Marzahn [12], Lane Tietz [11], Keegen Tracy [9], Blake Pauli [10]), 3:47.87

**Boys 4x800m Relay:** 10. (Keegen Tracy [9], Cole Simon [12], Blake Pauli [10], Lane Tietz [11]), 8:35.88

**Boys 4x100 Meter Relay Prelims:** 13. Andrew Marzahn [12], Ryder Johnson [9], Teylor Diegel [10], Korbin Kucker [10]), 45.73

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**The Groton City Electric Department has been busy changing out utility poles around town. Many of the poles are the original ones when electricity was brought to Groton many decades ago. Electric Superintendent Todd Gay is getting the pole property set while Journeyman Apprentice Landon Johnson runs the digger truck. (Photo by Paul Kosel)**

**GDILIVE.COM**



**Groton Memorial Day Program at Noon  
on Monday, May 29th**

**Free Viewing Sponsored by Groton  
American Legion Post #39**



Pictured left to right are Carlee Johnson, Carly Gilbert, Mia Crank, Shaylee Peterson, Carly Guthmiller and Coach Joel Guthmiller. (Courtesy Photo)

## Groton Area Golf Team Qualifies for State

The Groton girls golf team qualified for state in Rapid City on June 5th and 6th, by placing 3rd at the Region 1A golf tournament.

Carly Guthmiller 36 front 37 back, total 73 to place 1st. Carlee Johnson 43 front 44 back, total 87 to place 12th. Carly Gilbert 50 front 46 back total 96 21st. Mia Crank 45 front 51 back total 96 21st. Shaylee Peterson 55 front 62 back total 117.

## Travel South Dakota Grows Passports Program

PIERRE S.D. – In 2022, Travel South Dakota launched its free mobile-exclusive passports program featuring the Great Finds and State of Create passports. This year, Travel South Dakota is expanding the program with three new passports: Peaks to Plains, Tribal Nations and Black to Yellow.

The passport program uses gamification to encourage individuals to explore and experience the many hidden treasures found throughout the entire state. With these passports, visitors and locals can check into designated locations to unlock a broad range of fun South Dakota prizes based on points accumulated by the number of places visited.

South Dakota's tourism industry partners have connected with the Travel South Dakota team to highlight businesses, locations or events. This provides an opportunity to encourage visitors to explore all corners of South Dakota.

The free South Dakota Passports program is a key component of Travel South Dakota's marketing efforts. The goal is to highlight every area of South Dakota, encouraging individuals to explore additional attractions & regions beyond the familiar.

Peaks to Plains is the newest passport launched by Travel South Dakota. In collaboration with South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks, the Peaks to Plains passport is designed to highlight the hidden-gem state parks and outdoor attractions across the state. Learn the details about this new passport on [TravelSouthDakota.com/PeaksToPlains](https://TravelSouthDakota.com/PeaksToPlains).

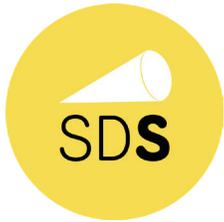
Tribal Nations: Oceti Sakotwin is the next passport. It will showcase more than 35 locations that share the story of Indigenous culture & history in South Dakota. The passport is scheduled to launch before July 1.

The fifth passport, Black to Yellow, is scheduled for launch later in 2023 to highlight areas of the Black to Yellow Trail linking travelers from Chicago and Yellowstone through South Dakota. Black to Yellow specifically aims to promote locations across Interstate 90 and Highway 14 through South Dakota.

Each passport starts over each year, and points expire annually. Users who signed up for any of the South Dakota Passports prior to April 2023 will need to sign up again. Visitors should be directed to [TravelSouthDakota.com/Passports](https://TravelSouthDakota.com/Passports) for information about signing up and the expiration for each passport.

For more information, please contact Mike Gussiaas, Global Marketing & Brand Strategy Director.

The South Dakota Department of Tourism is comprised of Travel South Dakota and the South Dakota Arts Council. The Department is led by Secretary James D. Hagen.



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **Noem criticizes universities, issues series of 'challenges'**

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - MAY 25, 2023 6:02 PM**

Gov. Kristi Noem challenged the South Dakota Board of Regents in a letter Thursday to "improve higher education" in the state through a range of suggestions.

Noem said she wants to bolster free speech, ban drag shows and the use of preferred pronouns on campuses, root out Chinese influence, require U.S. history and government classes, improve graduation rates and make higher education more affordable.

The board is a constitutionally established state entity that oversees the operation of the state's public university system. Although Noem has appointed and reappointed six of the eight board members, she does not have direct control over board actions.

The board governs Black Hills State University, Dakota State University, Northern State University, South Dakota Mines, South Dakota State University, the University of South Dakota, the School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, South Dakota Services for the Deaf, BHSU-Rapid City and USD-Sioux Falls.

Shuree Mortenson, spokesperson for the board, said the board has worked on several of the letter's suggestions for years.

"This letter, along with our internal Strategic Plan and Senate Bill 55 Legislative Task Force, presents solutions to support the growth of South Dakota's workforce through our public universities," Mortenson said in an emailed statement. "As the public university system of South Dakota, our main goal is to prepare the next generation of leaders with the necessary skills to grow our state's economy. We are fully committed to this mission."

The task force Mortenson referenced was mandated by the Legislature in 2020 to study the operations and functions of higher education.

*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.*

### **COMMENTARY**

## **Eight supervisors, seven years: The 'challenging' Black Hills National Forest**

**SETH TUPPER**

The Black Hills National Forest has its eighth supervisor in the past seven years, and if recent history is any indication, he probably doesn't fully recognize what he's up against.

Carl Petrick, most recently the supervisor of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests, won't stay long in his new Black Hills post. He's an acting supervisor, like five of the prior seven people in the job.

His predecessor, departing Acting Supervisor Bryan Karchut, said during a recent public meeting that the Forest Service is "trying to reduce the amount of transition between these leadership roles." He predicted the agency will keep Petrick in place until a permanent hire is made.

"Optimally, this position would be filled in the next three months," Karchut said. "If it's not optimal, it could be five, six months?"

### **Turnover begins with 2016 retirement**

The supervisor carousel started spinning in 2016 after the retirement of Craig Bobzien, who lasted 11

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years in the job. With a knack for diplomacy, he weathered difficult times, including a mountain pine beetle epidemic that killed millions of trees and the imposition of new regulations on off-road vehicles.

Everybody who's followed Bobzien has seemed competent and qualified, but they've all struggled to deal effectively with the diverse interests that constantly work to influence forest management in the Black Hills. Those interests include loggers, miners, prospectors, ATVers, hikers, bicyclists, horseback riders, cross-country skiers, hunters, campers, beachgoers, boaters, anglers, birders, ranchers, Native Americans, conservationists, environmentalists, botanists, archaeologists, cavers, tourists, and politicians, to name a few. And they all know exactly how the forest should be managed.

The first person to confront that panoply after Bobzien was Jim Zornes, an acting supervisor whose Southern drawl stood out like a palmetto in a pine forest. He was one of many supervisors to be surprised by what he found in the Black Hills.

"Ya'll got inholdins'," he proclaimed at one public meeting during his short tenure.

He was talking about "inholdings" — parcels of privately owned land within a national forest — and he was right. The Black Hills has a lot of those, thanks in part to gold rush-era land claims that predated the creation of the national forest.

The forest also neighbors a state park, a national park, a national monument and a national memorial. Dealing with all those private and public landowners is yet another reason the Black Hills is a difficult forest to manage. And I suspect that difficulty has been extreme for people like Zornes and some of his successors who've been dropped into the Black Hills from forests far away.

## Challenges are many

After Zornes came Mark Van Every, a permanent hire who walked right into the kind of thorny controversy that's a hallmark of Black Hills land management.

State officials wanted to convert some national forest land in Spearfish Canyon to a state park. Van Every told the media that he and his staff had not been consulted. That rankled people in the governor's office and the state's congressional delegation, who showed proof of consultations with the Forest Service from before Van Every's arrival. Van Every issued an apology, but the park plan remained controversial for myriad reasons, and state officials ultimately dropped it.

By the time Van Every retired in 2019, arguments about logging in the Black Hills were ratcheting up. Evidence was mounting that the beetle epidemic and increasingly severe wildfires had altered the forest. Forest Service researchers said if logging continued unabated, it would only be a few decades before the forest was depleted of trees big enough to harvest.

Since then, logging has declined, Hill City has suffered a sawmill closure, and tension has persisted among the Forest Service, loggers, conservationists and environmentalists.

That wasn't the only challenge Van Every left behind for the parade of supervisors who've followed him. The forest is also overdue for a rewrite of its management plan — an exhaustive, years-long process that's now underway.

Into that maelstrom of issues, the Forest Service has tossed Andrew Johnson, Jerry Krueger, Jack Isaacs, Jeff Tomac, Karchut and Petrick. All but Tomac were acting supervisors; he took a transfer to Washington, D.C., last month after a little more than two years on the job.

## A 'primo job'

Recently, Tomac and Karchut dealt with vociferous public opposition to proposed exploratory drilling in the forest. The Forest Service's regional office in Denver intervened to propose a "mineral withdrawal" — a removal of the national forest land around Pactola Reservoir from eligibility for new drilling and mining projects.

That brought Jacque Buchanan, a deputy regional forester, to Rapid City for a public hearing on the plan last month. She works for the Forest Service's Rocky Mountain Region, which oversees 17 national forests and seven national grasslands in five states.

I asked her, "Why do you go through so many supervisors here?"

"You know, I'll be honest," she said. "The Black Hills is a challenging forest."

She quickly added it's a "glorious forest" with "unique and wonderful aspects." But it also has the aforementioned array of competing interests.

"I think it's probably the most challenging forest in our region," Buchanan said.

The position of Black Hills National Forest supervisor was formerly known as a "primo" job, said Dave Mertz, who was the forest's natural resource officer when he retired six years ago. Now, according to Mertz, people in the Forest Service ask, "Who would want this job?"

That's unfortunate, because there are few higher callings in the field of natural resource management than serving as lead caretaker of such a remarkable place.

And although many have come to view the clash of interests in the Black Hills as a problem, it's also an opportunity: There may be no other national forest with such a wide range of people so deeply committed to its stewardship.

In other words, for the right person, being supervisor of the Black Hills National Forest could still be a primo job.

*Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.*

## Environmental groups seek Biden moratorium on carbon dioxide pipelines

**BY: JARED STRONG - MAY 25, 2023 6:29 PM**

President Joe Biden should prevent the construction of new carbon dioxide pipelines until changes to federal rules are adopted to increase their safety, opponents of the projects said Thursday.

The call for an executive order to stall the projects comes as federal regulators consider changes to pipeline requirements and are set to hold a two-day meeting in Des Moines, Iowa, next week to discuss their safety and gain public feedback.

Biden has little say over whether Iowa regulators issue hazardous liquid pipeline permits to the three companies who currently seek them. Approval from the federal Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, which regulates the pipelines from a safety perspective, is not required by Iowa Utilities Board's permit process, said Don Tormey, an IUB spokesperson.

However, pipeline opponents said Biden could potentially block their construction on federal lands and across certain waterways.

"President Biden has the power to put a halt to the carbon capture scam by issuing an executive order and directing federal agencies to restrict permits for projects until regulatory safeguards are in place," said Jim Walsh, policy director for Food & Water Watch.

That group and others have for months sought to halt the state permitting processes while PHMSA considers changes to its safety requirements in light of a carbon dioxide pipeline rupture in Mississippi that sickened 45 people in 2020.

"We are talking about a hazardous material that can cause rapid health effects over a very short period of time," said Ted Schettler, science director for the Science and Environmental Health Network, who warned that there aren't adequate regulations of the pipelines.

### **A confluence of factors**

The pipeline rupture in Satartia, Mississippi, has been a rallying cry for those who oppose carbon dioxide pipelines. They object to the projects because of the generous federal tax incentives for capturing the greenhouse gas from ethanol plants and other emitters, the potential for the pipelines to prolong the use of fossil fuels for energy, and for what they see as the erosion of property rights for landowners who lie in the pipeline paths.

There's also the issue of public safety. A PHMSA review of the Satartia incident found that operator Denbury Gulf Coast Pipelines failed to anticipate threats to the integrity of its pipeline, underestimated the areas that could be affected by a breach, and failed to notify local officials of a safety hazard.

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Jesse Harris, director of public affairs for Summit Carbon Solutions, which seeks to build one of the pipelines in Iowa, said the company learned from Denbury's mistakes and incorporated that into its design and operations plans. He noted that the company was found by federal regulators to be in "non-compliance with multiple existing regulations."

A PHMSA report also noted: "The weather conditions and unique topography of the accident site prevented the CO2 vapor from rapidly dispersing and allowing a plume to form that migrated toward Satartia."

That is not typical, a PHMSA administrator told state lawmakers this year. The administrator noted about 100 unintentional carbon dioxide releases from pipelines in the past two decades — all of them smaller than the Mississippi release — and one resulting injury.

"What the normal situation is: you have a release of carbon dioxide, you've got warm air and it goes up in the air," said Linda Daugherty, the administrator. "There's already CO2 in the atmosphere. It just goes up. There's wind, and it'll mix it up and disperse it."

## Greater precautions

But the potential for another confluence of factors that mimic the Mississippi situation means that the pipelines need more robust safety requirements, pipeline opponents argue.

"There's no requirement to add an odorant into the pipeline so that the public could know that there is a dangerous level of CO2 that could be asphyxiating them," said Bill Caram, executive director of the Pipeline Safety Trust. "We need better regulations to identify the communities that could be impacted in the case of a pipeline failure. Notably, Satartia was not identified by the operator Denbury as being potentially impacted by the failure."

The Satartia rupture was preceded by heavy rains that caused a landslide around a section of pipe, but Caram said more should be done to reduce subtle, longer-term threats to the integrity of the pipelines.

One of those threats is corrosion that is caused by contaminants. Navigator CO2 Ventures, one of the three companies that proposes a pipeline in Iowa, has said ethanol plants are an ideal source of carbon dioxide because their emissions have reduced contaminants.

"But when we start looking at capturing CO2 from power plants and things like that, there will be more water and other impurities that pose both public health risks and pipeline integrity risks to these pipelines," Caram said.

A PHMSA draft of the new proposed rules is expected early next year.

The agency's "CO2 Public Meeting 2023" is set to be held May 31 and June 1 in Des Moines.

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

## Fentanyl-related drugs permanently made criminal under bill passed by U.S. House

**74 Democrats join SD's Rep. Johnson and other Republicans voting in favor**

**BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - MAY 25, 2023 3:00 PM**

WASHINGTON — Lawmakers in the U.S. House passed bipartisan legislation Thursday in an effort to curb staggering overdose deaths from illegal fentanyl substances that are illicitly produced and up to 50 times stronger than heroin.

The HALT Fentanyl Act, passed on a 289-133 vote with 74 Democratic votes and support from the Biden administration, would permanently categorize lab-made substances with similar chemical structures to fentanyl among the most strictly regulated drugs under U.S. law. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, voted in favor of the bill.

The Drug Enforcement Administration in 2015 temporarily defined 17 fentanyl-related substances as Schedule I — the category carrying the most severe criminal penalties. Congress has since extended the temporary scheduling multiple times.

While proponents who point to record-breaking overdose deaths say the legislation would hold traffickers accountable, numerous advocacy groups argue the bill is under researched and risks criminal charges for those in possession of small amounts of "harmless and inert substances," according to a letter signed by 150 organizations.

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.

The study shows that deaths attributed to synthetic opioids, including fentanyl and its many analogues, have been steadily on the rise, with a staggering jump in recent years.

The CDC tracked a record 107,622 overdose deaths in 2021 — 71,238 of them due to manmade, illegal fentanyl substances.

The DEA attributes more deaths to illegal fentanyl among Americans under 50 than any cause of death, including heart disease, cancer, homicide, suicide and other accidents.

Of particular concern is that illicit fentanyl substances are often cut into other recreational drugs, including cocaine, methamphetamine and heroin, with users unaware of its presence.

"The HALT Fentanyl Act would ban fentanyl analogues and strip the drug cartels and other criminals of the incentive to create new versions of fentanyl to skirt around the law," GOP Rep. Brett Guthrie of Kentucky said on the House floor late Wednesday. "This bill is a key step to help get these poisons off our streets and give law enforcement the tools they need to crack down on illicit fentanyl traffic trafficking."

### Effect on loved ones

Sunday will mark nine months since Deb and Ray Cullen, of Shippingport, Pennsylvania, lost their 23-year-old son Zachary to a drug overdose.

The Shippensburg University student had traveled with two friends to Harrisburg for a birthday weekend trip.

"They were having dinner, having drinks, enjoying themselves. And then at some point, the detective told us that he thinks that they were targeted by a dealer. He doesn't think they were looking for anything but thinks somebody came up to them and offered, and they made the choice to purchase some cocaine. And the cocaine was laced with fentanyl," Deb said.

The morning they received the news, Ray and Deb say, they turned on Zachary's laptop to find that he had left open study materials for his university course in managerial economics.

"He passed away. His friend survived, but with some physical issues. So we're here trying to just make a difference so that other families don't have to go through this," she said Thursday shortly after the vote while sitting in the office of GOP Rep. John Joyce, her representative and a co-sponsor of the bill.

The parents said they hope to see more awareness and an end to the stigma around those with substance

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use disorder and those who experiment with drugs that they are unaware are laced with illicit fentanyl.

"There's a lot of recreational cocaine and drug use. There was (someone yesterday) who said that had (the users) not done something illegal, that they would still be here," Ray said. "I'm like, 'Well, there's a lot of things that get done illegally that you don't die from.'"

"I think people that are dealing this drug, they need to be held accountable," Deb added.

Joyce said he has been following up with the family since they emailed his office shortly after their son's death.

"I went over to Speaker McCarthy (today) and said 'Up there in the gallery, there are parents who have lost their son, and they're courageous and they continue to work to spread this message and have taken time out of their busy lives to come to Washington and drive down here for this vote,'" Joyce said.

"This is an initial step. We need to take additional steps to (go after) the active ingredients which are shipped from China, to Mexico to the cartels, formulated and brought through our borders to kill our family or neighbors or friends," Joyce continued.

Unlike legal fentanyl that doctors prescribe after surgery or for advanced stage cancer patients, illicit fentanyl and fentanyl-related substances are produced in underground labs by transnational criminal organizations.

## Concerns over mandatory minimums

More than 150 harm reduction, criminal justice and civil liberties organizations have come out against the bill, which was introduced this Congress by GOP Reps. Morgan Griffith of Virginia and Robert Latta of Ohio.

In a letter Wednesday to House leadership, groups including the American Civil Liberties Union and Human Rights Watch urged lawmakers to vote against the legislation.

"The classwide scheduling policy expands the application of existing severe mandatory minimum sentencing laws enacted by Congress in the 1980s to a newly scheduled class of fentanyl-related compounds," the letter said. "For example, just a trace amount of a fentanyl analogue in a mixture with a combined weight of 10 grams — 10 paper clips — can translate into a five-year mandatory minimum with no evidence needed that the seller even knew it contained fentanyl."

Other advocacy groups who co-signed the letter included the Association of Black Social Workers in Virginia, the Florida Harm Reduction Collective, Progressive Maryland and HEAL Ohio.

Though the bill outlines registration processes for researchers to continue to test the fentanyl-related substances, the advocacy groups say that lawmakers are classifying chemical compounds before their effects are known.

"... the HALT Fentanyl Act does not include an offramp to reschedule or remove (fentanyl related substances) that research has proven to be pharmacologically inactive or do not meet schedule I criteria," the letter continues.

Criteria used by the Department of Justice to classify Schedule I drugs include high abuse potential and "no currently accepted medical use in the United States."

Marijuana, LSD, ecstasy and peyote are listed as Schedule I.

"In committee, Democrats offered amendments to improve the (bill)," Rep. Frank Pallone of New Jersey said on the House floor Wednesday. "We asked that Republicans consider additions to the bill that reflect the Biden administration's commonsense interagency proposal."

Pallone, ranking member of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce Committee, which marked up the bill, said the amendments rejected by GOP leadership would have promised "a scientific and equitable approach."

## Support from across the aisle

Despite the opposition from many Democrats, 74 of the party members voted in favor of the HALT Fentanyl Act.

"To stop this effort now is just not right. Fentanyl related substances are highly toxic and we should treat them as such with blanket permanent scheduling," said Rep. Chris Pappas of New Hampshire.

Pappas is the sponsor of a bill that permanently schedules fentanyl related substances but also adjusts criminal penalties and establishes a process to declassify compounds found to be safe.

"This is the beginning of the legislative process. This bill ... would likely come back to the House after the Senate puts its mark on it. So we're gonna continue to advocate for those commonsense provisions," Pappas said.

The Biden administration issued a statement earlier this week supporting the HALT Fentanyl Act but said that its other recommendations to lawmakers included compelling agencies to root out which substances do not pose high potential for abuse and to study the effects of the blanket scheduling.

"The Administration calls on Congress to pass all of these critical measures to improve public safety and save lives," the statement said.

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

## U.S. Supreme Court rejects Biden wetlands regulation, ruling for Idaho couple

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - MAY 25, 2023 12:05 PM

The U.S. Supreme Court in a major environmental decision on Thursday overturned the Environmental Protection Agency's definition of wetlands that fall under the agency's jurisdiction, siding with an Idaho couple who'd said they should not be required to obtain federal permits to build on their property that lacked any navigable water.

All nine justices agreed to overturn the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals' ruling that endorsed the Biden administration's broad definition of waters of the United States, or WOTUS, the term for what falls under federal enforcement of the Clean Water Act.

But they published four separate opinions that showed a 5-4 split in how far they would allow federal jurisdiction to extend, with the conservative majority ruling to significantly narrow federal agency power.

"It is a substantial change to the way wetlands have been regulated under the Clean Water Act" since the law's 1972 enactment, said Ashley Peck, an environmental litigator and water quality adviser at Holland and Hart LLP. "It looks like it will eliminate jurisdiction for a huge amount of wetlands, particularly in the arid West."

Conservative Justice Brett M. Kavanaugh and the court's three liberals concurred with the ruling in favor of Idaho landowners Michael and Chantell Sackett, but objected to the majority's narrow new standard, which they said introduced more uncertainty and would hurt water quality.

The Sacketts had sought to build on a piece of their property separated by a 30-foot road from a tributary to Priest Lake in the Idaho panhandle. Lower courts held they needed federal environmental approvals because of their land's connection to Priest Lake.

The Supreme Court heard oral arguments in their appeal in October.

### 'Continuous surface connection' test

Writing for the court's majority, Justice Samuel Alito said the Clean Water Act applies only to wetlands with a "continuous surface connection" to the navigable waters like streams, lakes, oceans and rivers that are indisputably covered by the law.

The Biden administration's definition — that said an area with an ecologically "significant nexus" to a navigable waterway was subject to Clean Water Act enforcement — would put nearly all waters and wetlands in the country under federal jurisdiction, with little room for state enforcement, Alito wrote.

Wetlands must be virtually indistinguishable from the navigable waters for federal jurisdiction to apply, he wrote.

That standard would limit the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers' authority to regulate wetlands, even in areas where no one had disputed federal power.

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Alito, who was appointed to the court by President George W. Bush, praised the Clean Water Act for effectively curtailing water pollution. But he said the law "is a potent weapon" with severe penalties, and its power should be checked.

The text of the law uses both the terms "navigable waters," which has a well-known definition, and "waters of the United States," which does not, Alito wrote.

The EPA, Army Corps of Engineers and various courts have held that waters of the United States can include tributaries to navigable waters and even dry land with an ecological connection to those tributaries.

The inclusion in the statute of "navigable waters" means Congress was focused on the permanent lakes, rivers, streams and oceans that are generally included in that definition, even if some wetlands can also be regulated under the law, Alito wrote.

"Although we have acknowledged that the CWA extends to more than traditional navigable waters, we have refused to read 'navigable' out of the statute," Alito said.

Some adjacent wetlands can still be considered waters of the United States, Alito said. But for the federal law to apply to a wetland, it "must be indistinguishably part of a" covered water, he wrote.

The ruling represents a sweeping shift in wetlands regulation, even for a conservative court with a recent history of restricting federal regulations.

"This was a broader brush than I expected," Peck said. "This is always a possibility with this court, for certain, but I wasn't necessarily expecting to have the whole regulatory regime upended."

In a statement, President Joe Biden called the decision "disappointing."

"Today's decision upends the legal framework that has protected America's waters for decades," he said. "It also defies the science that confirms the critical role of wetlands in safeguarding our nation's streams, rivers, and lakes from chemicals and pollutants that harm the health and wellbeing of children, families, and communities."

## **Kavanaugh and liberals band together**

Kavanaugh, with the court's three liberals joining, wrote that a continuous surface connection to navigable waters was not strictly necessary for wetlands to fall under federal jurisdiction. Waters can be adjacent without that connection, they said.

Kavanaugh, in a notable departure from the usual alliance on the court, said the majority rewrote the law and introduced new questions about wetlands that have long been subject to federal jurisdiction.

"The Court's new and overly narrow test may leave long-regulated and long-accepted-to-be-regulable wetlands suddenly beyond the scope of the agencies' regulatory authority, with negative consequences for waters of the United States," he wrote.

## **Kagan blasts judicial policymaking**

Justice Elena Kagan wrote a separate concurring opinion with fellow liberal Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Ketanji Brown Jackson that criticized the court for policymaking.

Drawing parallels with her dissent in a decision last year that restricted the EPA's power to regulate carbon emissions at existing power plants, Kagan wrote that the court's conservatives simply substituted their policy preferences for what Congress actually enacted.

The majority in this case invented a standard that laws that impact private property must have "exceedingly clear language," Kagan wrote, putting "a thumb on the scale for property owners," and disregarding the public interest in clean water.

"A court may not rewrite Congress's plain instructions because they go further than preferred," she said. "That is what the majority does today in finding that the Clean Water Act excludes many wetlands (clearly 'adjacent' to covered waters."

## **Lengthy legal fight**

The case is part of a decades-long legal conflict to define the reach of the Clean Water Act.

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Alito's majority opinion referenced the years of shifting definitions and the uncertainty provided in various court cases and agency regulations, calling it "the persistent problem that we must address."

In general, agricultural interests, home builders and Republican officials have argued that the federal regulations impose an undue burden and should be applied narrowly.

"The Supreme Court just ruled that Biden's overreaching WOTUS interpretation is unconstitutional," Missouri Attorney General Andrew Bailey, a Republican, said on Twitter. "This is a huge win for farmers across America."

Environmental groups and Democrats have argued for a broader definition that they say allows the federal government to offer important protections.

"Federal protections that don't depend on local politics or regional polluter influence are essential to vulnerable and disadvantaged communities nationwide," Jim Murphy, the director of legal advocacy for the National Wildlife Federation, said in a statement "The court's ruling removes these vital protections from important streams and wetlands in every state."

Murphy called on Congress and state governments to adopt stronger standards.

The ruling doesn't necessarily limit the issue's long-running uncertainty, Peck said. While it settles federal jurisdiction for now, states, especially in the West, may decide to strengthen their own clean water laws and regulations, she said.

## Reaction from Congress

Several Republicans in Congress responded to the ruling with enthusiasm.

"The Supreme Court's decision is clearly a decisive win for America's farmers, small businesses, property owners, and those who help build our infrastructure," U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Sam Graves of Missouri and Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee Chairman David Rouzer of North Carolina said in a joint statement.

"This is great news for rural America!" Minnesota Republican Pete Stauber, the chairman of the U.S. House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources, tweeted.

"I'm glad to see the Supreme Court rightfully and unanimously blocked Biden's ill-conceived #WOTUS rule," U.S. Sen. Joni Ernst of Iowa wrote on Twitter. "This is a big WIN for Iowa, where nearly every industry is impacted."

"Kansans are best positioned to conserve our land and natural resources," Kansas Republican U.S. Rep. Ron Estes said. "And they don't need Biden's bureaucrats 1000 miles away to regulate the rainwater that accumulates in ditches in rural parts of our state."

Fewer Democrats publicly commented on the ruling, but Senate Environment and Public Works Chairman Tom Carper of Delaware said the decision undermines the EPA's ability to effectively regulate water pollution and puts "America's remaining wetlands in jeopardy."

"I strongly disagree with the Court's decision, and I am deeply concerned about the future impacts of this case on clean drinking water, coastal and flood-prone communities, and wildlife across our nation," Carper said.

*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.*

## States see record low unemployment across the US

**South Dakota has nation's lowest rate at 1.9%**

**BY: CASEY QUINLAN - MAY 25, 2023 10:00 AM**

Across much of the country, the jobs market is as strong as it's ever been, and Black women, young people and people with disabilities are among the workers benefiting, recent U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data show.

Twenty states reported an unemployment rate under 3% in April, while 15 states saw record lows, led by South Dakota at 1.9%, followed by Nebraska at 2%, and New Hampshire and North Dakota at 2.1%. The national rate was 3.4%. Other states that saw their unemployment rates reach levels not seen since the BLS began recording them in 1976, include Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Maine, Montana, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, according to BLS data released on Friday.

Mark Vitner, chief economist at Piedmont Crescent Capital in Charlotte, North Carolina, said major metropolitan areas and emerging metropolitan areas in the south have benefited from recent shifts in the labor market. In Florida, the labor market in Miami, Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach, Orlando, Tampa and Jacksonville has been growing rapidly, he said.

"... Huntsville, Alabama, is one of the fastest growing markets and it's a big tech market in aerospace and in defense. We've seen a huge influx from California into Huntsville and Chattanooga, Tennessee, has seen an influx of investment in the automotive industry," he said. "The Port of Savannah has been the fastest growing port in the country. It's just fueled enormous growth in the industrial market in Savannah and more broadly in south Georgia. These markets have low unemployment rates and very strong job growth and so that's what you want to see that mix of."

Vitner added that the rural areas of states with low unemployment may have a different story to tell.

"States that have a larger rural population tend to have lower labor force participation and given the stronger overall job growth, it results in some very low unemployment rates without particularly strong nonfarm employment," Vitner said.

To be sure, in some states, the number of people who have lost work has increased. Ten states had rates of 4% or higher than the nation. Nevada, which had the highest unemployment rate in the country in 2020, has seen job gains but still had the nation's highest rate in April, at 5.4%. States like Washington and California, which have seen large layoffs among tech companies, also have seen their job markets slightly worsen.

But the recovery has also lifted up workers often sidelined in worse economic times. Bureau of Labor Statistics data on the demographics of workers and their unemployment rates for April showed that employment among Black women climbed to a 22-year high. Women's labor force participation is also moving up. It increased by 0.6 percentage point in the past year.

That growth is affecting women of all ages and education levels, and Black women and Hispanic women have had some of the biggest labor force participation growth, at a 2.2% and 2.1% increase over the same period, according to an analysis from University of Michigan's Betsey Stevenson, professor of economics, and Benny Docter, a senior policy analyst.

The unemployment rate for people with disabilities, while still high compared to the overall unemployment rate, is 6.3% compared to 8.3% a year ago. In March, the unemployment rate for people aged 16 to 24, who are already benefiting from pre-pandemic labor market conditions, marked a 70-year low at 7.5%, according to the Economic Policy Institute. In April, it dipped further for that age group, to 6.5%.

"What happens when the economy is strong is that you can bring marginalized groups of workers off of the sidelines because employers are more open to different folks essentially," said Katherine Gallagher Robbins, senior fellow at the National Partnership for Women & Families. "Part of the consequence of this strong labor market is that you're seeing low unemployment rates for Black workers, and in particular Black women and for disabled workers. The rates for disabled workers have been both in terms of unemployment, but also in terms of participation, really strong compared to what we have seen in years gone by."

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Gallagher Robbins added that Gen Z workers came into a very strong labor market which bodes better for them than previous generations, but it also means they have more to lose if the economy falters soon.

"They're hopefully in a position of setting themselves up for lifelong higher earnings and yet they will be amongst the first to go. They tend to work in industries where there's more churn," she said, such as retail and hospitality.

Many industries are also showing fast job growth right now, Docter said, and growth has been largest in education and healthcare.

"[Private sector education and health services] had been the strongest job grower through the time between the last recession and 2020 and it got knocked pretty far off course in a way that was pretty atypical. Since then, we've seen really steady, really impressive growth most months (in those areas) and I expect that we still will for a while," he said. "... It's nowhere near its pre-pandemic trajectory, so there'd be over 700,000 more jobs in that industry today than there are. And so there's a lot of space there to grow if you look at the numbers this month. ... There's nothing really to say that those industries are going to falter any time soon."

The labor market is still leaning toward greater power for workers as well, which has been positive for labor organizers, Gallagher Robbins said. Americans' approval of labor unions has increased from 64% before the pandemic to 71% in 2022.

"[Worker bargaining] is on the rise and not accidentally. ... Not everything has been successful but those [organizing efforts] coming to the fore now, I think are no coincidence," she said. "That is also something that is interacting and intersecting with the economy of the moment and if we shift back towards a place where workers have less bargaining power, I think that that's gonna have an impact on the ability to organize."

Vitner said the retirement of Baby Boomers provides many workers with greater labor power than they previously enjoyed.

"Workers clearly have more negotiating power today. One of the things that's in their favor is that we have a rising tide of Baby Boomers that are leaving the workforce. And that makes for a very tight labor market and certain industries have even greater challenges because their workforce skews a bit older," he said. "... Younger workers have a bit more negotiating power but they have a brighter outlook. They're entering the workforce at a time where there's going to be opportunities to advance relatively quickly."

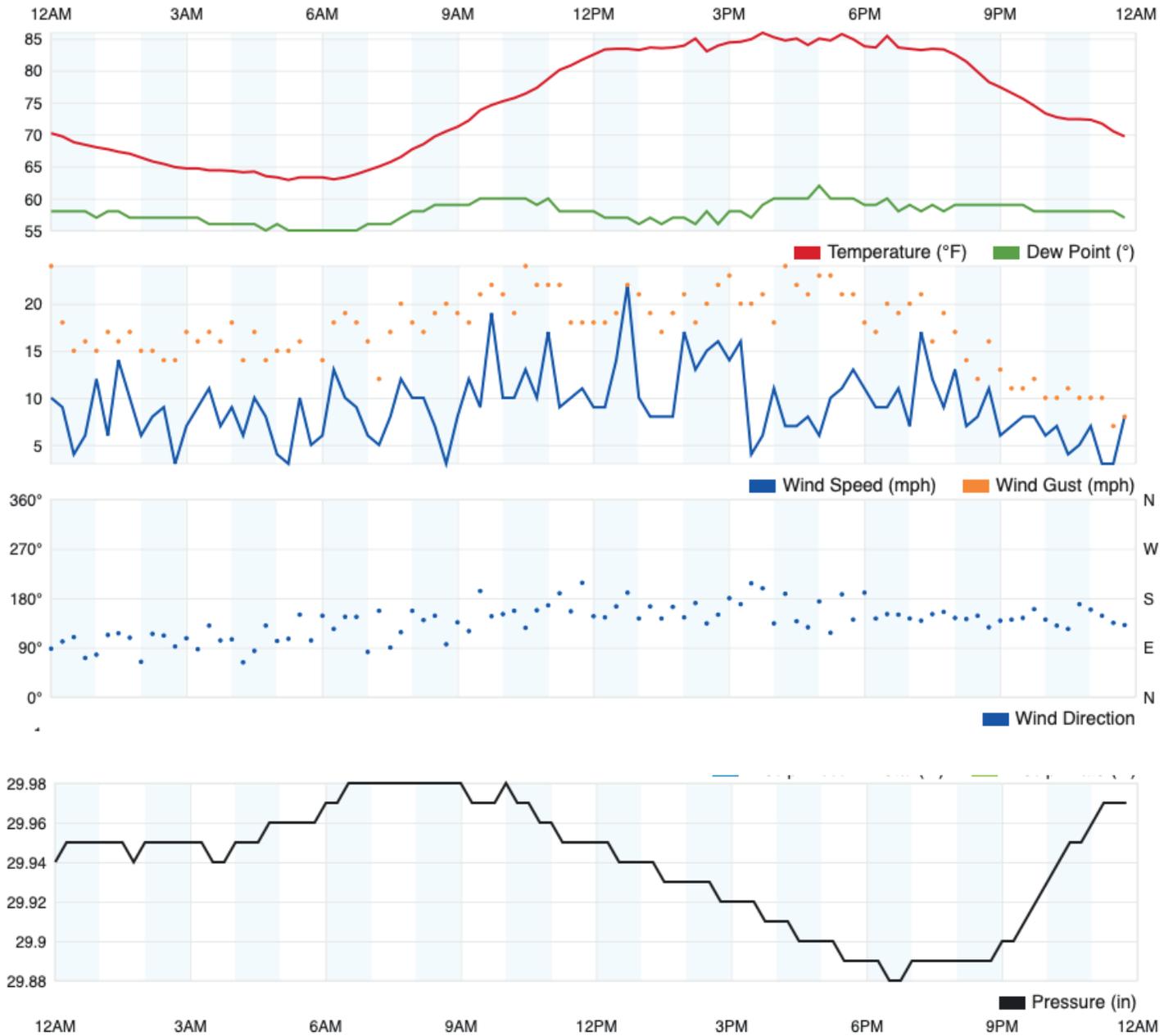
Inflation has made it more difficult for many workers to enjoy these gains but that could be changing. Although inflation is still far above the Federal Reserve's 2% target, inflation is moderating, and wages are now outpacing inflation, at a 6.1% increase in median weekly earnings for January, February, and March compared to a year before. During the same period, there was a 5.8% rise in consumer prices. In April, average hourly earnings rose by 4.4% over the past 12 months.

*Casey Quinlan is an economy reporter for States Newsroom, based in Washington, D.C. For the past decade, they have reported on national politics and state politics, LGBTQ rights, abortion access, labor issues, education, Supreme Court news and more for publications including The American Independent, ThinkProgress, New Republic, Rewire News, SCOTUSblog, In These Times and Vox.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Memorial Day
						
Sunny and Breezy	Mostly Clear and Breezy	Sunny and Breezy	Partly Cloudy and Breezy	Mostly Sunny and Breezy	Breezy. Chance T-storms then Chance Showers	Partly Sunny then Chance T-storms
High: 85 °F	Low: 60 °F	High: 84 °F	Low: 61 °F	High: 85 °F	Low: 61 °F	High: 85 °F



## The Weekend Outlook

May 26, 2023  
3:01 AM

*Warm with a chance of showers/thunderstorms, mainly west*

### Today/Saturday/Sunday

- Windy...Highs upper 70s & 80s
- Rain chances mainly central/western SD



### Monday through Wednesday

- Remaining warm, Highs 80-90°
- Continued rain chances



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 86 °F at 3:47 PM

Low Temp: 63 °F at 5:11 AM

Wind: 24 mph at 10:24 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 20 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 97 in 2018

Record Low: 30 in 1992

Average High: 74

Average Low: 49

Average Precip in May.: 2.79

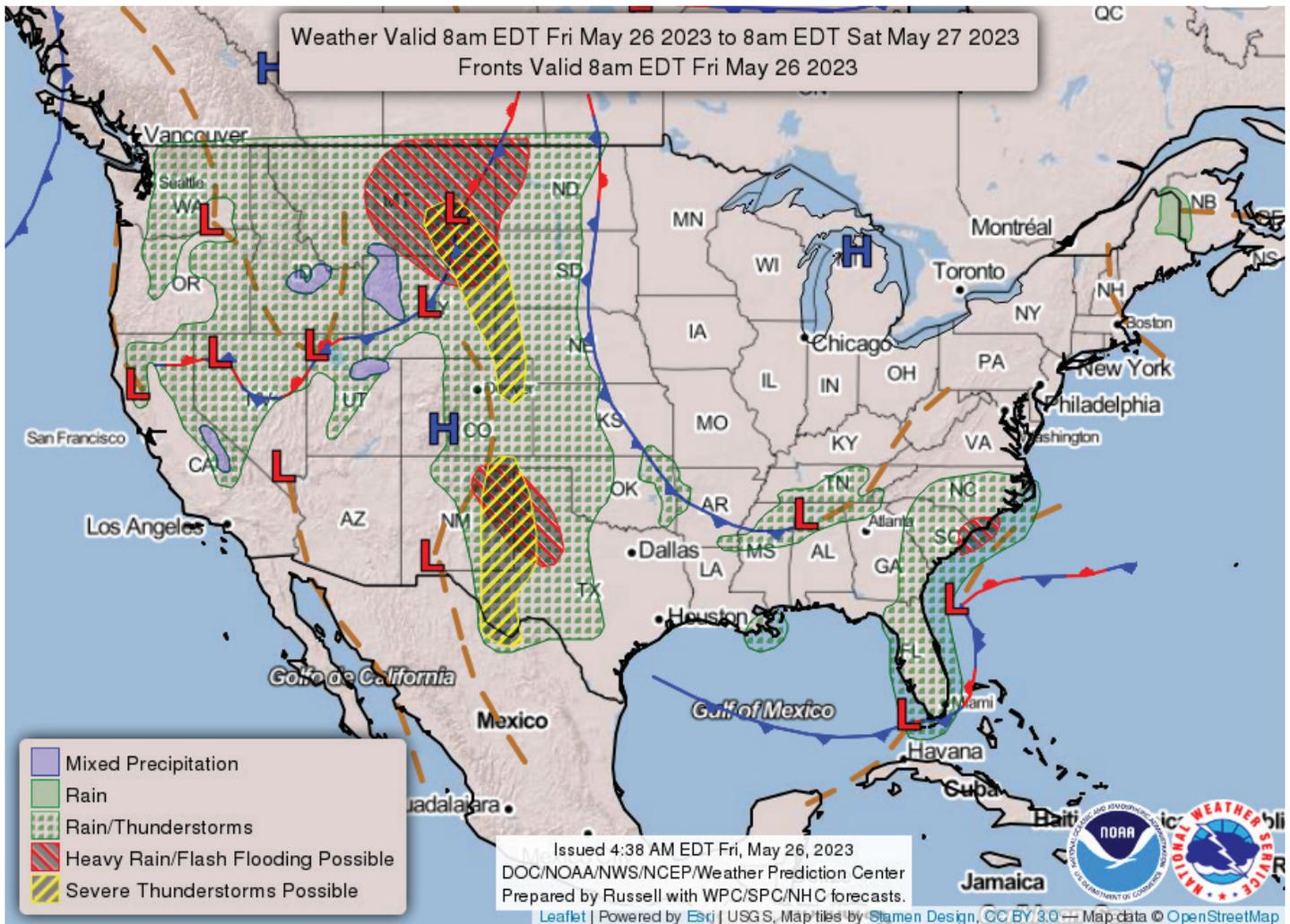
Precip to date in May.: 2.19

Average Precip to date: 6.76

Precip Year to Date: 7.91

Sunset Tonight: 9:09:29 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:48:39 AM



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## Today in Weather History

May 26, 1983: Unofficial rainfall of up to 5 inches caused widespread flooding of basements and streets in and near Aberdeen. Only 1.72 inches of rain was reported at the Aberdeen airport.

May 26, 1985: Hail of unknown diameter was five inches deep, 1 mile north of Rosholt. Some hail remained on the ground until the following morning.

May 26, 1992: A widespread frost and hard freeze hit most of South Dakota except portions of the south-east causing up to \$14 million in potential crop losses to growing corn, soybeans, wheat, and other crops. Some low temperatures include; 23 degrees 12 miles SSW of Harrold; 26 at one mile west of Highmore and 23 north of Highmore; 27 in Kennebec; and 28 degrees 1 NW of Faulkton and at Redfield.

1771: Thomas Jefferson recorded the greatest flood ever known in Virginia. The great Virginia flood occurred as torrential rains in the mountains brought all rivers in the state to record high levels.

1917: A major tornadic thunderstorm took a 293-mile track across parts of central Illinois and Indiana. Once believed to be a single tornado, the later study indicated it was likely at least eight separate tornadoes. The first touchdown was about 50 miles south-southeast of Quincy, Illinois. The tornadic storm tracked due east, before beginning a northeast curve near Charleston; separate tornadic storms then curved southeast from Charleston. The towns of Mattoon and Charleston bore the brunt of the tornado. Damage from this severe tornado in Mattoon was about 2.5 blocks wide and 2.5 miles long, with over 700 houses destroyed, while the Charleston portion was 600 yards wide and 1.5 miles long, with 220 homes damaged. Dozens of farms were hit along the path, and at least three farm homes were swept away between Manhattan and Monee. Another estimated F4 tornado touched down 6 miles south of Crown Point and devastated a dozen farms. A total of 7 people died, and 120 were injured. 53 people were killed in Mattoon, and 38 were killed in Charleston. Overall, 101 people in Illinois were killed during the tornado outbreak, with 638 injured.

1984 - Thunderstorms during the late evening and early morning hours produced 6 to 13 inches of rain at Tulsa OK in six hours (8.63 inches at the airport). Flooding claimed fourteen lives and caused 90 million dollars property damage. 4600 cars, 743 houses, and 387 apartments were destroyed or severely damaged in the flood. (Storm Data) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms in southwest Iowa spawned five tornadoes and produced up to ten inches of rain. Seven inches of rain at Red Oak forced evacuation of nearly 100 persons from the town. Record flooding took place in southwest Iowa the last twelve days of May as up to 17 inches of rain drenched the area. Total damage to crops and property was estimated at 16 million dollars. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - There was "frost on the roses" in the Upper Ohio Valley and the Central Appalachian Mountain Region. Thirteen cities reported record low temperatures for the date, including Youngstown OH with a reading of 30 degrees. Evening thunderstorms in North Dakota produced wind gusts to 75 mph at Jamestown. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms in produced large hail in eastern Oklahoma during the pre-dawn hours, and again during the evening and night. Hail two inches in diameter was reported near Prague, and thunderstorm winds gusted to 70 mph near Kenefic. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from eastern Colorado to western Arkansas and north-eastern Texas. Severe thunderstorms spawned three tornadoes, and there were eighty-eight reports of large hail or damaging winds. Evening thunderstorms over central Oklahoma spawned strong tornadoes east of Hinton and east of Binger, produced hail three inches in diameter at Minco, and produced wind gusts to 85 mph at Blanchard. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2003: A BMI Airbus bound for Cyprus from Manchester, England encountered a violent thunderstorm over Germany. The plane bounced and twisted violently as it ran into severe turbulence with huge hailstones pounding the exterior. A football-sized hole was punched in the aircraft's surface. None of the 213 passengers or eight crew members was seriously hurt.

2009: Northeast of Anchorage, Alaska, two hikers climbed a ridge to see a developing storm better. Lightning knocked the couple unconscious. Regaining consciousness, they called emergency services as the woman was unable to walk. The man's shoes looked as though they had melted.

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### FINDING LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Darkness.

We've all experienced it. Sometimes feared it. Always recognized it. Occasionally wanted it. Most often found our way out of it. But, have you ever tried to define it? Or explained it?

A quick and easy answer would be: "The absence of light." When darkness surrounds us, we need light to discover where we are and where we want to go.

Another question might be: Do we need darkness? Perhaps, some might say, "We need it for rest and peacefulness." But, consider the fact that we also need it to see the stars.

There are times in all of our lives when we are going through what we might call the "deepest darkness imaginable." Suddenly, a glimmer of light appears before us. And then it grows and grows, and then becomes larger and larger. Finally, we are surrounded by light.

Isaiah had a unique experience with darkness. It kept him from seeing God at work in His world and in his life. But, one day everything changed and he wrote, "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord." After his vision, he was able to recognize the presence and power of God and see His light. And after that experience, he became a mighty prophet and counselor to kings and prophesied many signs that described the coming Messiah. From the darkness that once surrounded him, he then experienced God's redeeming light.

It worked for Isaiah. It will work for us if we seek His light!

Prayer: Open our eyes, Lord, that we may see Your light and find the path You have prepared for us. Help us to seek Your light when we experience dark times in life. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord. Isaiah 6:1-4



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

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## 2023 Community Events

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

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## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.23.23

3 10 22 65 66 19

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$169,000,000**

NEXT 15 Hrs 18 Mins 58  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.24.23

1 23 24 35 43 4

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$3,150,000**

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 18  
DRAW: Mins 58 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.25.23

10 20 30 45 48 3

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

NEXT 14 Hrs 48 Mins  
DRAW: 58 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.24.23

6 14 16 32 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$72,000**

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 18  
DRAW: Mins 58 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.24.23

7 25 29 40 45 12

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

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 17  
DRAW: Mins 59 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
05.24.23

12 21 44 50 58 26

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$211,000,000**

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 17  
DRAW: Mins 59 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the **AP** Associated Press

### 3 people killed when house explodes in South Dakota

FORT PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota State Fire Marshal's Office is investigating a house explosion that killed a baby and her grandparents and left two young children hospitalized with burns.

The house about 11 miles (about 18 kilometers) southwest of Fort Pierre exploded around 10:20 a.m. Wednesday, Stanley County Sheriff Brad Rathbun said.

The sheriff said 6-month-old Harper Hupp and her grandmother, LaDonna Hupp, 61, died at the scene. William Hupp, 66, died at a hospital.

Two boys, 5-year-old Myles and 3-year-old Royce, were seriously injured and flown to a burn unit at a St. Paul, Minnesota, hospital.

The children's parents, Kelsey and Trevor Hupp, were at work in Pierre at the time of the explosion. LaDonna and William Hupp were Trevor Hupp's parents.

Kelsey Hupp said on a Caring Bridge account Thursday that Myles has mostly first- and second-degree burns on 10% of his body and Royce suffered third-degree burns on 25% of his body on his chest and arms.

"(Myles) squeezes my hand and wiggles his toes. He even fought sedation one time and sat up and looked around. He is stable," Kelsey Hupp wrote.

Royce's recovery will take longer than his brother's, their mother wrote, but he also wiggles his toes and at one point woke up from sedation. Both boys are intubated, she said.

"The boys have a long road ahead of them, but we are just so thankful that we even have this road with them," she wrote. "They are strong and will persevere. I will do my best to update as I can because I know everyone cares. Please don't stop praying. I'm going to need every ounce I can get to continue. We love our family, friends and community so much."

Funds to support the family have been set up on GoFundMe and at First Dakota National Bank, where Trevor Hupp worked.

Rathbun said neighbors in the rural area heard the blast and alerted authorities.

The South Dakota State Fire Marshal's office is investigating the cause of the explosion. Rathbun said foul play is not suspected.



**Two grandparents and their 6-month-old granddaughter were killed when a house southwest of Fort Pierre, S.D., exploded on Wednesday, May 24, 2023. Investigators were still working Thursday to determine the cause of the explosion in Stanley County, that also left two boys injured.** (Jeff Hartley/Capital Journal via AP)

## Oklahoma Legislature overrides governor's veto of tribal regalia bill

By SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — The Oklahoma Legislature on Thursday overrode Gov. Kevin Stitt's veto of a bill that would allow students to wear Native American regalia during high school and college graduations.

The state House and Senate easily cleared the two-thirds threshold needed to uphold the measure, which takes effect July 1 and had strong support from many Oklahoma-based tribes and Native American citizens.

It would allow any student at a public school, including colleges, universities and technology centers, to wear tribal regalia such as traditional garments, jewelry or other adornments during official graduation ceremonies. Weapons such as a bow and arrow, tomahawk or war hammer are specifically prohibited.

Stitt, a Cherokee Nation citizen who has feuded with many Oklahoma-based Native American tribes throughout his two terms in office, vetoed the bill earlier this month, saying at the time that the decision should be up to individual districts.

"In other words, if schools want to allow their students to wear tribal regalia at graduation, good on them," Stitt wrote in his veto message. "But if schools prefer for their students to wear only traditional cap and gown, the Legislature shouldn't stand in their way."

Stitt also suggested the bill would allow other groups to "demand special favor to wear whatever they please at a formal ceremony."

Lawmakers also overrode vetoes of several other measures, including one adding experts on Native American health to a wellness council and another allowing for the existence of the Oklahoma Educational Television Authority, the state's Public Broadcasting Service affiliate.

Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr. thanked the Legislature on Thursday.

"I hope Governor Stitt hears the message that his blanket hostility to tribes is a dead end," Hoskin said in a statement. "The majority of Oklahomans believe in respecting the rights of Native Americans and working together with the sovereign tribes who share this land."

Kamryn Yanchick, a citizen of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, was denied the opportunity to wear a decorated cap with a beaded pattern when she graduated from her high school in 2018.

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

A Native American former student sued Broken Arrow Public Schools and two employees earlier this month after she was forced to remove an eagle feather from her graduation cap prior to her high school commencement ceremony.

Follow Sean Murphy on Twitter: @apseanmurphy

## Remains of 5 more Native American children to be disinterred in Pennsylvania

CARLISLE, Pa. (AP) — The remains of five more Native American children who died at a notorious government-run boarding school in Pennsylvania over a century ago will be disinterred from a small Army cemetery and returned to descendants, authorities said Thursday.

The remains are buried on the grounds of the Carlisle Barracks, home of the U.S. Army War College. The children attended the former Carlisle Indian Industrial School, where thousands of Indigenous children were taken from their families and forced to assimilate to white society as a matter of U.S. policy.

The Carlisle school put children through harsh conditions that sometimes resulted in their deaths. Founded by an Army officer, the school cut their braids, dressed them in military-style uniforms and punished them for speaking their native languages. European names were forced upon them.

The Office of Army Cemeteries said the latest disinterment of remains will take place beginning Sept.

11. It will be the sixth such disinterment operation at Carlisle since 2017 as the military transfers remains to living family members for reburial. Twenty-eight children have been returned so far, according to cemetery officials.

The remains to be moved this fall include those belonging to 13-year-old Amos LaFromboise, of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate tribe of South Dakota, who died in 1879, only 20 days after his arrival at the school. The tribe had written to the U.S. Army's cemetery office in March to urge a faster return of the boy, who has been described as a son of one of the tribe's most celebrated leaders. The Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate want to bury him next to his father on the Lake Traverse Reservation in South Dakota.

The other students to be moved died between 1880 and 1910 while attending the Carlisle school, according to the Office of Army Cemeteries. They are Edward Upright from the Spirit Lake Tribe of North Dakota, Beau Neal from the Northern Arapaho Tribe of Wyoming, Edward Spott from the Puyallup Tribe of Washington state, and Launy Shorty from the Blackfeet Nation of Montana.

More than 10,000 children from more than 140 tribes passed through the school between 1879 and 1918, including famous Olympian Jim Thorpe.

Starting with the Indian Civilization Act of 1819, the U.S. enacted laws and policies to establish and support Native American boarding schools across the nation. Hundreds of thousands of Indigenous children were taken from their communities and forced into boarding schools that focused on assimilation.

The federal government has been investigating its past oversight of the boarding schools.

## Deadline looming, Biden and McCarthy narrow in on budget deal to lift debt ceiling

By LISA MASCARO, SEUNG MIN KIM, KEVIN FREKING, STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press  
WASHINGTON (AP) — Days from a deadline, President Joe Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy are narrowing in on a two-year budget deal aiming to curb federal deficits in exchange for lifting the nation's debt ceiling and staving off an economically devastating government default.

The Democratic president and Republican speaker hope to strike a budget compromise this weekend. With Republicans driving for steep cuts, the two sides have been unable to agree to spending levels for 2024 and 2025. Any deal would need to be a political compromise, with support from both Democrats and Republicans to pass the divided Congress.

But the budget flow isn't the only hang-up.

A person familiar with the talks said the two sides are "dug in" on whether or not to agree to Republican demands to impose stiffer work requirements on people who receive government food stamps, cash assistance and health care aid, some of the most vulnerable Americans.

Yet both Biden and McCarthy expressed optimism heading into the weekend that the gulf between their positions could be bridged. A two-year deal would raise the debt limit for that time, past the 2024 presidential election.

"We knew this would not be easy," McCarthy, R-Calif., said as he left the Capitol for the evening Thursday.

McCarthy said, "It's hard, but we're working and we're going to continue to work until we get this done."

House Republicans have pushed the issue to the brink, displaying risky political bravado in leaving town for the Memorial Day holiday. The U.S. could face an unprecedented default as soon as June 1, hurling the global economy into chaos.

In remarks at the White House, Biden said, "It's about competing versions of America."

"The only way to move forward is with a bipartisan agreement," Biden said Thursday. "And I believe we'll come to an agreement that allows us to move forward and protects the hardworking Americans of this country."

Lawmakers are tentatively not expected back at work until Tuesday, just two days from the early June deadline when Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has said the U.S. could start running out of cash to pay its bills and face a federal default.

Biden will also be away this weekend, departing Friday for the presidential retreat at Camp David, Mary-

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land, and Sunday for his home in Wilmington, Delaware. The Senate is on recess and will return after Memorial Day.

Meanwhile, Fitch Ratings agency placed the United States' AAA credit on "ratings watch negative," warning of a possible downgrade.

Weeks of negotiations between Republicans and the White House have failed to produce a deal — in part because the Biden administration resisted negotiating with McCarthy over the debt limit, arguing that the country's full faith and credit should not be used as leverage to extract other partisan priorities.

The White House has offered to freeze next year's 2024 spending at current levels and restrict 2025 spending, but the Republican leader says that's not enough.

"We have to spend less than we spent last year. That is the starting point," said McCarthy.

One idea is to set those topline budget numbers but then add a "snap-back" provision that enforces the cuts if Congress is unable during its annual appropriations process to meet the new goals.

On work requirements for the aid recipients, the White House is particularly resisting measures that would drive Americans into poverty or take their health care, said the person familiar with the talks, who was granted anonymity to describe behind-closed-door discussions.

On the Republican demand to rescind money for the Internal Revenue Service, it's still an "open issue" whether the sides will compromise by allowing the funding to be pushed back into other domestic programs, the person said.

Pressure is bearing down on McCarthy from the House's right flank not to give in to any deal, even if it means blowing past the June 1 deadline.

"Let's hold the line," said Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, a Freedom Caucus member.

McCarthy said Donald Trump, the former president who is again running for office, told him, "Make sure you get a good agreement."

Failure to raise the nation's debt ceiling, now at \$31 trillion, to pay America's already incurred bills would risk a potentially chaotic federal default. Anxious retirees and social service groups are among those already making default contingency plans.

Even if negotiators strike a deal in coming days, McCarthy has promised lawmakers he will abide by the rule to post any bill for 72 hours before voting — now likely Tuesday or even Wednesday. The Democratic-held Senate has vowed to move quickly to send the package to Biden's desk, right before next Thursday's possible deadline.

In one potential development, Republicans may be easing their demand to boost defense spending, instead offering to keep it at levels the Biden administration proposed, according to another person familiar with the talks.

The teams are also eyeing a proposal to boost energy transmission line development from Sen. John Hickenlooper, D-Colo., that would facilitate the buildout of an interregional power grid, according to a person familiar with that draft. Those two people were also granted anonymity to discuss the private negotiations.

The White House has continued to argue that deficits can be reduced by ending tax breaks for wealthier households and some corporations, but McCarthy said he told the president as early as their February meeting that raising revenue from tax hikes was off the table.

While Biden has ruled out, for now, invoking the 14th Amendment to raise the debt limit on his own, Democrats in the House announced they have all signed on to a legislative "discharge" process that would force a debt ceiling vote. But they need five Republicans to break with their party and tip the majority to set the plan forward.

They are all but certain to claw back some \$30 billion in unspent COVID-19 funds now that the pandemic emergency has officially been lifted.

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Associated Press writers Chris Megerian, Josh Boak, Zeke Miller and Mary Clare Jalonick contributed to this report.

## What to know about Texas' extraordinary move to impeach GOP Attorney General Ken Paxton

By JIM VERTUNO and JAKE BLEIBERG Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — After years of legal and ethical scandals swirling around Texas Republican Attorney General Ken Paxton, the state's GOP-controlled House of Representatives has moved toward an impeachment vote that could quickly throw him from office.

The extraordinary and rarely-used maneuver comes in the final days of the state's legislative session and sets up a bruising political fight. It pits Paxton, who has aligned himself closely with former President Donald Trump and the state's hard-right conservatives, against House Republican leadership, who appear to have suddenly had enough of the allegations of wrongdoing that have long dogged Texas' top lawyer.

Paxton has said the charges are based on "hearsay and gossip, parroting long-disproven claims."

Here is how the impeachment process works in Texas, and how the 60-year-old Republican came to face the prospect of becoming just the third official to be impeached in the state's nearly 200-year history:

### THE PROCESS

Under the Texas constitution and law, impeaching a state official is similar to the process on the federal level: the action starts in the state House.

In this case, the five-member House General Investigating Committee voted unanimously Thursday to send 20 articles of impeachment to the full chamber. The next step is a vote by the 149-member House, where a simple majority is needed to approve the articles. Republicans control the chamber 85-64.

The House can call witnesses to testify, but the investigating committee already did that prior to recommending impeachment. The panel met for several hours Wednesday, listening to investigators deliver an extraordinary public airing of Paxton's years of scandal and alleged lawbreaking.

If the full House impeaches Paxton, everything shifts to the state Senate for a "trial" to decide whether to permanently remove Paxton from office, or acquit him. Removal requires a two-thirds majority vote.

### A SUDDEN THREAT

But there is a major difference between Texas and the federal system: If the House votes to impeach, Paxton is immediately suspended from office until the outcome of the Senate trial. Republican Gov. Greg Abbott would have the opportunity to appoint an interim replacement.

The GOP in Texas controls every branch of state government. Republican lawmakers and leaders alike have until this week taken a muted posture toward the the myriad examples of Paxton's misconduct and alleged law breaking that emerged in legal filings and news reports over the years.

It's unclear when and why exactly that changed.

In February, Paxton agreed to settle a whistleblower lawsuit brought by former aides who accused him of corruption. The \$3.3 million payout must be approved by the House and Republican Speaker Dade Phelan has said he doesn't think taxpayers should foot the bill.

Shortly after the settlement was reached, the House investigation into Paxton began.

### REPUBLICAN ON REPUBLICAN

The five-member committee that mounted the investigation of Paxton is led by his fellow Republicans, contrasting America's most prominent recent examples of impeachment.

Trump's federal impeachments in 2020 and 2021 were driven by Democrats who had majority control of the U.S. House of Representatives. In both cases, the impeachment charges approved by the House failed in the Senate, where Republicans had enough votes to block conviction.

In Texas, Republicans control both houses by large majorities and the state's GOP leaders hold all levers of influence. But that hasn't stopped Paxton from seeking to rally a partisan defense.

When the House investigation emerged Tuesday, Paxton suggested it was a political attack by Phelan. He called for the "liberal" speaker's resignation and accused him of being drunk during a marathon session last Friday.

Phelan's office brushed off the accusation as Paxton attempting to "save face." None of the state's other top Republicans have voiced support for Paxton since.

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Paxton issued a statement Thursday, portraying impeachment proceedings as an effort to disenfranchise the voters who gave him a third term in November. He said that by moving against him "the RINOs in the Texas Legislature are now on the same side as Joe Biden."

## THE MARRIAGE WRINKLE

But Paxton, who served five terms in the House and one in the Senate before becoming attorney general, is sure to still have allies in Austin.

A likely one is his wife, Angela, a two-term state senator who could be in the awkward position of voting on her husband's political future. It's unclear whether she would or should participate in the Senate trial, where the 31 members make margins tight.

In a twist, Paxton's impeachment deals with an extramarital affair he acknowledged to members of his staff years earlier. The impeachment charges include bribery for one of Paxton's donors, Austin real estate developer Nate Paul, allegedly employing the woman with whom he had the affair in exchange for legal help.

## YEARS IN THE MAKING

The impeachment reaches back to 2015, when Paxton was indicted on securities fraud charges for which he still has not stood trial. The lawmakers charged Paxton with making false statements to state securities regulators.

But most of the articles stem from Paxton's connections to Paul and a remarkable revolt by the attorney general's top deputies in 2020.

That fall, eight senior Paxton aides reported their boss to the FBI, accusing him of bribery and abusing his office to help Paul. Four of them later brought the whistleblower lawsuit. The report prompted a federal criminal investigation that in February was taken over by the U.S. Justice Department's Washington-based Public Integrity Section.

The impeachment charges cover myriad accusations related to Paxton's dealings with Paul. The allegations include attempts to interfere in foreclosure lawsuits and improperly issuing legal opinions to benefit Paul, and firing, harassing and interfering with staff who reported what was going on. The bribery charges stem from the affair, as well as Paul allegedly paying for expensive renovations to Paxton's Austin home.

The fracas took a toll on the Texas attorney general's office, long one of the primary legal challengers to Democratic administrations in the White House.

In the years since Paxton's staff went to the FBI, his agency has come unmoored by disarray behind the scenes, with seasoned lawyers quitting over practices they say aim to slant legal work, reward loyalists and drum out dissent.

## TEXAS HISTORY

Paxton was already likely to be noted in history books for his unprecedented request that the U.S. Supreme Court overturn Joe Biden's defeat of Trump in the 2020 presidential election. He may now make history in another way.

Only twice has the Texas House impeached a sitting official.

Gov. James "Pa" Ferguson was removed from office in 1917 for misapplication of public funds, embezzlement and the diversion of a special fund. State Judge O.P. Carrillo was forced out of office in 1975 for using public money and equipment for his own use and filing false financial statements.

Bleiberg reported from Dallas.

## Judge to sentence 2 Oath Keepers members after handing down punishment for group's founder

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two members of the Oath Keepers who stormed the U.S. Capitol in a military-style formation will be sentenced Friday, a day after the far-right extremist group's founder received an 18-year prison term for seditious conspiracy and other charges in the Jan. 6, 2021 attack.

U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta will sentence Army veterans Jessica Watkins and Kenneth Harrelson after

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handing Oath Keepers founder Stewart Rhodes the longest prison sentence so far in more than 1,000 criminal cases brought in the Jan. 6 riot.

Watkins and Harrelson were acquitted of seditious conspiracy but convicted of obstructing Congress in the trial alongside Rhodes and other members of the group that ended in November. One of their other co-defendants, Florida chapter leader Kelly Meggs, was sentenced Thursday to 12 years behind bars.

Harrelson was the group's "ground team lead" when Oath Keepers joined the mob that stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6 and disrupted the joint session of Congress certifying President Joe Biden's electoral victory. Watkins founded and led a separate Ohio-based militia. Harrelson and Watkins marched toward the Capitol with other Oath Keepers members in "stack" formations.

Rhodes, 58, of Granbury, Texas, was the first Jan. 6 defendant convicted of seditious conspiracy to receive his punishment for what prosecutors said was a weeklong plot to forcibly block the transfer of power from former President Donald Trump to Biden. Four other Oath Keepers convicted of the sedition charge during a second trial in January will be sentenced next week.

Justice Department prosecutors are seeking an 18-year prison sentence for Watkins, of Woodstock, Ohio, and a 15-year prison sentence for Harrelson, of Titusville, Florida.

Mehta canceled a sentencing hearing scheduled this week for another defendant — Thomas Caldwell of Berryville, Virginia — as the judge weighs whether to overturn the jury's guilty verdict against Caldwell for obstruction and a documents tampering charge.

Lawyers for Oath Keepers argued there was no plan to attack the Capitol and insisted they never intended to interfere with Congress' certification of the election. Watkins testified at the trial that storming the Capitol was a "really stupid" decision, saying she got swept up in what seemed to be a "very American moment." Harrelson didn't take the witness stand.

During his sentencing Thursday, Rhodes defiantly claimed to be a "political prisoner," criticized prosecutors and the Biden administration and tried to play down his actions on Jan. 6. The judge described Rhodes as a continued threat to the United States who clearly "wants democracy in this country to devolve into violence."

The judge in Rhodes' case agreed with the Justice Department that Rhodes' actions should be punished as "terrorism," which increases the recommended sentence under federal guidelines. Judges had previously rejected such requests in other Jan. 6 cases.

The Oath Keepers' sentences this week could serve as a guide for prosecutors in a separate Jan. 6 case against leaders of the Proud Boys extremist group. Earlier this month, a different jury convicted former Proud Boys national chairman Enrique Tarrio and three other group leaders of seditious conspiracy for what prosecutors said was another plot to keep Trump in the White House.

Before Thursday, the longest sentence in the more than 1,000 Capitol riot cases was 14 years and two months for a man with a long criminal record who attacked police officers with pepper spray and a chair as he stormed the Capitol. Just over 500 of the defendants have been sentenced, with more than half receiving prison time.

Richer reported from Boston.

## Passenger opens exit door during airplane flight in South Korea; 12 people injured slightly

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — A passenger opened an emergency exit door during a plane flight in South Korea on Friday, causing air to blast inside the cabin and slightly injure 12 people, officials said. The plane landed safely.

Some people aboard the Asiana Airlines Airbus A321 aircraft tried to stop the person, who was able to partially open the door, the Transport Ministry said.

The person was detained by airport police on suspicion of violating the aviation security law, a ministry

statement said. The person's identity and motive weren't immediately released.

The law bars passengers from handling exit doors and other equipment on board and provides for penalties of up to 10 years in prison, the ministry said.

The plane with 194 people aboard was heading to the southeastern city of Daegu from the southern island of Jeju. The flight is normally about an hour, and the incident occurred when the plane was reaching the Daegu airport at an altitude of 700 feet (213 meters).

A video apparently taken by a person on board that was posted on social media shows some passengers' hair being whipped by the air blowing into the cabin through the open door.

The passengers included teenage athletes on their way to a track and field competition. Some screamed and cried in panic, Yonhap news agency reported, citing their unidentified coach.

Yonhap quoted other passengers as saying they suffered severe ear pain after the door opened. It said some cabin crew shouted for help from passengers to prevent the door from being opened.

Twelve people were taken to hospitals for treatment, according to the Transportation Ministry. Emergency officials in Daegu said the injured people suffered breathing problems and other minor symptoms.

## Indiana doctor reprimanded for talking publicly about Ohio 10-year-old's abortion

By TOM DAVIES Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — An Indiana board decided Thursday night to reprimand an Indianapolis doctor after finding that she violated patient privacy laws by talking publicly about providing an abortion to a 10-year-old rape victim from neighboring Ohio.

The state Medical Licensing Board voted that Dr. Caitlin Bernard didn't abide by privacy laws when she told a newspaper reporter about the girl's treatment in a case that became a flashpoint in the national abortion debate days after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* last summer.

The board, however, rejected accusations from Indiana's Republican attorney general that Bernard violated state law by not reporting the child abuse to Indiana authorities. Board members chose to fine Bernard \$3,000 for the violations, turning down a request from the attorney general's office to suspend Bernard's license. The board issued no restrictions on her practice of medicine.

Bernard has consistently defended her actions, and she told the board on Thursday that she followed Indiana's reporting requirements and hospital policy by notifying hospital social workers about the child abuse — and that the girl's rape was already being investigated by Ohio authorities. Bernard's lawyers also said that she didn't release any identifying information about the girl that would break privacy laws.

The Indianapolis Star cited the girl's case in a July 1 article that sparked a national political uproar in the weeks after last summer's *Roe v. Wade* decision put into effect an Ohio law that prohibited abortions after six weeks of pregnancy. Some news outlets and Republican politicians falsely suggested Bernard fabricated the story, until a 27-year-old man was charged with the rape in Columbus, Ohio. During an event at the White House, President Joe Biden nearly shouted his outrage over the case.

Medical board President Dr. John Strobel said he believed Bernard went too far in telling a reporter about the girl's pending abortion and that physicians need to be careful about observing patient privacy.

"I don't think she expected this to go viral," Strobel said of Bernard. "I don't think she expected this attention to be brought to this patient. It did. It happened."

Bernard's lawyer Alice Morical told the board Thursday that the doctor reported child abuse of patients many times a year and that a hospital social worker had confirmed with Ohio child protection staffers that it was safe for the girl to leave with her mother.

"Dr. Bernard could not have anticipated the atypical and intense scrutiny that this story received," Morical said. "She did not expect that politicians would say that she made the story up."

Amid the wave of attention to the girl's case last summer, Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita, who is stridently anti-abortion, told Fox News he would investigate Bernard's actions and called her an "abortion activist acting as a doctor."

Deputy Attorney General Cory Voight argued Thursday that the board needed to address what he called an "egregious violation" of patient privacy and Bernard's failure to notify Indiana's Department of Child Services and police about the rape.

"There's been no case like this before the board," Voight said. "No physician has been as brazen in pursuit of their own agenda."

Voight asked Bernard why she discussed the Ohio girl's case with the newspaper reporter and later in other news media interviews rather than using a hypothetical situation.

"I think that it's incredibly important for people to understand the real-world impacts of the laws of this country about abortion," Bernard said. "I think it's important for people to know what patients will have to go through because of legislation that is being passed, and a hypothetical does not make that impact."

Board member Dr. Bharat Barai opposed finding that Bernard violated privacy laws, saying that she released no direct protected identifying information such as the girl's name or address. He disagreed with the board majority's view that the combination of information about the rare instance of a pregnant 10-year-old girl could have exposed her identity.

"We are trying to suppose that yeah this could have been done and maybe somebody could have discovered it," Barai said.

During Thursday's hearing lasting some 13 hours, Rokita's office kept up a running commentary on its official Twitter account, with one post saying: "When Bernard talked about the high priority she puts on legislation and speaking to the public, she did so at the expense of her own patient. This shows where her priorities are as an activist rather than a doctor."

Bernard objected to Voight saying her choice to publicly discuss the case led to the misconduct allegations.

"I think if the attorney general, Todd Rokita, had not chosen to make this his political stunt we wouldn't be here today," Bernard said.

Lawyers for the attorney general's office repeatedly raised questions about whether the policy of Bernard's employer, Indiana University Health, to report suspected child abuse to authorities in the state where the abuse occurred complied with Indiana law. Officials of IU Health, which is the state's largest hospital system, testified that the Indiana Department of Child Services has never objected to the hospital policy.

The Indiana board — with five doctors and one attorney present who were appointed or reappointed by Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb — had wide latitude under state law allowing it to issue reprimand letters or suspend, revoke or place on probation a doctor's license.

Ohio's law imposing a near-ban on abortion was in effect for about two months, before being put on hold as a lawsuit against it plays out. Indiana's Republican-dominated Legislature approved a statewide abortion ban weeks after the Ohio girl's case drew attention, but abortions have continued to be permitted in the state while awaiting an Indiana Supreme Court decision on the ban's constitutionality.

Bernard unsuccessfully tried to block Rokita's investigation last fall, although an Indianapolis judge wrote that Rokita made "clearly unlawful breaches" of state confidentiality laws with his public comments about investigating the doctor before filing the medical licensing complaint against her.

## **GOP-led Texas House panel issues 20 impeachment counts against state Attorney General Ken Paxton**

By ACACIA CORONADO and JAKE BLEIBERG Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Following years of scandal, criminal charges and corruption accusations, Texas's Republican Attorney General, Ken Paxton, finds himself on the brink of impeachment, and a GOP-led panel is heading the charge.

In a unanimous decision, a Republican-led House investigative committee that spent months quietly looking into Paxton recommended impeaching the state's top lawyer Thursday on 20 articles, including bribery, unfitness for office and abuse of public trust.

The House could vote on the recommendation as soon as Friday. If it impeaches Paxton, he would be

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forced to leave office immediately.

The move sets up what could be a remarkably sudden downfall for one of the GOP's most prominent legal combatants, who in 2020 asked the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn President Joe Biden's victory. Only two officials in Texas' nearly 200-year history have been impeached.

Paxton has been under FBI investigation for years over accusations that he used his office to help a donor. He was separately indicted on securities fraud charges in 2015, but has yet to stand trial.

When the five-member committee's investigation came to light Tuesday, Paxton suggested it was a political attack by the House's "liberal" Republican speaker, Dade Phelan. He called for Phelan's resignation and accused him of being drunk during a marathon session last Friday. Phelan's office brushed off the accusation as Paxton attempting to "save face."

"It's is a sad day for Texas as we witness the corrupt political establishment unite in this illegitimate attempt to overthrow the will of the people and disenfranchise the voters of our state," Paxton said in a statement Thursday, calling the committee's findings "hearsay and gossip, parroting long-disproven claims."

By moving against him, Paxton said, "The RINOs in the Texas Legislature are now on the same side as Joe Biden."

Impeachment requires a majority vote of the state's usually 150-member House chamber, which Republicans now control 85-64, since a GOP representative resigned ahead of an expected vote to expel him.

It's unclear how many supporters Paxton may have in the House, where he served five terms before becoming a state senator. Since the prospect of impeachment suddenly emerged Wednesday, none of Texas' other top Republicans have voiced support for Paxton.

The articles of impeachment issued by the investigative committee, which include three Republicans and two Democrats, stem largely from Paxton's relationship with one of his wealthy donors. They deal heavily with Paxton's alleged efforts to protect the donor from an FBI investigation and his attempts to thwart whistleblower complaints brought by his own staff.

The timing of a vote by the House is unclear. Rep. Andrew Murr, the Republican chair of the investigative committee, said he did not have a timeline and Phelan's office declined to comment.

Unlike in Congress, impeachment in Texas requires immediate removal from office until a trial is held in the Senate. Republican Gov. Greg Abbott could appoint an interim replacement. Abbott's office did not respond to requests for comment on the impeachment counts.

Final removal would require two-thirds support in the Senate, where Paxton's wife's, Angela, is a member. Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, a Republican and leader of the Senate, did not respond to requests for comment.

Paxton, 60, faces ouster at the hands of GOP lawmakers just seven months after easily winning a third term over challengers — among them George P. Bush — who had urged voters to reject a compromised incumbent but discovered that many didn't know about Paxton's litany of alleged misdeeds or dismissed the accusations as political attacks.

The attorney general characterized his potential impeachment as "a critical moment for the rule of law and will of Texas voters."

Even with Monday's end of the regular session approaching, state law allows the House to keep working on impeachment proceedings. It also could call itself back into session later. The Senate has the same options.

In one sense, Paxton's political peril arrived with dizzying speed: The House committee investigation came to light Tuesday, followed the next day by an extraordinary public airing of alleged criminal acts he committed as one of Texas' most powerful figures.

But to Paxton's detractors, who now include a widening share of his own party in the Texas Capitol, the rebuke was years in the making.

In 2014, he admitted to violating Texas securities law over not registering as an investment advisor while soliciting clients. A year later, Paxton was indicted on felony securities charges by a grand jury in his hometown near Dallas, where he was accused of defrauding investors in a tech startup. He has pleaded not guilty to two felony counts carrying a potential sentence of five to 99 years in prison.

He opened a legal defense fund and accepted \$100,000 from an executive whose company was under

investigation by Paxton's office for Medicaid fraud. An additional \$50,000 was donated by an Arizona retiree whose son Paxton later hired to a high-ranking job but was soon fired after trying to make a point by displaying child pornography in a meeting.

But what has unleashed the most serious risk to Paxton is his relationship with another wealthy donor, Austin real estate developer Nate Paul.

Several of Paxton's top aides in 2020 told the FBI that they had become concerned the attorney general was misusing the powers of his office to help Paul over unproven claims that an elaborate conspiracy to steal \$200 million of his properties was afoot. The FBI searched Paul's home in 2019 but he has not been charged and his attorneys have denied wrongdoing. Paxton also told staff members that he had an affair with a woman who, it later emerged, worked for Paul.

The impeachment charges cover myriad accusations related to Paxton's dealings with Paul. The allegations include attempts to interfere in foreclosure lawsuits and improperly issuing legal opinions to benefit Paul, and firing, harassing and interfering with staff who reported what was going on. The bribery charges stem from Paul allegedly employing the woman with whom Paxton had an affair in exchange for legal help and Paul allegedly paying for expensive renovations to Paxton's Austin home.

Other charges date back to Paxton's still-pending 2015 felony securities fraud indictment, including lying to state investigators.

The eight aides who reported Paxton to the FBI were all fired or quit, and four later sued under Texas' whistleblower law. In February, Paxton agreed to settle the case for \$3.3 million. But the Texas House must approve the payout and Phelan has said he doesn't think taxpayers should foot the bill.

Shortly after the settlement was reached, the House investigation into Paxton began. The probe amounted to rare scrutiny of Paxton in the state Capitol, where many Republicans have long taken a muted posture about the accusations that have dogged him.

Only twice has the Texas House impeached a sitting official: Gov. James Ferguson in 1917 and state Judge O.P. Carrillo in 1975.

Bleiberg reported from Dallas. Associated Press reporters Paul J. Weber and Jim Vertuno contributed from Austin, Texas.

## As electric cars boom, locals fear Chinese battery plant will harm land in drought-stricken Hungary

By JUSTIN SPIKE Associated Press

DEBRECEN, Hungary (AP) — Just beyond the pastoral gardens and traditional homes of an eastern Hungarian village, a gigaproject of Chinese industry is taking shape.

Bulldozers and excavators are already preparing the land for construction of a nearly 550-acre electric vehicle (EV) battery plant. The 7.3 billion euro (\$7.9 billion) factory will be one of Hungary's largest-ever foreign investments, and the government hopes it will make the Central European country a global hub of lithium-ion battery manufacturing in an era where governments are increasingly seeking to limit greenhouse gas emissions by switching to electric cars.

But residents, environmentalists and opposition politicians worry that the sprawling factory — built by China-based Contemporary Amperex Technology Co. Limited (CATL) — will exacerbate existing environmental problems, hit the country's precious water supplies and further undermine its economy to China.

"You have this viscerally bad feeling when you walk past the area where they are building. I simply feel this bad feeling in my stomach," said Eva Kozma, 47, a local mother who has joined with other residents of a village near the building site to oppose the project.

"This is progress, this is the future? Pouring concrete over nature while we know how polluting the factory is going to be?" she said.

Kozma and others on the outskirts of Debrecen, Hungary's second-largest city, say they were blindsided

panies, and see it as a deepening of the foothold Hungary has provided to China in Central Europe.

Laszlo Lorant Keresztes, president of the Hungarian parliament's Committee on Sustainable Development, said that Hungary's economy "is very vulnerable to the automotive industry, and this (plant) increases that vulnerability."

Speaking at a protest opposing the factory in Debrecen this week, Keresztes said the roughly 800 million euros (\$861 million) in infrastructure and tax incentives Hungary's government will supply to CATL is "an unrealistic amount of money per job," and that — as in the case of German car makers — the majority of capital generated would be exported.

"These are essentially assembly plants, and they take the profits away from here. It is also typical that they do not give work to Hungarian people, not to the local people, but to foreign guest workers," he said.

Some of the residents outside Debrecen worry that the massive plant will bring traffic and noise that will spoil the idyllic community where they came to raise their children. But mostly, they're afraid of the irreversible impact it could have on their natural world.

"They took the lands, they destroyed the soil, they destroyed the air, the water," said Eniko Pasztor, 65, a local activist who plans to leave the area if the plant is completed as planned.

"There's no amount of money that can fix what we have ruined. We have to make sure that what we have remains," she said. "We've done a lot of damage already. I don't understand why we need more, more, more."

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## Scarred by war, Ukrainian children carry on after losing parents, homes and innocence

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

LVIV, Ukraine (AP) — The two children squinted to see through the thick smoke that hung in the air after a deafening blast shook their small home in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region.

The pair, ages 9 and 10, called out for their father. Only eerie silence followed.

Then Olha Hinkina and her brother, Andrii, rushed to the bomb shelter, as they had been taught. When the booms stopped and the smoke cleared, they found their father on the porch — motionless and covered in blood after being struck by a Russian projectile.

"Father was killed at seven in the morning," said Andrii, who now lives in the safer western city of Lviv, near the border with Poland.

The two siblings join a generation of Ukrainian children whose lives have been upended by the war. Russia's full-scale invasion has subjected them to constant bombardment, uprooted millions from their homes and turned many into orphans.

Hundreds of kids have been killed. For the survivors, the wide-ranging trauma is certain to leave psychological scars that will follow them into adolescence and adulthood.

"Even if children fled to a safer area, it doesn't mean they forgot everything that happened to them," said psychologist Oleksandra Volokhova, who works with children who escaped the violence.

At least 483 children have lost their lives and nearly 1,000 have been wounded, according to figures from Ukraine's general prosecutor's office.

Meanwhile, UNICEF says an estimated 1.5 million Ukrainian children are at risk of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health issues, with potentially lasting effects.

Nearly 1,500 Ukrainian children have been orphaned, the National Social Service of Ukraine said.

The largest number of child casualties comes from Donetsk, the epicenter of many battles, where 462 children have been killed or wounded, according to Ukrainian officials.

That figure does not include casualties from the Russian occupied city of Mariupol, which is also part of

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Donetsk province, where Ukrainian officials have found it difficult to track the dead and wounded.

Before the war tore them apart, the Hinkin family was like any other living in the village of Torske, which today is just 35 kilometers (22 miles) from the front.

With the death of their father in October, the children were orphaned. Their mother died years before the war.

Six months later, the siblings appear to be moving past the worst of their ordeal.

Police and volunteers evacuated them to a safer area in western Zakarpattia region, where they were cared for by government social services and a Ukrainian charity organization called SOS Children's Villages, which provided housing and counseling.

Their story became known in and around Torske after police released a widely seen video that showed their father's body being removed from the family home.

"We knew the village. We knew where they lived. We knew these people," said Nina Poliakova, 52, from the nearby town of Lyman.

Although she fled last year with her family to Lviv, Poliakova continued to follow news from her native area. Then tragedy struck her life as well when her 16-year-old foster son died suddenly from a heart condition.

She also has a 16-year-old foster daughter she took in with her husband in 2016 from the occupied town of Horlivka, where hostilities with Russian-backed separatists began, years before the 2022 invasion.

Mired in grief, Poliakova received a call one day from a local center supporting children. The caller asked if she would be willing to meet the Hinkin siblings.

At their first meeting, they talked mostly about the Hinkin family home and the domestic animals they had. One of Andrii's favorite activities was to feed the pigs.

Poliakova decided to welcome the two children into her extended family.

"We had that tragedy in our family, and then fate just brought us together," Poliakova said. "Now many children have been left alone, without parents. Children need care, love. They seek to be embraced and comforted."

Many foundations have emerged to help children overcome the trauma of war, including a group called Voices of Children, which has processed around 700 requests from parents looking for help with children suffering from chronic stress, panic attacks and symptoms of PTSD.

The pleas have changed as the war has progressed, according to a report issued by the charity. During this past winter, parents sought help after noticing behavioral changes in their children including apathy, aggression and anxiety, sensitivity to loud noises and anti-social habits.

"A child's psyche remains more malleable than that of adults, and with timely and quality support, we understand that a child can more easily overcome any traumatic events," said Olena Rozvadovska, the head of Voices of Children.

Recovering from months living so close to combat lines was difficult for the siblings, Poliakova said.

"They were very scared," she said. Olha would cry and hug her every time she heard the air-raid sirens. Andrii was relatively calm during the day but would start screaming in the middle of the night.

A charity known as Sincere Heart has operated short-term recovery camps for children and their mothers since the start of the invasion last year. More than 8,000 people have used the camp services.

Poliakova took her three foster children there. She wanted to help revive the childhood they lost to the war.

At the camp they played with other children who had similar experiences and took part in art sessions, dance classes and other activities designed to help children express emotions.

Sounds of laughter and play resonate at the camp full of kids from the war-ravaged regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson and other areas. Many witnessed bombings and experienced the loss of a parent. Some recovered from war-related wounds.

During an art session, the children were given white T-shirts and instructed to express their feelings through drawing. Most painted in the blue and yellow of the Ukrainian flag and scribbled the phrase "glory to Ukraine."

Olha Hinkina painted a heart in blue and yellow.

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"Children reflect what lies on the surface," Rozvadovska said. "They are growing up in an atmosphere of the colors of our flag, the daily updates from the front line, the pride for the army that is standing."

Recovery is within reach for the children, she added. They can grow stronger because they have survived. "They carry the experience that helped them to survive," she said. "Maybe it even made them more resilient and adaptive."

When Andrii Hinkin remembers his hometown, he doesn't recall the bombs, the smoke or the thunderous explosions. He remembers it as a beautiful village.

Asked what are his biggest dreams, he responds timidly. "I want to grow up."

## Movie Review: Disenchantment under the sea in live-action 'The Little Mermaid'

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

It's not Rob Marshall's fault that Disney's latest live-action retread doesn't really sing. "The Little Mermaid," a somewhat drab undertaking with sparks of bioluminescence, suffers from the same fundamental issues that plagued "The Lion King," "Aladdin" and "Beauty and the Beast." Halle Bailey might be a lovely presence and possesses a superb voice that is distinctly different from Jodi Benson's, but photorealistic fins, animals and environments do not make Disney fairy tales more enchanting on their own.

The essential problem is that the live-action films have prioritized nostalgia and familiarity over compelling visual storytelling. They try to recreate beats and shots from their animated predecessors, defiantly ignoring the possibility that certain musical sequences and choices were enchanting and vibrant because they were animated, not in spite of it.

There was, in the 1989 film, a sparkling awe to everything. The underwater castle. The mermaids. Eric's ship. Even Ariel's bright red hair. Combined with the wonderful songs and lyrics by Alan Menken and Howard Ashman, it's not hard to understand why it helped fuel a Disney Animation renaissance.

Anyone who has gone through the recent Disney's live-action library would be right to approach "The Little Mermaid" with caution. Still, there's excitement as the camera takes us underwater to give us our first glimpse of the mermaids — even after a somewhat ominous quote from Hans Christian Anderson that begins the movie ("But a mermaid has no tears, and therefore she suffers much more"). You can't help but be hopeful. But the first mermaid that comes into focus doesn't so much evoke wonder as it does a flashback of Ben Stiller's merman in "Zoolander." The technology is better, sure, but the result is about the same. Worse, as we spend more time with them, following Ariel's multicultural sisters as they gather around their father King Triton (Javier Bardem), it's hard to shake a distinctly uncanny valley feeling. It's like gazing in on a roundtable of AI supermodels with fins.

For all its pizzazz, everything about this "Little Mermaid" is just more muted. Miranda's new songs are odd, too, and don't seem to fit. Prince Eric's (Jonah Hauer-King) makes sense, maybe even Ariel's in-her-head anthem after she gives her voice to Melissa McCarthy's Ursula, but did Scuttle really need a song, too?

Speaking of Scuttle, the cute cartoons that stood in for Ariel's seagull, crab and fish friends have been replaced with horrifyingly accurate depictions of said animals. Awkwafina's comedy charms can only go so far while looking like an actual seagull who might be after your chips at the beach. Close-ups of its beady blue eyes are unsettling, though it was probably a good call to go blue over gold, which looks a bit demonic even in the cartoon. Sometimes it seems as though the editor is trying to minimize the unpleasantness by quickly cutting away from Scuttle. Flounder (Jacob Tremblay, who also voiced Luca) doesn't have this problem as much, mainly because once they go out of the water he's essentially hidden under the surface. Daveed Diggs' Sebastian gets off easy, looking the most pleasantly cartoonish. But then there's that Jamaican accent that they decided to carry over (and this in a movie that adds a line about consent to "Kiss the Girl").

Visibility is a problem for more than just Flounder, too. Sometimes "The Little Mermaid's" underwater sequences just look too underwater. Things are cloudy and dull and hard to see, once again probably in

the name of authenticity, but straining to see what Marshall and the scores of VFX teams have labored on for years is not a pleasant experience. This could be a projection issue — I wasn't in an especially high-tech theater with color enhancing upgrades. But that also means anyone without access to things like Dolby Vision around the world will have this issue, too. When Sebastian brings out the most colorful fish he can find for the "Under the Sea" number, you even start to empathize with Ariel a little bit. It is the exact opposite of the "Avatar: The Way of Water" experience.

"The Little Mermaid," a Walt Disney Co. release in theaters Friday, is rated PG by the Motion Picture Association for "action/peril, some scary images." Running time: 135 minutes. Two stars out of four.

MPA Definition of PG: Parental guidance suggested.

Follow AP Film Writer Lindsey Bahr on Twitter: [www.twitter.com/ldbahr](https://www.twitter.com/ldbahr).

## US study finds 1 in 10 get long COVID after omicron, starts identifying key symptoms

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — About 10% of people appear to suffer long COVID after an omicron infection, a lower estimate than earlier in the pandemic, according to a study of nearly 10,000 Americans that aims to help unravel the mysterious condition.

Early findings from the National Institutes of Health's study highlight a dozen symptoms that most distinguish long COVID, the catchall term for the sometimes debilitating health problems that can last for months or years after even a mild case of COVID-19.

Millions worldwide have had long COVID, with dozens of widely varying symptoms including fatigue and brain fog. Scientists still don't know what causes it, why it only strikes some people, how to treat it — or even how to best diagnose it. Better defining the condition is key for research to get those answers.

"Sometimes I hear people say, 'Oh, everybody's a little tired,'" said Dr. Leora Horwitz of NYU Langone Health, one of the study authors. "No, there's something different about people who have long COVID and that's important to know."

The new research, published Thursday in the Journal of the American Medical Association, includes more than 8,600 adults who had COVID-19 at different points in the pandemic, comparing them to another 1,100 who hadn't been infected.

By some estimates, roughly 1 in 3 of COVID-19 patients have experienced long COVID. That's similar to NIH study participants who reported getting sick before the omicron variant began spreading in the U.S. in December 2021. That's also when the study opened, and researchers noted that people who already had long COVID symptoms might have been more likely to enroll.

But about 2,230 patients had their first coronavirus infection after the study started, allowing them to report symptoms in real time — and only about 10% experienced long-term symptoms after six months.

Prior research has suggested the risk of long COVID has dropped since omicron appeared; its descendants still are spreading.

The bigger question is how to identify and help those who already have long COVID.

The new study zeroed in on a dozen symptoms that may help define long COVID: fatigue; brain fog; dizziness; gastrointestinal symptoms; heart palpitations; sexual problems; loss of smell or taste; thirst; chronic cough; chest pain; worsening symptoms after activity and abnormal movements.

The researchers assigned scores to the symptoms, seeking to establish a threshold that eventually could help ensure similar patients are enrolled in studies of possible long COVID treatments, as part of the NIH study or elsewhere, for apples-to-apples comparison.

Horwitz stressed that doctors shouldn't use that list to diagnose someone with long COVID — it's a potential research tool only. Patients may have one of those symptoms, or many — or other symptoms

not on the list — and still be suffering long-term consequences of the coronavirus.

Everyone's doing studies of long COVID yet "we don't even know what that means," Horwitz said.

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Science and Educational Media Group. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## Climbers celebrate Mount Everest 70th anniversary amid melting glaciers, rising temperatures

By BINAJ GURUBACHARYA Associated Press

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — As the mountaineering community prepares to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the conquest of Mount Everest, there is growing concern about temperatures rising, glaciers and snow melting, and weather getting harsh and unpredictable on the world's tallest mountain.

Since the 8,849-meter (29,032-foot) mountain peak was first scaled by New Zealander Edmund Hillary and his Sherpa guide Tenzing Norgay in 1953, thousands of climbers have reached the peak and hundreds of lost their lives.

The deteriorating conditions on Everest are raising concerns for the mountaineering community and the people whose livelihoods depend on the flow of visitors.

The Sherpa community, who grew up on the foothills of the snow-covered mountain they worship as the mother of the world, is the most startled.

"The effects of climate change are hitting not just the fishes of Antarctica, the whales or the penguins, but it's having a direct impact on the Himalayan mountains and the people there," said Ang Tshering, a prominent Sherpa who has been campaigning for years to save the Himalayan peaks and surrounding areas from the effects of global warming.

Almost every year, he and his Asian Trekking agency organize a cleaning expedition in which clients and guides alike bring down garbage left by previous Everest climbing parties.

The effects of climate change and global warming have been severe in the high Himalayan area, Ang Tshering said. "The rising temperature of the Himalayan area is more than the global average, so the snow and ice is melting fast and the mountain is turning black, the glaciers are melting and lakes are drying up."

Growing up on the foothills of the mountain, Ang Tshering said he remembers sliding on the glacier near his village. But that's gone now.

Other Sherpas also said they have seen the changes in the Khumbu Glacier at the foot of Everest, near the base camp.

"We don't really need to wait for the future; we are seeing the impact already," said Phurba Tenjing, a Sherpa guide who recently scaled the peak for the 16th time guiding foreign clients to the summit.

Phurba Tenjing has been climbing Everest since he was 17. He said both the snow and ice have melted and the trek that used to take five or six hours over the icy path now only takes half an hour because the glaciers have melted and bare rocks are exposed.

"Before, the building-like ice chunks of the Khumbu Glacier used to come all the way up to the base camp. But now we don't see it near the base camp," Phurba Tenjing said.

Recent research found that Mount Everest's glaciers have lost 2,000 years of ice in just the past 30 years.

Researchers found that the highest glacier on the mountain, the South Col Glacier, has lost more than 54 meters (177 feet) of thickness in the past 25 years. A team of 10 scientists visited the glacier and installed two weather monitoring stations — the world's highest — and extracted samples from a 10-meter-long (33-foot) ice core. The glacier, which sits around 7,900 meters (26,000 feet) above sea level, was found to be thinning 80 times faster than it first took the ice to form on the surface, according to research published in 2022.

The glaciers are losing ice at rates that likely have no historic precedent, said Duncan Quincey, a glaciologist at the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom.

The change is happening "extremely rapidly" he said. "It's causing challenges for everybody within that

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by the announcement that the factory would be built on valuable agricultural land. They fear that the large quantities of water diverted to the plant for cooling equipment will threaten their water supply, and that chemicals from the plant could leech into the soil and water, damaging the region's natural resources.

That region, the Great Hungarian Plain, is threatened by desertification, a process where vegetation recedes due to high heat and low rainfall. Climate change-driven droughts and record heat waves in the area have compounded heavy water use by agriculture and depleted groundwater, resulting in devastating crop yields.

Last year, Hungary experienced its hottest summer on record, and nearly 2.5 million acres, or 20% of the country's croplands, dried out. Experts say that unless a comprehensive water retention plan is enacted, much of the region will soon be unsuitable for agriculture.

Yet despite these environmental struggles, Hungary's government believes that the European Union's ambitions to phase out the manufacture of internal combustion engine vehicles by 2035 present a unique opportunity for the country to take its place as a leader in EV battery production, and has embarked on a major push to attract such investments.

And there will likely be buyers: transport represents nearly a quarter of Europe's greenhouse gas emissions, and more than 70% of those emissions are caused by road transport. If the EU is to reach its goal of net zero emissions by 2050, EVs will play a pivotal role.

CATL's 100 GWh battery plant in Debrecen, which is expected to create around 9,000 jobs, is the largest of a number of EV battery factories popping up around the country, part of the government's strategy to serve foreign car manufacturers present in Hungary — like German carmakers Audi, BMW and Mercedes-Benz — as they transition to battery-powered vehicles.

Hungary's foreign minister, Peter Szijjarto, said earlier this month in Beijing that the presence of those German carmakers had "inspired" the recent spate of Chinese investments in EV battery plants, and that "the Chinese suppliers of these German companies continue to regard Hungary as the meeting point of East-West investment."

Gabor Varkonyi, an auto industry expert, agrees that the effort to attract battery makers makes good sense for Hungary's economy — especially given that more than 20% of the country's exports comes from the automotive industry.

"It is very much in Hungary's interest for these investments to appear here, especially arm in arm with German technology," Varkonyi said. "This way, both can be tied here in the medium term, so that neither will be able to work successfully without the other. In this sense, it is an absolute national interest."

But Dalma Dedak, an environmental policy expert with WWF Hungary, says that despite intentions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by making cars electric, there's been a lack of environmental impact studies on the longer term consequences for Hungary's air, soil and water.

Details have only been released on the first phase of the CATL plant's multi-stage construction, she said, so its footprint on the environment once it is fully running remains unknown — something that has eroded trust between the affected population and the government.

"It is of concern that the approval procedure for the first phase of the plant does not show what kind of water consumption and emissions can be expected when the entire plant is built," she said. "That is, will Hungary's resources be sufficient for these ambitious plans?"

The water consumption of the industrial park where the factory is located is expected to amount to more than 40,000 cubic meters (10.5 million gallons) per day — doubling the drinking water consumption of Debrecen and laying a major burden on a region in the midst of a historic water crisis, Dedak said.

"In the long run, it's a problem and a question of how to supply water to such a water-scarce city," she said.

CATL says that 70% of its water consumption will come from gray water — household wastewater that has been purified — though this plan was not present in the environmental impact study for the first phase of the factory. Hungary's Ministry of Economic Development did not respond to a request for comment.

Other critics of the investment point to the economy's dependence on foreign-owned automobile com-

region and, of course, for the millions of people who are living downstream," since much of Southern Asia depends on rivers that originate in the Himalayas for agriculture and drinking water.

Both floods and droughts are likely to become more extreme, he said.

"There's a huge amount of unpredictability within these systems now, and it makes it very difficult for people who require water at a particular time of year to know that they're going to have that water available," he said.

Nepal's government and mountaineering community plan to celebrate Everest Day on May 29 with a parade around Kathmandu and a ceremony honoring the climbers and veteran Sherpa guides.

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Associated Press climate writer Sibi Arasu in Bengaluru, India, contributed to this report.

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

## **Rights groups slam severe Taliban restrictions on Afghan women as 'crime against humanity'**

By RAHIM FAIEZ Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Two top rights groups on Friday slammed the severe restrictions imposed on women and girls by the Taliban in Afghanistan as gender-based persecution, which is a crime against humanity.

In a new report, Amnesty International and the International Commission for Jurists, or ICJ, underscored how the Taliban crackdown on Afghan women's rights, coupled with "imprisonment, enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment," could constitute gender persecution under the International Criminal Court.

The report by Amnesty and ICJ, titled, "The Taliban's war on women: The crime against humanity of gender persecution in Afghanistan," cited the ICC statute, which lists gender-based persecution as a crime against humanity.

The Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in August 2021 as U.S. and NATO troops were in the final weeks of their withdrawal from the country after two decades of war.

Despite initial promises of a more moderate rule, the Taliban started to enforce restrictions on women and girls soon after their takeover, barring them from public spaces and most jobs, and banning education for girls beyond the sixth grade. The measures harked back to the previous Taliban rule of Afghanistan in the late 1990s, when they also imposed their strict interpretation of Islamic law, or Sharia.

The harsh edicts prompted an international outcry against the already ostracized Taliban, whose administration has not been officially recognized by the United Nations and the international community.

In the report, Santiago A. Canton, the ICJ secretary general, said the Taliban's actions are of such "magnitude, gravity and of such a systematic nature," that they qualify "as a crime against humanity of gender persecution."

Both organizations called on the International Criminal Court to include this crime in their ongoing investigation into what is happening in Afghanistan and take legal action. They also called on countries "to exercise universal jurisdiction" and hold the Taliban accountable under international law.

The report also accused the Taliban of targeting women and girls who have taken part in peaceful protests by detaining, forcibly disappearing them and subjecting them to torture in custody. The Taliban have also forced them to sign "confessions" or "agreements" not to protest again, the report said.

What is happening in Afghanistan is "a war against women," which amounts to "international crimes" that are "organized, widespread, systematic," said Agnès Callamard, Amnesty's secretary general.

Without elaborating, she called for the international community to dismantle "this system of gender oppression and persecution."

Amnesty also documented cases of women and girls being forcibly married to members of the Taliban, as well as attempts to force them into such marriages. The report said those who refused such marriages were "subjected to abduction, intimidation, threats and torture."

The report cited the case of a 15-year-old girl who was forced to marry a Taliban figure despite her family's objections in the northeastern province of Takhar in August 2021, and that of a 33-year-old female journalist and social activist who was forcibly married to a Taliban commander the following month.

"We simply cannot afford to fail the women and girls of Afghanistan," said Canton of ICJ.

The report said the Taliban have also perpetrated human rights violations have also been against Afghan men.

Several monitoring groups have documented reports of "extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detention, enforced disappearances, and torture" of those associated with the former, Western-backed Afghan government that crumbled in the face of the Taliban takeover of the country.

The Taliban have also targeted journalists, the LGBTQ community, rights activists and ethnic minorities, the report said.

Amnesty and ICJ also shared a summary of the report's findings with the Taliban-appointed foreign ministry in Kabul, requesting a response. None was immediately provided, the groups said.

## **Biden releases new strategy to tackle rise in antisemitism, says 'hate will not prevail'**

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Thursday announced what he said is the most ambitious and comprehensive undertaking by the U.S. government to fight hate, bias and violence against Jews, outlining more than 100 steps the administration and its partners can take to combat an alarming rise in antisemitism.

Speaking during a videotaped address at the White House, Biden said the first U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism sends a "clear and forceful message" that "in America, evil will not win, hate will not prevail" and "the venom and violence of antisemitism will not be the story of our time."

Months in the making, the strategy has four basic goals: increasing awareness and understanding of antisemitism, including its threat to America, and broadening appreciation of Jewish American heritage; improving safety and security for Jewish communities; reversing the normalization of antisemitism and countering antisemitic discrimination; and building "cross-community" solidarity and collective action to counter hate.

Jewish organizations largely applauded the administration's effort.

"Jewish safety is inextricably linked to the safety of other communities and the health and vibrancy of our multiracial democracy," said Amy Spitalnick, CEO of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs. "As we see antisemitism and extremism increasingly normalized in our politics and our society, the urgency of this framework is even more clear."

The strategy also calls on Congress, state and local governments, tech companies and other private businesses, faith leaders and others to help combat bias and hate directed at Jews.

Tech companies are asked to establish "zero tolerance" policies against antisemitic content on their platforms. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum has committed to launching an education research center. Professional sports leagues and clubs are asked to use their platforms and clout to raise awareness. The White House public engagement office will invite members of the public to describe how they have supported Jewish, Muslim or other communities that are different from their own.

Doug Emhoff, who is married to Vice President Kamala Harris, said at the White House that hate crimes against Jews accounted for 63%, or nearly two-thirds, of all religiously motivated hate crimes in the United States in 2022 although Jews make up just over 2% of the overall population.

"I know the fear. I know the pain. I know the anger that Jews are living with because of this epidemic of hate," said Emhoff, the first Jewish spouse of a U.S. president or vice president. He has become the administration's point-person on combating antisemitism.

Emhoff, formerly an entertainment lawyer in California, said he never envisioned that this issue would

become “my cause” as second gentleman of the United States, “ but now, more than ever, we must all rise to the challenge and meet this moment.” He said the plan will save lives.

“We are committed to making sure that everyone can live openly, proudly and safely in their own communities,” Emhoff said. “It’s on all of us to put an end to the visceral hate we are seeing across our nation. We cannot normalize this.”

In a sign of the administration’s support for the strategy, Emhoff was flanked by White House domestic policy adviser Susan Rice; homeland security adviser Liz Sherwood-Randall; and Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt, the special envoy to monitor and combat antisemitism.

Harris slipped into the auditorium for a few minutes to watch her husband from the back of the room and flashed him a thumbs-up before departing.

A survivor of the 2018 massacre at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, the deadliest antisemitic attack in U.S. history, welcomed the strategy.

“I am proud that our leaders understand the urgency and importance of countering antisemitism in a comprehensive way, but grieve the levels of antisemitism in the country that required the need for a plan in the first place,” said Rabbi Jeffrey Myers, who survived the attack that killed 11 worshippers.

Jury selection concluded Thursday in the trial of Robert Bowers, the man charged with those killings. Testimony is expected to begin Tuesday.

In his videotaped remarks, Biden said hate does not go away, that it only hides until given oxygen. He recalled the deadly white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017, and noted that the antisemitic chants by participants led him to run for president in 2020.

“Silence is complicity,” the president said.

Last fall, Biden hosted a White House summit against hate-fueled violence. Emhoff led a White House discussion with Jewish community leaders last December to discuss the rise in antisemitism and how to counteract it. Days later, Biden created a government working group to develop the new strategy.

Lipstadt said the strategy’s release is a “historic moment in the modern fight against what’s known as the world’s oldest hatred.”

“For the first time, the United States government is not only acknowledging that antisemitism is not only a serious problem in this country, but laying out a clear plan to counter it,” she said.

AP White House Correspondent Zeke Miller contributed to this report.

## **Joe Pavelski scores on OT power play, Stars beat Golden Knights 3-2 to avoid West sweep**

By STEPHEN HAWKINS AP Sports Writer

DALLAS (AP) — Joe Pavelski admits that he probably appreciates the big playoff goals more the later he gets in his career. But they all still feel just as good, and his latest kept the season alive for the Dallas Stars.

“Just really living in the moment,” Pavelski said. “A tremendous feeling for sure, and glad we could play another game, and go from there and try to extend it.”

The 38-year-old Pavelski scored on a power play at 3:18 of overtime — a one-timer from the middle of the left circle to the far post — and the Stars avoided a sweep in the Western Conference Final with a 3-2 victory over the Vegas Golden Knights on Thursday night.

Jason Robertson scored twice for his first career multigoal playoff game for Dallas, which played without suspended captain Jamie Benn.

“We’re looking for goals and that’s kind of my responsibility I put on myself,” Robertson said. “I know these playoffs have been tough. ... I was able to get the bounces that we needed tonight.”

Jake Oettinger had 37 saves, two nights after the 24-year-old Stars goalie was pulled 7:10 into Game 3 after allowing three goals on five shots.

The Stars had the man advantage in overtime after Brayden McNabb’s high-sticking penalty on Ty Del-

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landrea. Fifty seconds into the power play, Pavelski scored on a pass from Miro Heiskanen. They won for the first time in their five OT games this postseason — Vegas won the first two games of this series past regulation.

It was only the second Vegas penalty of the game, both high-sticking calls against McNabb. His penalty on Pavelski late in the first period set up the power play when Robertson scored his first goal with some nifty stickwork.

Pavelski, in his 15th NHL season and still looking for his first Stanley Cup, scored his ninth goal in 12 games this postseason, but his first in five games. He has 73 career postseason goals — the most for U.S.-born players and the most among all active players.

"He's ageless. ... I've seen that movie over and over again. Never gets old," Stars coach Pete DeBoer said. "He lives for those moments and he wants to be in those situations. Always has, and delivers almost every time."

Benn was suspended two games by the NHL on Wednesday for his cross-check with his stick landing near the neck of Vegas captain Mark Stone in the first two minutes of Game 3 on Tuesday night. Benn also will miss Game 5 on Saturday night in Las Vegas.

William Karlsson and Jonathan Marchessault scored for Vegas. Adin Hill had his five-game winning streak snapped. He made 39 saves, including a game-saver with his extended left leg without about two minutes left in regulation on rookie Fredrik Olofsson's swiping try in his first career playoff game.

"Our effort wasn't good enough. Closing a series is probably the hardest game in a series, right, so it just wasn't good enough from our group," Marchessault said. "It was still a one-goal game in overtime. It was right there for us."

Karlsson and Marchessault are among six of the original Vegas players still on the team from the inaugural 2017-18 season that ended with the Knights playing for the Stanley Cup, though they lost in five games to the Washington Capitals after winning the first game.

Vegas missed a chance to complete a sweep, a night after the Florida Panthers finished off a sweep of the Carolina Hurricanes in the Eastern Conference Final.

Vegas took a 2-1 lead midway through the second period when Marchessault, after whacking his stick on the back of Ryan Suter in front of the net, scored on a pass between the Stars defenseman's legs from McNabb, another original Golden Knight.

Robertson's tying goal late in that period came on a ricochet off the back board just seconds after he had another shot hit the post. That was the fourth goal of this series, and sixth in the playoffs, after this regular season becoming the first Dallas player with a 100-point season.

On his first goal late in the first that tied it 1-1, Robertson deflected Heiskanen's shot from just inside the blue line up into the air. As Hill was trying to secure the puck into his glove, Robertson knocked it free and then reached around and swiped the puck into the net with his stick parallel to the ice.

With former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson and wrestling great Ric Flair both in the building wearing Stars jerseys Dallas was avoided being swept in the playoffs for the first time since 2001 against St. Louis in the second round. This was the Stars' 21st playoff series since then.

The Golden Knights scored first again — though not like those three quick goals in Game 3 that led to the earliest exit ever for Oettinger.

Karlsson pushed the puck up and skated to the front of the net after passing to Nicolas Roy, whose pass through traffic went off a Dallas stick before Reilly Smith got it just inside the right circle and took a shot. Karlsson's deflection past Oettinger only 4:17 into the game was his eighth goal this postseason.

"There were a lot of rush chances," said Smith, also with Vegas since the beginning. "I don't think we did a good enough job of making it difficult on them. So we get another opportunity in two days."

## Supreme Court limits regulation of some US wetlands, making it easier to develop and destroy them

By JOHN FLESHER and MICHAEL PHILLIS Associated Press

The U.S. Supreme Court has stripped federal agencies of authority over millions of acres of wetlands, weakening a bedrock environmental law enacted a half-century ago to cleanse the country's badly polluted waters.

A 5-4 majority significantly expanded the ability of farmers, homebuilders and other developers to dig up or fill wetlands near rivers, lakes and streams, finding the government had long overreached in limiting such activities.

The ruling Thursday may nullify key parts of a rule the Biden administration imposed in December, which two federal judges already had blocked from being enforced in 26 states. It's the latest turn in a decades-old struggle by courts and regulators to determine which waters are subject to protection under the Clean Water Act.

Some experts say the battle over wetlands now may shift to states, with red and blue states writing laws that take dramatically different approaches.

The high court's decision follows one in 2022 curtailing federal power to reduce carbon emissions from power plants and indicates a willingness by the court's emboldened conservatives to limit environmental laws and agency powers.

"This is one of the saddest chapters in the 50-year history of the Clean Water Act," said Jim Murphy, an attorney with the National Wildlife Federation.

Industry and farm groups praised the ruling.

"We're absolutely thrilled with the results," said Travis Cushman, deputy general counsel for the American Farm Bureau Federation. "This is the exact answer that we've been asking for for a long time."

The court's majority sided with an Idaho couple who sought to build a house near Priest Lake in the state's panhandle. Chantell and Michael Sackett objected when federal officials identified a soggy portion of the property as a wetland requiring them to get a permit before filling it with rocks and soil.

"Now that the case is finally over ... they'll be able to make reasonable use of their property," said Damien Schiff of the Pacific Legal Foundation, which represented the couple.

While all nine justices agreed the Sacketts' property was not covered by the law, they disagreed over the definition of "waters of the United States" and which wetlands it includes.

The majority opinion, written by Justice Samuel Alito, echoed a 2006 opinion by the late Justice Antonin Scalia. It said federally protected wetlands must be directly adjacent to a "relatively permanent" waterway "connected to traditional interstate navigable waters" such as a river or ocean.

They also must have a "continuous surface connection with that water, making it difficult to determine where the 'water' ends and the 'wetland' begins," Alito wrote.

The court jettisoned a 17-year-old opinion by their former colleague, Anthony Kennedy, describing covered wetlands as having a "significant nexus" to larger bodies of water. It had been the standard for evaluating whether permits were required for discharges under the 1972 landmark environmental law. Opponents had objected that the standard was vague and unworkable.

Justice Elena Kagan, one of three liberals on the court, said the majority rewrote the law to reach the political decision it wanted by coming up with new ways to curtail environmental protection powers Congress gave the Environmental Protection Agency.

"The court will not allow the Clean (Water) Act to work as Congress instructed," Kagan wrote. "The court, rather than Congress, will decide how much regulation is too much."

EPA Administrator Michael Regan said the decision "erodes longstanding clean water protections" and the agency was considering its options.

The Biden administration regulations replaced a Trump-era rule that federal courts had thrown out and environmentalists said left waterways vulnerable to pollution.

Even after the latest court ruling, some experts said ambiguities remain – and likely will persist as the

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EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers craft yet more regulations tailored to the court's edicts.

Landowners wishing to develop property near waterways will still need to hire consultants, "walk the land and figure out whether you're in or out" of federal reach, Boston real estate attorney Peter Alpert said. "There's still going to be a lot of doubt about what's in the gray area."

The ruling could scuttle protections for at least 45 million acres of wetlands, an area roughly the size of Florida, according to the Southern Environmental Law Center.

"They just put huge swaths of wetlands at risk," said Kelly Moser, an attorney with the center.

Justice Brett Kavanaugh said the majority likely stripped protections from wetlands that were long considered regulated, including those behind levees along the flood-prone Mississippi River.

Despite their vital role in blocking flood waters and filtering out pollutants, those wetlands may lose protection because they aren't directly connected to the river, he said in an opinion that concurred on the Sackett case but disagreed significantly with the majority on the broader issues.

The ruling will have a big impact in the arid Southwest, where some rivers and streams dry up between infrequent rainstorms, experts said. The court majority said the Clean Water Act protects only wetlands connected to rivers and streams that are "relatively permanent" or "continuous."

"Continuous is a big deal because we don't have water, really, for 10 months of the year," said Maureen Gorsen, a California environment and regulatory attorney.

The ruling might lead some developers to decide they don't need to seek permits for projects that could disturb wetlands, said Jim Murphy, director of legal advocacy for the National Wildlife Federation.

And those who are discussing settlements for wetland damage or building new ones to compensate for losses might back out, said Alpert, the Boston attorney.

"Everybody involved in enforcement actions ... is going to hit the pause button on negotiations with agencies right now and question with their consultants whether under this decision there is a reason to even be talking with the government," he said.

Environmental advocates will prod Congress and states to "plug some of the gaps that have been created by this decision," Murphy of the National Wildlife Federation said.

But Congress showed in March it is in no mood to do so, voting to overturn the administration's wetlands rules and prompting a veto from President Joe Biden.

State governments may become another battleground. More than a dozen prohibit environmental regulations tougher than federal ones.

"You're going to see a patchwork of regulation depending on what state you are in," said Ashley Peck, an environmental attorney in Salt Lake City.

The Supreme Court ruling will likely create "red state" and "blue state" approaches to water protection," said Cara Horowitz of the UCLA School of Law.

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Reporters Mark Sherman and Jessica Gresko in Washington contributed to this story.

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The Associated Press receives support from the Walton Family Foundation for coverage of water and environmental policy. The AP is solely responsible for all content. For all of AP's environmental coverage, visit <https://apnews.com/hub/climate-and-environment>

## What to watch this weekend: 'Succession' finale, John Wick, Matchbox Twenty, 'American Born Chinese'

By The Associated Press undefined

Sure, lots of folks are eagerly anticipating this Sunday's "Succession" finale. But what if you haven't followed the Roy family drama? There's plenty of new don't miss new television, movies, music and games headed to a device near you.

Among the offerings worth your time as selected by The Associated Press' entertainment journalists this week are streaming arrival of the latest "John Wick" film, the end of a long drought of new Matchbox

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Twenty music, a video game that lets you play one of Middle Earth's most recognizable characters and a television adaptation of the graphic novel "American Born Chinese."

## NEW MOVIES TO STREAM

— It can be hard to believe when corporate folks make genuinely altruistic gestures, especially involving their fortunes, but neither Kris McDivitt Tompkins, the first CEO of Patagonia, nor her late husband, Doug Tompkins, the founder the North Face and Esprit, were ones to play by the rules. "Wild Life," a new documentary from the Oscar-winning "Free Solo" filmmakers, tells the story of this couple, their love of the outdoors, their adventurous spirits and how they funneled their fortunes to "rewilding" conservation efforts by buying up roughly 2.2 million acres in Argentina and Chile. "Wild Life" starts streaming on Disney+ and Hulu on Friday.

— It's a robust week for Sundance documentaries on streaming as "Victim/Suspect" debuted on Netflix on Tuesday. This film from director Nancy Schwartzman follows reporter Rae de Leon's investigation into a disturbing pattern: That in the United States, women reporting sexual assaults often become suspects. The film delves into possible flaws and loopholes in the system that may be enabling the chilling trend.

— For more escapism, Keanu Reeves' tireless assassin John Wick returns for a fourth film, which made its way to video on demand on Tuesday. This time, Wick goes to Paris. He's still being hunted but has also gone on the offensive. AP's Mark Kennedy wrote in his review that this installment elevates and expands the franchise. "The fourth installment is more stylish, more elegant and more bonkers — kind of like Paris itself," Kennedy said. It also serves as a bittersweet farewell to the Continental Hotel concierge Charon, played by Lance Reddick, who died shortly before the film came out.

— AP Film Writer Lindsey Bahr

## NEW MUSIC TO STREAM

— Pop-rockers Matchbox Twenty end over a decade away with their fifth studio album, "Where The Light Goes," out Friday. It's an upbeat collection, opening with a horn-drenched, sing-along "Friends" — the chorus goes "All my friends are here" and the song features the vocals from bandmember Paul Doucette's son — and other highlights include singer-songwriter Amanda Shires' duet with frontman Rob Thomas on the cheerful "No Other Love" and the single "Wild Dogs (Running In a Slow Dream)," which captures that time in your youth when you finally find your people.

— Celebrate the end of "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" by singing along with an album of the fifth and final season's music. The album features songs like "Relax Max" by Dinah Washington, "I Love The Way You Say Goodnight" by Doris Day with The Page Cavanaugh Trio, Barbra Streisand's "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf" and Tony Bennett's "I Wanna Be Around." Fans will appreciate actor Hank Azaria doing "Nancy (With The Laughing Face)" and the cast belting out "Everything Grows!"

— AP Entertainment Writer Mark Kennedy

## NEW SERIES TO STREAM

— Dinosaurs once again come to life in the second season of "Prehistoric Planet" on Apple TV+. Executive produced by Jon Favreau and the team behind "Planet Earth," the docuseries uses the latest technology to not only create dinosaurs that look real, but also to immerse viewers into their habitat. Sir David Attenborough returns to narrate. "Prehistoric Planet" season two is presented as an event series, debuted Monday and is completely out now.

— Each episode of the "SmartLess" podcast hosted by Jason Bateman, Sean Hayes and Will Arnett features an entertaining conversation with a guest, but one of the best parts about the trio is their banter with each other. These longtime friends bicker and rib one another like family. The guys took their show on the road in 2022 to six cities, hosting conversations in front of a live, sold-out audience with surprise guests. If you weren't one of the lucky ones to see them live, it turns out cameras were rolling. "SmartLess: On the Road" debuted Tuesday on Max.

— The new action-comedy series "American Born Chinese" is based on the graphic novel by Gene Luen Yang. It stars Ben Wang as a high schooler trying to survive the daily life as a first generation American in a Chinese family. He meets an exchange student from Taiwan and finds himself caught up in a war of ancient Chinese Gods. The series strikes a balance between a coming-of-age story and mythology with

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the spirit of the graphic novel. It also boasts a cast that includes Oscar winners Ke Huy Quan and Michele Yeoh, plus Chin Han and Daniel Wu. Recurring cast members include Stephanie Hsu, Ronnie Chieng and Jimmy O. Yang. "American Born Chinese" premiered Wednesday on Disney+.

— Alicia Rancilio

## NEW VIDEO GAMES TO PLAY

— You're off to visit Middle-Earth. Which character do you want to be? Frodo? Gandalf? Legolas? Daedalic Entertainment is betting on a more conflicted protagonist with *The Lord of the Rings: Gollum*. Instead of wielding cool weapons and flashy spells, Gollum has to rely on stealth and spiderlike climbing skills to survive. He also has to put up with kibitzing from his alter ego, Smeagol, the kindhearted hobbit Gollum was before being corrupted by his "preciousss" One Ring. The German studio Daedalic is best known for story-heavy adventures like its *Deponia* series, so it could be interesting to see how it tackles a tale set in J.R.R. Tolkien's sprawling world. Gollum's journey begins Friday on Xbox X/S/One, PlayStation 5/4 and PC.

— In a typical post-apocalyptic video game like *Fallout* or *The Last of Us*, there are still plenty of people wandering the planet. Private Division's *After Us* isn't messing around — in its future, human beings have been wiped off the face of the Earth. You play as Gaia, the "spirit of life," and your mission is to gather the lost souls of all the species that have been driven to extinction. Oil-drenched monsters called Devourers are out to stop any hope of revival. Despite the grim setting, *After Us* looks gorgeous, evoking the haunted wasteland of the 2012 classic *Journey*. And Barcelona-based *Piccolo Studio* says it's a story of "sacrifice and hope," so Earth may not be done just yet. It arrived Tuesday on Xbox X/S, PlayStation 5 and PC.

— Lou Kesten

Catch up on AP's entertainment coverage here: <https://apnews.com/apf-entertainment>.

## Always wanted a lighthouse? US is giving some away, selling others at auction

By MARK PRATT Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Ten lighthouses that for generations have stood like sentinels along America's shorelines protecting mariners from peril and guiding them to safety are being given away at no cost or sold at auction by the federal government.

The aim of the program run by the General Services Administration is to preserve the properties, most of which are more than a century old.

The development of modern technology, including GPS, means lighthouses are no longer essential for navigation, said John Kelly of the GSA's office of real property disposition. And while the Coast Guard often maintains aids to navigation at or near lighthouses, the structures themselves are often no longer mission critical.

Yet the public remains fascinated by the beacons, which are popular tourist attractions and the subject of countless photographers and artists.

"People really appreciate the heroic role of the solitary lighthouse keeper," he said, explaining their allure. "They were really the instruments to provide safe passage into some of these perilous harbors which afforded communities great opportunities for commerce, and they're often located in prominent locations that offer breathtaking views."

The GSA has been transferring ownership of lighthouses since Congress passed the National Historic Lighthouse Preservation Act in 2000. About 150 lighthouses have been transferred, 80 or so given away and another 70 auctioned, raising more than \$10 million.

This year, six lighthouses are being offered at no cost to federal, state or local government agencies, nonprofits, educational organizations or other entities that are willing to maintain and preserve them and make them publicly available for educational, recreational or cultural purposes.

They include the 34-foot (10.4-meter) tall Plymouth/Gurnet Light in Massachusetts. The octagonal wooden structure dates to 1842, although a lighthouse has been at the site since 1768. A previous beacon at the

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site was staffed by America's first female lighthouse keeper.

Kelly's personal favorite is Warwick Neck Light, in Warwick, Rhode Island. The 51-foot (15.5-meter) tall lighthouse that dates to 1827 was an important navigation tool for mariners making their way to Providence.

"Warwick Neck is really at quite a prominent location up on a cliff overlooking Narragansett Bay," he said. "That's probably one that I would say that has a real 'Wow' factor when you get out and look at it."

The other lighthouses being offered at no cost are Lynde Point Lighthouse in Old Saybrook, Connecticut; Nobska Lighthouse in Falmouth, Massachusetts; Little Mark Island and Monument in Harpswell, Maine; and Erie Harbor North Pier Lighthouse in Pennsylvania.

Some are already maintained by nonprofits, and those agencies will have the opportunity to apply to continue doing so, Kelly said.

If a new owner is not found, the lighthouse is offered for competitive bidding at auction.

The four lighthouses being sold at auction include Cleveland Harbor West Pierhead Light, a 50-foot (15.5-meter) steel tower dating to 1911 that is only accessible by boat but has spectacular views of the city skyline.

The others are Penfield Reef Lighthouse in Fairfield, Connecticut; Stratford Shoal Light in the middle of Long Island Sound between New York and Connecticut; and Keweenaw Waterway Lower Entrance Light in Chassell, Michigan.

Some of the lighthouses purchased in the past have been converted into private residences by people who want a unique living situation.

"They all have their own interesting history," Kelly said.

## Rare James M. Cain story 'Blackmail' published for first time

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The characters are pure noir: Pat, a "dark, heavily handsome thick-shouldered" young man; Myra, a "cheesecake" woman whose "thick blonde hair" fell "off her bare head to brilliant brassy effect."

And they talk the way crime fiction characters used to talk, as crafted by James M. Cain, in a short story rarely seen until now.

"Hello there," she said.

"Hiya."

"You looking for someone?"

"Sure am.

For Johnsie."

"He just now left.

"In the taxi?"

"For the concert. He likes egghead music."

Cain's "Blackmail" is featured in the new issue of Strand Magazine, a quarterly which has unearthed obscure works by Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Shirley Jackson and many others. Written over the latter part of his life and left unpublished, "Blackmail" tells of a blind Korean War veteran known as Johnsie; Pat, the former comrade who now employs him; and Myra, a woman from the past with some hard-boiled ideas about money, and love.

"Here, Cain serves up vintage noir — complete with gritty dialogue, a damaged war hero, and a young femme fatale who thinks she's a lot harder than she really is — only to then turn the tale on its head in the very final scene," Strand managing editor Andrew Gulli wrote in a brief introduction.

The themes in "Blackmail" of betrayal, violence, rough sexuality — and blackmail — echo such Cain classics as "Double Indemnity" and "The Postman Always Rings Twice." Paul Skenazy, a professor emeritus of the University of California, Santa Cruz, who has written books on Cain and Raymond Chandler among others, called the story minor, but compelling.

"'Blackmail' is the perfect title for a James M. Cain story," Skenazy said. "Cain really had few other sub-

jects: forbidden desire, the violence it leads to, the secrets we hide from ourselves and others, the price we pay to hide who we are and what we've done."

"These are all wounded figures," he added: "a man blinded in Korea, his friend whom he rescued, a mysterious woman from the past who enters their lives looking to make a quick buck."

Cain, who died in 1977 at 85, is widely regarded as one of the 20th century's greatest crime fiction writers and would describe his work as having "some quality of the opening of a forbidden box." Born in Baltimore in 1892, he wrote for years for *The American Mercury* and other magazines and newspapers before he published his first fiction, in his mid-30s. Starting with his million-selling debut novel, "The Postman Always Rings Twice," he was a prolific fiction writer and screenplay writer in the 1930s and 1940s, and saw "Double Indemnity," "Mildred Pierce" and other of his books adapted into classic Hollywood movies.

By the 1950s, his popularity was in decline and his style was seen as outdated. Cain had lived in Los Angeles over the previous two decades, but returned to Maryland and quit such longtime vices as drinking and smoking. Skensky noted that "Blackmail," set in Washington, D.C., has a more forgiving view of human nature than in his earlier work.

"In Cain's best work," he said, "no one is exempt from Cain's irony and life's brutality. Here, the exemptions abound. Those exemptions don't make for his best writing but do provide a more generous, sentimental, even humane ending than we generally expect from Cain."

## **Suspect in killing of 4 people, including 2 police officers, in Japan captured after standoff**

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Police said they arrested a man Friday who had holed up in his father's house armed with a rifle and a knife after allegedly killing four people, including two police officers, in central Japan.

TV Asahi showed the man with his hands on his head walk out of the house and be ushered toward a police vehicle.

Masanori Aoki, 31, a farmer, was arrested by police under a court warrant on suspicion of murder in Nakano, a city in Nagano prefecture.

Nagano prefectural police chief Iwao Koyama offered condolences to the victims and said the loss of two police officials is "extremely regrettable." He noted that the suspect allegedly shot to death a police officer in the left chest with a hunting rifle.

National Public Safety Commission Chairperson Koichi Tani told a regular news conference Friday that the suspect had licenses for multiple hunting and air guns authorized by the prefectural public safety commission and his license renewals have been properly made.

Tani said police are investigating his gun usage records and that they plan to take necessary safety measures based on investigation results.

Police said the house was owned by his father, a local politician. Koyama said two women who escaped while the suspect was holed up are the suspect's mother and aunt and that they were uninjured. NHK said that the mother told police that the attacker was her son and that his father was chairman of the city assembly.

Japanese media quoted neighbors described the suspect as a quiet person and that they were not aware of any family feud.

Police said earlier that two police officers were shot by the suspect when they arrived at the scene after receiving an emergency call saying a woman was stabbed. The officers were apparently without bullet-proof vests.

On Friday, Nagano police chief said the suspect allegedly stabbed to death the 66-year-old woman with a survival knife.

A witness told NHK on Thursday that a woman fell while being chased by the suspect, who then stabbed her with a knife and shot at two police officers as they arrived at the scene in a patrol car.

The woman and the two police officers were pronounced dead at a hospital. An older woman, who was

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injured but could not be rescued because she was near the suspect, was found dead early Friday, police said.

During the standoff, TV footage showed police wearing bulletproof vests and carrying shields, with an ambulance nearby. Police sealed off a 300-meter (330-yard) radius around the house, and city officials urged people in the quiet farming neighborhood to stay home or stay at an evacuation center, where about 80 people reportedly took shelter.

Violent crimes are rare in Japan. It has strict gun control laws and only a handful of gun-related crimes annually. But in recent years, there have been some high-profile cases involving random knifings on subways and arson attacks, and there is growing concern about homemade guns and explosives.

This story has been corrected to correct attribution in the 2nd paragraph to TV Asahi.

## Celtics thrive on 3s, beat Heat 110-97 in Game 5 to extend East finals

By KYLE HIGHTOWER AP Sports Writer

BOSTON (AP) — The Boston Celtics have looked elimination in the face four times this postseason and still haven't blinked.

Derrick White had 24 points, including six 3-pointers, and the Celtics dominated the Miami Heat 110-97 on Thursday night in Game 5 to extend the Eastern Conference finals.

Marcus Smart had 23 points and five steals. Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown finished with 21 points apiece as the Celtics won their second straight and trimmed Miami's series lead to 3-2. The Celtics are halfway to becoming the first team in NBA history to overcome a 3-0 deficit to win a series.

"We've got to do whatever it takes to get a win," White said.

Boston also survived two elimination games in the second round against the 76ers. Teams that fell behind 3-0 are 0-150 all-time in series.

"It just says that our backs are against the wall and we're sticking together and we're competing at a high level to give ourselves a chance," Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla said.

Game 6 is Saturday in Miami, where the Heat will try again to become the second No. 8 seed to reach the NBA Finals in the current format, which dates to 1984.

"We're always going to stay positive, knowing that we can and we will win the series," the Heat's Jimmy Butler said. "We just have to close it out at home."

A day after the Florida Panthers punched the franchise's first ticket to the Stanley Cup Finals since 1996, for the second straight game the Heat were denied a spot in the NBA Finals.

"One game doesn't lead to the next game," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said. "It just doesn't matter. It's about collectively preparing and putting together a great game. We'll play much better on Saturday. That's all we just have to focus on right now."

Duncan Robinson led the Heat with 18 points. Bam Adebayo added 16 points and eight rebounds. Butler had 14 points, five rebounds and five assists, but sat out the final 9:47 of the game. Caleb Martin finished with 14 points.

It was Butler's lowest-scoring game of the playoffs. He had 16 points in Game 3, a blowout win by Miami. Miami never led and had 16 turnovers.

"I don't want to say we're surprised by it, but they raised their level," Robinson said. "We've got to raise ours now as well."

Boston entered the day just 4-5 at TD Garden this postseason. But with a raucous home crowd behind them, the Celtics thrived on their energy.

They dove for loose balls, outfought Miami for rebounds and found each other for layups and dunks in transition as they built as much as a 20-point lead in the first half.

The Heat cut into it, but Boston kept knocking down 3s and grew its edge as high as 96-72 in the fourth quarter.

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Boston's fans reignited a "Beat the Heat!" chant that hadn't been prevalent since Game 1.

The Heat started Kyle Lowry at point guard after Gabe Vincent was ruled out with a sprained left ankle earlier in the day. It was Lowry's first start since Feb. 2.

Vincent, the Heat's third-leading scorer this postseason, got hurt late in Miami's Game 4 loss when he landed awkwardly while trying to save a loose ball near the Heat bench.

His presence was missed as Miami struggled early on the offensive end, swarmed by a Celtics' defense that forced the Heat into 10 first-half turnovers that led to 17 Boston points. Lowry played 31 minutes, scored five points and finished with four turnovers.

"I think now it's a series," Brown said.

## TIP-INS

Heat: Were outscored 13-0 in second-half points in the opening 24 minutes.

Celtics: It was the first time this season that Boston had four 20-point scorers. ... Al Horford added six points and 11 rebounds. ... The Celtics took a 61-44 edge into halftime. ... Boston's first turnover of the game didn't come until the 8:16 mark of the second quarter.

## FAST START

The Celtics got the fast start they had hoped for in front of their home crowd.

Smart stripped Adebayo on Miami's opening possession, igniting a fast break and layup on the other end by Tatum.

Then, with the game tied at 4, Tatum got free in the lane for a monstrous two-handed dunk. He hung on the rim afterward and continued his celebration when he landed, leading to a technical foul.

It didn't stop the Celtics' momentum, as their first-quarter lead grew as high as 23-7. Boston ended the period with a 35-20 lead, punctuated by a 3-pointer by White at the buzzer.

Tatum had 12 points in the opening 12 minutes, with the Celtics outscoring the Heat 21-6 from beyond the arc. Boston hit 7 of its 12 attempts.

## VIP WATCH

Celtics Hall of Famer Paul Pierce, NCAA president Charlie Baker and New England Patriots Matt Slater and Devin McCourty were among several celebrities in the Garden.

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

## Texas lawmakers issue 20 articles of impeachment against state Attorney General Ken Paxton

By ACACIA CORONADO and JAKE BLEIBERG Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton teetered on the brink of impeachment Thursday after years of scandal, criminal charges and corruption accusations that the state's Republican majority had largely met with silence until now.

In an unanimous decision, a Republican-led House investigative committee that spent months quietly looking into Paxton recommended impeaching the state's top lawyer on 20 articles, including bribery, unfitness for office and abuse of public trust. The House could vote on the recommendation as soon as Friday. If it impeaches Paxton, he would be forced to leave office immediately.

The move sets up what could be a remarkably sudden downfall for one of the GOP's most prominent legal combatants, who in 2020 asked the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn President Joe Biden's victory. Only two officials in Texas' nearly 200-year history have been impeached.

Paxton has been under FBI investigation for years over accusations that he used his office to help a donor. He was separately indicted on securities fraud charges in 2015, but has yet to stand trial.

When the five-member committee's investigation came to light Tuesday, Paxton suggested it was a political attack by the House's "liberal" Republican speaker, Dade Phelan. He called for Phelan's resignation and accused him of being drunk during a marathon session last Friday. Phelan's office brushed off the accusation as Paxton attempting to "save face."

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"It's is a sad day for Texas as we witness the corrupt political establishment unite in this illegitimate attempt to overthrow the will of the people and disenfranchise the voters of our state," Paxton said in a statement Thursday, calling the committee's findings "hearsay and gossip, parroting long-disproven claims."

By moving against him, Paxton said, "The RINOs in the Texas Legislature are now on the same side as Joe Biden."

Impeachment requires a majority vote of the state's usually 150-member House chamber, which Republicans now control 85-64, since a GOP representative resigned ahead of an expected vote to expel him.

It's unclear how many supporters Paxton may have in the House, where he served five terms before becoming a state senator. Since the prospect of impeachment suddenly emerged Wednesday, none of Texas' other top Republicans have voiced support for Paxton.

The articles of impeachment issued by the investigative committee, which include three Republicans and two Democrats, stem largely from Paxton's relationship with one of his wealthy donors. They deal heavily with Paxton's alleged efforts to protect the donor from an FBI investigation and his attempts to thwart whistleblower complaints brought by his own staff.

The timing of a vote by the House is unclear. Rep. Andrew Murr, the Republican chair of the investigative committee, said he did not have a timeline and Phelan's office declined to comment.

Unlike in Congress, impeachment in Texas requires immediate removal from office until a trial is held in the Senate. Republican Gov. Greg Abbott could appoint an interim replacement. Abbott's office did not respond to requests for comment on the impeachment counts.

Final removal would require two-thirds support in the Senate, where Paxton's wife's, Angela, is a member. Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, a Republican and leader of the Senate, did not respond to requests for comment.

Paxton, 60, faces ouster at the hands of GOP lawmakers just seven months after easily winning a third term over challengers — among them George P. Bush — who had urged voters to reject a compromised incumbent but discovered that many didn't know about Paxton's litany of alleged misdeeds or dismissed the accusations as political attacks.

The attorney general characterized his potential impeachment as "a critical moment for the rule of law and will of Texas voters."

Even with Monday's end of the regular session approaching, state law allows the House to keep working on impeachment proceedings. It also could call itself back into session later. The Senate has the same options.

In one sense, Paxton's political peril arrived with dizzying speed: The House committee investigation came to light Tuesday, followed the next day by an extraordinary public airing of alleged criminal acts he committed as one of Texas' most powerful figures.

But to Paxton's detractors, who now include a widening share of his own party in the Texas Capitol, the rebuke was years in the making.

In 2014, he admitted to violating Texas securities law over not registering as an investment advisor while soliciting clients. A year later, Paxton was indicted on felony securities charges by a grand jury in his hometown near Dallas, where he was accused of defrauding investors in a tech startup. He has pleaded not guilty to two felony counts that carry a potential sentence of five to 99 years in prison.

He opened a legal defense fund and accepted \$100,000 from an executive whose company was under investigation by Paxton's office for Medicaid fraud. An additional \$50,000 was donated by an Arizona retiree whose son Paxton later hired to a high-ranking job but was soon fired after trying to make a point by displaying child pornography in a meeting.

But has unleashed the most serious risk to Paxton is his relationship with another wealthy donor, Austin real estate developer Nate Paul.

Several of Paxton's top aides in 2020 told the FBI that they had become concerned the attorney general was misusing the powers of his office to help Paul over unproven claims that an elaborate conspiracy to steal \$200 million of his properties was afoot. The FBI searched Paul's home in 2019 but he has not been charged and his attorneys have denied wrongdoing. Paxton also told staff members that he had an affair

with a woman who, it later emerged, worked for Paul.

The impeachment charges cover myriad accusations related to Paxton's dealings with Paul. The allegations include attempts to interfere in foreclosure lawsuits and improperly issuing legal opinions to benefit Paul, and firing, harassing and interfering with staff who reported what was going on. The bribery charges stem from Paul allegedly employing the woman with whom Paxton had an affair in exchange for legal help and Paul allegedly paying for expensive renovations to Paxton's Austin home.

Other charges date back to Paxton's still-pending 2015 felony securities fraud indictment, including lying to state investigators.

The eight aides who reported Paxton to the FBI were all fired or quit, and four later sued under Texas' whistleblower law. In February, Paxton agreed to settle the case for \$3.3 million. But the Texas House must approve the payout and Phelan has said he doesn't think taxpayers should foot the bill.

Shortly after the settlement was reached, the House investigation into Paxton began. The probe amounted to rare scrutiny of Paxton in the state Capitol, where many Republicans have long taken a muted posture about the accusations that have dogged him.

Only twice has the Texas House impeached a sitting official: Gov. James Ferguson in 1917 and state Judge O.P. Carrillo in 1975.

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This story has been corrected to reflect that impeachment requires a majority, not a two-thirds, vote of the Texas House.

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Bleiberg reported from Dallas. Associated Press reporters Paul J. Weber and Jim Vertuno contributed from Austin, Texas.

## **Body-cam footage shows indicted ex-police officers laughing at man who died in their custody**

By MICHAEL GOLDBERG Associated Press/Report for America

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — Three former police officers who were indicted by a Mississippi grand jury joked around about a Black man who died in their custody, with one of them questioning whether to call an ambulance for the man immediately, body-camera footage shows.

Officials in the state capital of Jackson announced Wednesday that a Mississippi grand jury had indicted two former police officers on murder charges and another ex-officer on a manslaughter charge in the death of Keith Murriel, who is seen on video being pinned down and repeatedly shocked with stun guns during a New Year's Eve arrest. The city released hours of body-camera footage detailing the encounter, which The Associated Press reviewed.

The officers had tackled Murriel while arresting him for allegedly trespassing at a hotel after they asked him to leave the building's parking lot. The footage showed then-officers Avery Willis, Kenya McCarty and James Land struggling to handcuff Murriel as he was stunned numerous times for over 10 minutes.

McCarty and Willis are Black, and Land is white, according to Melissa Faith Payne, a city spokesperson.

After officers handcuffed Murriel, they placed him horizontally in the back of a patrol car. Seventeen minutes of the hourlong body-camera footage shows officers trying to place Murriel inside the vehicle. The remaining 43 minutes of the footage don't show paramedics arriving or the officers checking on Murriel to see if he needed immediate medical aid. The footage is broken up into multiple clips, and it is unclear whether officers attended to Murriel off-camera.

What is clear is that during that 43-minute period, the officers joked around about the encounter.

"I hope (he) is asleep. Because if he's asleep, it'll be a good ride," Willis is heard saying on camera, using a racial slur to refer to Murriel. "It was funny seeing (his) feet in the air ... In the beginning, it was funny. After a while it got annoying."

After officers left Murriel in the patrol vehicle, Willis said he was going to call a sergeant to ask when officers should call an American Medical Response, or AMR, ambulance.

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"I don't know if he wants to wait until we get down (to the station) to do this, until I give him AMR," Willis said. "That way he's at least already down there, because if we open the door, he's going to try to get out."

The clip from Willis' body camera ends after one hour. Paramedics arrived 12 minutes into the next clip from Willis' body camera. When a paramedic opened the back door of the patrol vehicle, he noticed Murriel wasn't breathing.

McCarty then told one of the paramedics Murriel was "on something." The Jackson Police Department has not indicated whether any narcotics were detected in Murriel's toxicology report.

Paramedics performed CPR before transporting Murriel to a local hospital, where he was pronounced dead. On Willis' body-camera footage, he can be heard telling someone Murriel choked on his own vomit.

In an email, Francis Springer, an attorney for McCarty, wrote that her client "sincerely laments Mr. Muriel's death and has the most sincere condolences for his family and friends."

"Ms. McCarty doesn't believe she is guilty of the crime for which she is indicted or of any other crime. She will enter a not-guilty plea," Springer wrote.

An attorney for Land declined to comment. The Hinds County District Attorney's Office and Hinds County Sheriff's Office did not immediately respond to inquiries about whether Willis had retained an attorney.

Daryl Washington, an attorney for Murriel's family, said the language and tactics used by the officers justified their indictment.

"It makes you wonder how these officers act when they are not captured on their own body cam," Washington said. "But these officers knew that their body cams were on, and they felt very comfortable because they believed nothing would happen to them. Fortunately, Keith's family is not going to allow this to be swept under the rug like a lot of these cases usually are."

Murriel's family has filed a civil lawsuit against the officers. Washington said city officials did not give them enough time to view the footage before it was released to the public. Some family members saw the footage for the first time in news reports.

"We expected to at least have a couple of days or so to prepare ourselves," he said.

Jackson Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba said at Wednesday's news conference that the city was now releasing body-camera footage because a Mississippi Bureau of Investigation probe of the death had been completed. The officers — all ex-members of the Jackson Police Department — were indicted on May 12.

All three officers were placed on administrative leave after the incident. McCarty was fired in February, and Willis and Land in April.

Hinds County Sheriff Tyree Jones told WJTV-TV that Land is out of jail on a \$75,000 bond, and McCarty is out on a \$150,000 bond. The sheriff on Wednesday said Willis had not yet been arrested and a spokesperson for the department did not respond to a phone message Thursday inquiring whether he was in custody.

Michael Goldberg is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues. Follow him on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/mikergoldberg>.

## Guam 'very blessed' with no early reports of major damage in the messy aftermath of Typhoon Mawar

By GRACE GARCES BORDALLO and JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER Associated Press

HAGATNA, Guam (AP) — Chainsaws buzzed Friday as neighbors helped neighbors clear toppled trees and began cleaning the wreckage of Typhoon Mawar, which walloped Guam as the strongest typhoon to hit the island in over two decades but appeared to have passed without leaving death or massive destruction in its wake.

While it was still early going in the recovery effort, police Sgt. Paul Tapao said there did not seem to be any major damage, main roads were passable and "Guam has been very blessed to have no storm-related deaths or any serious injuries."

To Tapao, the roar of the mechanical saws was a reminder of the resilience of the storm-prone U.S.

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Pacific territory and its people.

"Everyone helps out with the cleaning," he said. "That's the Guamanian way — that's embedded in the blood."

He added that there's a saying in Chamorro — the indigenous language of the Mariana Islands — "inafa maolek," that means cooperation, a concept of restoring harmony or order.

"Storms have taught our island to be resilient," he said. "We're still here."

Still, officials said it could take weeks to clean up the mess after Mawar briefly made landfall as a Category 4 storm Wednesday night on the northern tip of the island of roughly 150,000 people, flipping cars, tearing off roofs and leaving trees bare.

Some villages had little or no water Friday, Tapao said. About 51,000 customers were without electricity, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency. There were 725 people in shelters Friday, down from nearly 1,000 on Thursday, officials said.

Water contamination from the heavy rains and runoff was a concern: The Guam Waterworks Authority issued a notice advising residents to boil water before drinking it, and the Guam Environmental Protection Agency warned people to stay out of the sea at all beaches because of high bacteria content.

The central and northern parts of the island received more than 2 feet (60 centimeters) of rain as the eyewall passed. The swirling typhoon churned up a storm surge and waves that crashed through coastal reefs and swamped houses.

In the southeastern village of Yona, the floodwaters reached above the waist at the home where Alexander Ken M. Aflague's mother-in-law and sister-in-law live, he said. Two trucks and an SUV were completely submerged.

Aflague said the mood on the island was like after every storm, as people assess the damage and move toward rebuilding their lives back to normal. His major worry was shortages, saying supplies were at levels similar to what they were during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The cleanup is the struggle but we all pitch in and help each other," he said via text message.

Also in Yona, winds peeled back the roof of Enrique Baza's mother's house, allowing water to damage everything inside. His mother rode out the storm with him at his concrete residence, he said, but "my mom's house didn't escape."

He drove around in a pickup after the storm passed looking for supplies to repair her roof, but most stores were without power and accepting only cash. Many wooden or tin homes were badly damaged or had collapsed outright.

"It's kind of a shock," Baza said.

On Friday, President Joe Biden declared that a major disaster exists for Guam and ordered federal aid to supplement recovery efforts.

There were long lines at ATMs and some stores and gas stations on Friday.

Officials said they anticipated being able to resume operations at the flooded A.B. Won Pat International Airport next Tuesday.

Guam Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero gave the all-clear Thursday evening, returning the island to its typical condition of readiness as the National Weather Service lifted its typhoon watch.

"We have weathered the storm," Leon Guerrero said.

The storm is forecast to continue moving northwest before turning sharply north Tuesday or Wednesday, according to Taiwan's Central Weather Bureau. That track would keep the typhoon at sea for days as it gradually weakens.

Mawar had regained its status as a super typhoon on Thursday, with winds reaching 150 mph (241 kph). By early Friday, they had strengthened to 175 mph (282 kph), according to the weather service.

On Friday morning, Mawar was centered 345 miles (555 kilometers) west-northwest of Guam and 360 miles (579 kilometers) west of Rota, Guam's neighbor to the north, moving west-northwest at 14 mph (23 kph).

Carlo Quinonez, who lives near Tamuning, said he rode out the storm in a hotel and felt "very lucky" that the building was largely unscathed. A nearby abandoned building lost many of its windows and part

of a wall on the fifth story, Quinonez said.

"It was the peak that had us questioning our safety. Floors rattling and walls creaking. Tossing debris, and roots, and fruit everywhere," he wrote in an email.

The Navy has ordered the USS Nimitz aircraft carrier strike group to head to the island to assist in the recovery effort, according to a U.S. official. The Nimitz, along with the USS Bunker Hill, a cruiser, and the USS Wayne E. Meyer, a destroyer, were south of Japan and expected to arrive in Guam in three or four days, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss ship movements not yet made public.

Kelleher reported from Honolulu. AP Science Writer Seth Borenstein in Kensington, Maryland, and Associated Press writers Lolita C. Baldor and Sarah Brumfield in Washington, Audrey McAvoy in Honolulu, Mark Thiessen in Anchorage, Alaska, Stefanie Dazio in Los Angeles, Ed Komenda in Seattle and Rebecca Boone in Boise, Idaho, contributed.

## **GOP field in Pennsylvania Senate race still wide open as hard-right state lawmaker says he won't run**

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — A hard-right Pennsylvania state lawmaker said Thursday night that he will not challenge Democratic Sen. Bob Casey, leaving the GOP field wide open as Republican Party officials try to recruit a strong candidate in the moderate battleground state to help capture a Senate majority in 2024.

Doug Mastriano, who was endorsed by former President Donald Trump in last year's race for governor but lost in a landslide, said in a livestreamed appearance with his wife that he will not run for Senate "at this moment the way things currently are."

Former hedge fund CEO David McCormick is the favorite of party leaders and has drawn pledges of financial support from top Republican officials — should he decide to run.

McCormick, however, is facing a complicated decision, with Trump seeking the party's nomination for president. A Mastriano candidacy could have further complicated McCormick's path, and his announcement allowed Republican Party officials, for a night, to breathe a sigh of relief — or, as one quipped, "pop Champagne."

A year ago, the party weathered a bruising, seven-way primary for Pennsylvania's open U.S. Senate seat. It cost upwards of \$85 million, launched months of TV attack ads and inflicted lasting damage on the eventual nominee, heart surgeon-turned-TV celebrity Dr. Mehmet Oz.

A three-week recount in the primary contest left McCormick behind Oz by fewer than 1,000 votes.

Mastriano's decision gives the Pennsylvania GOP hope of avoiding another divisive and expensive primary like the one in 2022, which led to a rough general election that featured losses in races for governor and Senate.

"It gives us as a party the chance to coalesce behind a candidate," said Sam DeMarco, a McCormick ally and chair of the Allegheny County GOP. "Hopefully that would be Dave McCormick."

It also could give an eventual GOP nominee the opportunity to "define yourself on your own terms instead of entering a general campaign with attacks against you and your character playing across the television screens in Pennsylvania statewide," DeMarco said.

Mastriano, a state senator, did not voice explicit support for McCormick or any other candidate, but said he expected that an eventual GOP nominee would live up to their campaign pledges.

For Republicans, Pennsylvania is a top target in their quest to recapture the Senate majority, while Democrats face a difficult Senate map in 2024.

Of 34 seats up for election, Democrats must defend incumbents in red states — Montana, Ohio and West Virginia — and multiple swing states, including Pennsylvania, if they are to hold their 51-seat majority.

The prospect of a Mastriano victory in a primary had prompted handwringing among some Republicans.

Mastriano had spent the last few months saying he could win a Senate primary "hands down" and blaming the party establishment for his 15-point loss in November's election for governor.

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But many Republican officials say Mastriano's subpar political skills, inability to raise money and extreme positions on abortion — among other issues — would guarantee a Casey victory in a state that has long embraced more moderate voices.

Republican hopes for victory may rest on McCormick.

McCormick has promises of support from party brass, including a super PAC linked to Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and the National Republican Senatorial Committee.

McCormick also has deep pockets and connections across spheres of politics, business and government from which to draw endorsements and campaign contributions — none of which were enough to prevail against Oz, the Trump-backed candidate who went on to lose the general election to Democrat John Fetterman.

If he runs, McCormick may have to share a ticket with Trump, who castigated McCormick in last year's primary and continues to tell the lie that the 2020 presidential election was stolen.

In a book he published in March, McCormick told of an exchange with Trump in which the former president told him that, to win last year's Senate primary, McCormick would need to say the 2020 election was stolen.

"I made it clear to him that I couldn't do that. Three days later, Trump endorsed Mehmet Oz," McCormick wrote.

Trump went on to campaign against McCormick, deriding him at one point as the "candidate of special interests and globalists and the Washington establishment."

McCormick lost to Oz by fewer than 1,000 votes.

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Follow Marc Levy on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/timelywriter>

## **Cambodia's top opposition party barred from July elections, leaving Hun Sen's party unchallenged**

By SOPHENG CHEANG Associated Press

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) — Cambodia's top opposition party was barred Thursday from participating in elections set for July after the Constitutional Council refused to overturn a decision not to register the party over a paperwork issue.

The Candlelight Party, the sole credible challenger to the governing Cambodian People's Party in the upcoming polls, lost its appeal because its complaint was deemed unlawful, the council said in a brief statement.

The decision is final and cannot be appealed.

Cambodian courts are widely considered to be under the influence of Prime Minister Hun Sen's government and his Cambodian People's Party.

The National Election Committee on May 16 had refused to register the Candlelight Party, saying it failed to provide necessary documents. A few days later the party officially filed an appeal with the Constitutional Council asking it to overturn the election commission's ruling.

Kimsour Phirith, a spokesperson for the Candlelight Party, said he "regretted" Thursday's decision since it denies the party's supporters nationwide from being able to vote for their preferred candidates.

"The absence of the (Candlelight Party) from the election means the voices of the people are dismissed. Such a move would never occur in a real democratic country," Kimsour Phirith said.

The U.S. State Department said it would not send official observers to witness the elections and is "deeply troubled" by the decision barring the Candlelight Party from participating.

"Contrived legal actions, threats, harassment, and politically motivated criminal charges targeting opposition parties, independent media, and civil society undermine Cambodia's international commitments to develop as a multiparty democracy" spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a statement.

It urged Cambodia authorities "to reverse course to ensure its citizens can participate in a fair, multiparty democracy."

About 9.7 million Cambodians are registered to vote in the July 23 elections for the 125 members of the

National Assembly. Eighteen political parties are registered and recognized by the election committee, but the absence of the Candlelight Party leaves only Hun Sen's party, its allies and small parties that lack a national presence to contest the polls.

The Cambodian People's Party has held an iron grip on power for decades and controls almost every level of government. Hun Sen, 70, an authoritarian ruler in a nominally democratic state, has held his position for 38 years.

He and his party hold all the advantages of incumbency ahead of the election, with dominance in political organizing, personnel, finances and media influence. Hun Sen's eldest son, army chief Hun Manet, is widely expected to replace his father as prime minister after the polls.

The Candlelight Party is the unofficial successor to the Cambodia National Rescue Party, which had posed a serious challenge to Hun Sen's party before the 2018 elections. It was dissolved just months ahead of the polls by a controversial court ruling that alleged it had plotted the illegal overthrow of the government.

The party's disbanding enabled the governing party to win all the seats in the National Assembly. Western nations declared the election was neither free nor fair, and imposed mild economic sanctions in response.

Most prominent opposition members are now in self-imposed exile to avoid being jailed on various charges they say are trumped up and unfair.

## **Man declared innocent of attempted murder after 33 years in California prison**

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A California man who spent 33 years in prison for attempted murder has been declared innocent and freed, the Los Angeles County district attorney announced Thursday.

Daniel Saldana, 55, was convicted in 1990 of opening fire on a car containing six teenagers who were leaving a high school football game in Baldwin Park, east of Los Angeles. Two students were wounded but survived.

The attackers mistook the teens for gang members, authorities said.

Saldana was 22 at the time of the shooting and worked full-time as a construction worker. He was one of three men charged with the attack. Convicted of six counts of attempted murder and one count of shooting at an occupied vehicle, Saldana was sentenced to 45 years to life in state prison.

Saldana appeared with District Attorney George Gascón at a press conference announcing his exoneration Thursday. He said he was grateful to be freed.

"It's a struggle, every day waking up knowing you're innocent and here I am locked up in a cell, crying for help," Saldana said, according to the Southern California News Group.

"I'm just so happy this day came," he added.

Gascón's office began investigating after learning in February that another convicted attacker told authorities during a 2017 parole hearing that Saldana "was not involved in the shooting in any way and he was not present during the incident," the DA said.

A former deputy district attorney was present at the hearing "but apparently did nothing" and failed to share the exonerating information with Saldana or his attorney as required, Gascón said.

That caused Saldana to spend an additional six years in prison before the DA's office reopened the case and declared him innocent, Gascón said.

The district attorney didn't disclose other details of the case but he apologized to Saldana and his family.

"I know that this won't bring you back the decades you endured in prison," he said. "But I hope our apology brings some small comfort to you as you begin your new life."

Gascón added: "Not only is this a tragedy to force people into prison for a crime they did not commit, but every time that an injustice of this magnitude takes place, the real people responsible are still out there to commit other crimes."

## DeSantis pushes past embarrassing campaign start, raises \$8.2M ahead of early state blitz

By STEVE PEOPLES, HOLLY RAMER and ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE Associated Press  
CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis on Thursday sought to push past an embarrassing beginning to his presidential campaign, outlining an aggressive travel schedule as his allies insisted they remain well funded and well positioned for a long Republican primary fight ahead.

While DeSantis supporters privately acknowledged the bungled announcement was an unwelcome distraction, there was a broad sense — even among some Republican critics — that it would likely have limited long-term political consequences, if any at all. For the doubters, the campaign confirmed Thursday night that it had raised \$8.2 million in the 24 hours since entering the race, a massive sum that far exceeded the amount raised by President Joe Biden over the same period.

“Do they wish they could do it over again? Probably,” David Oman, a veteran Republican Iowa operative, said of DeSantis’ glitch-ridden opening. “Will we be talking about it in 10 days? Probably not.”

DeSantis formally launched his campaign Wednesday night during an online conversation with Twitter CEO Elon Musk. But the audio stream crashed repeatedly, making it difficult for most users to hear the announcement in real time.

On Thursday, the Republican governor announced plans for a three-state blitz next week featuring at least a dozen stops. He’s scheduled to campaign Tuesday and Wednesday in Iowa before a trip to New Hampshire on Thursday and South Carolina on Friday.

“We are laser-focused on taking Gov. DeSantis’ forward-thinking message for restoring America to every potential voter in Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina,” campaign manager Generra Peck said. “Our campaign is committed to putting in the time to win these early nominating states. No one will work harder than Gov. DeSantis to share his vision with the country — he has only begun to fight.”

DeSantis is casting himself as the only legitimate Republican rival in the GOP’s crowded primary to former President Donald Trump, who holds a big lead in early polls along with a firm grip on a significant portion of the GOP’s passionate base.

Yet Trump is plagued by his own baggage, which includes multiple legal threats and a fixation on his 2020 election loss.

Meanwhile, DeSantis’ team opens the campaign with tens of millions of dollars in the bank, including the \$8.2 million raised since Wednesday’s announcement, part of which came from donations secured by bundlers gathered Thursday in Miami. In the 24 hours after he launched his campaign, Biden said he raised \$6.3 million.

The New York Times was the first to report DeSantis’ stunning haul.

An adviser to DeSantis’ allied super PAC said the group began with \$33 million in the bank and 30 full-time paid staff already in place across the first four states on the presidential primary calendar, with many more hires already planned for the subsequent 14 states to hold primary contests.

No other Republican presidential candidate has such an infrastructure in place, including Trump. His aides declined to say how many staff he has in early states. “The only numbers we’ll talk about are the huge leads President Trump is racking up in the early states,” said spokesman Steven Cheung.

DeSantis faced nagging questions about his rocky rollout during a conservative media tour throughout the day Thursday. But he also projected confidence in a matchup against Trump, claiming in a Newsmax interview, “There’s a limit to the number of voters that would consider the former president at this point.”

“Now we’re going to be launching a blitz. We’re going to be in these early states. We’re really going to be all over the country bringing this message to our voters,” DeSantis said. “They also understand that you need someone (to) serve two terms. You need somebody that’s going to be able to win and win big.”

While Trump’s team piled on with gleeful mocking — “a #DeSaster of epic proportions,” Donald Trump Jr. wrote on Truth Social — many Republican officials, donors and early state activists suggested there would be few long-term consequences.

“Look, I like Elon Musk, but apparently he fired one too many IT guys,” New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu, a 2024 Republican presidential prospect himself and a periodic DeSantis critic, said on ABC’s “The

View." "You can't blame Ron DeSantis for that."

"I mean, if Elon Musk told me, 'We're going to stream it,' I'd be like, 'Yeah, this guy knows what he's doing.' It didn't work," Sununu added. "Ron's job was to deliver the speech and make the points. I think he did a pretty good job of that."

Republican strategist Terry Sullivan, who managed Sen. Marco Rubio's 2016 presidential campaign, suggested that DeSantis is well positioned to overcome an early stumble.

"Big presidential campaign announcements are only about getting a short-term bounce (in the polls) and raising money online," Sullivan said. "DeSantis doesn't need either of those. He just needed to get in the race and start campaigning. Mission accomplished."

Meanwhile, DeSantis was balancing his presidential ambitions with his day job.

On his first full day as an announced presidential candidate, the Florida governor signed bills to give Florida residents tax breaks. They ranged from sales tax holidays on hurricane and school supplies to permanent exemptions for baby and toddler needs like diapers. He also approved a one-year tax exemption on gas stoves — a direct shot at Democrats who have raised health concerns about the appliances.

Much of the buzz beyond Florida remained focused on the bungled announcement.

Former New Hampshire GOP Chair Jennifer Horn described DeSantis' rollout as an "embarrassing missed opportunity." The only potential longer-term challenge, she said, was that it serves as "a gift to Donald Trump," who will almost certainly ensure that it's not quickly forgotten.

There remained "a high level of interest" in DeSantis, according to New Hampshire Republican Party Chair Chris Ager. He said multiple Republican Party groups are requesting DeSantis to speak at their events.

"I think it was a pretty bold move to try something totally new in an announcement," Ager said.

And while early polls show Trump with a wide lead over DeSantis among New Hampshire primary voters, Ager said a lot can change over time.

"I fully expect the race will tighten up," he said. "Gov. DeSantis is definitely a serious and legitimate contender for the top spot."

Republican donor and vocal Trump critic Eric Levine said there was little chatter in the donor community about DeSantis' stumble out of the gate. He said the Florida governor remains one of his top three candidates.

"Nobody's leaving him because of it. Whether or not he's lost a couple of people that might have jumped on the bandwagon had it been better, I don't know," Levine said. "Now, it's a marathon from now until Iowa."

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Peoples reported from New York. Izaguirre reported from Tallahassee, Florida. Associated Press writers Jill Colvin in New York, Thomas Beaumont in Des Moines, Iowa, and Brendan Farrington in Tallahassee contributed to this report.

## **Ford electric vehicle owners to get access to Tesla Supercharger network starting next spring**

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — All of Ford Motor Co.'s current and future electric vehicles will have access to about 12,000 Tesla Supercharger stations in the U.S. and Canada starting next spring.

Ford CEO Jim Farley and Tesla CEO Elon Musk announced the agreement Thursday during a "Twitter Spaces" audio chat.

"We think this is a huge move for our industry and for all electric customers," Farley said.

Musk said he didn't want Tesla's network to be a "walled garden" and that he wants to use it to support sustainable transportation.

"It is our intent to do everything possible to support Ford and have Ford be on an equal footing at Tesla Superchargers," Musk said.

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Farley said there will be a cost to Ford owners, perhaps a monthly subscription, but he didn't give specifics. Details of any financial arrangement between Ford and Tesla were not announced.

At first, Ford's current electric vehicles will need an adapter to hook into the Tesla stations, which have their own connector. But Ford will switch to Tesla's North American Charging Standard connector with its second-generation EVs starting in 2025, Farley said.

Ford said Tesla's connector is smaller and lighter than those in use by other automakers.

Farley said Tesla's Superchargers have great locations.

"We love the locations. We love the reliability," he said. They will join Ford's own Blue Oval charging network which has about 10,000 fast-charging stations, he said.

Ford EV owners will be able to access the Tesla chargers seamlessly with Ford's app, Musk said.

Tesla has about 17,000 Supercharger stations in the U.S. There are about 54,000 public charging stations in the U.S., according to the Department of Energy, but many charge much more slowly than the Tesla stations.

The Ford-Tesla deal is separate from a plan to open part of Tesla's charging network to all EVs.

The White House announced in February that at least 7,500 chargers from Tesla's Supercharger and Destination Charger network would be available to non-Tesla electric vehicles by the end of 2024.

The chat between Musk, who last fall bought Twitter for \$44 billion, and Farley came off without the embarrassing technical glitches that plagued Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis' announcement Wednesday that he was running for president.

With Musk, DeSantis released the news that he would seek the Republican nomination, but the chat was delayed by glitches for nearly a half hour. Musk blamed it on straining of servers because so many were trying to listen in.

The Farley-Musk chat had a much smaller audience, than DeSantis, about 18,000 listeners at the start.

The number on the DeSantis chat topped out at 420,000, far from the millions who have watched televised presidential announcements. After the problems were fixed, the audience remained under 500,000.

## Debt ceiling talks teeter on the brink, as lawmakers leave town for weekend without a deal

By LISA MASCARO, STEPHEN GROVES, SEUNG MIN KIM and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press  
WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republicans pushed debt ceiling talks to the brink Thursday, displaying risky political bravado in leaving town for the holiday weekend just days before the U.S. could face an unprecedented default hurling the global economy into chaos.

At the Capitol, Speaker Kevin McCarthy said "every hour matters" in talks with President Joe Biden's team as they try to work out a budget agreement. Republican are demanding spending cuts the Democrats oppose as their price for raising the legal debt limit.

"We've been taking to the White House all day," McCarthy, R-Calif., told reporters as he left the Capitol for the evening, with his top negotiators soon to follow. "We're working hard to make it happen."

In remarks at the White House, Biden said, "It's about competing versions of America." Yet both men expressed optimism that the gulf between their positions could be bridged.

The White House said discussions with the Republicans have been productive, including by video conference Thursday, though serious disagreements remained as the president fights for his priorities.

"The only way to move forward is with a bipartisan agreement," Biden said. "And I believe we'll come to an agreement that allows us to move forward and protects the hardworking Americans of this country."

As the deadline nears, it's clear the Republican speaker — who leads a Donald Trump-aligned party whose hard-right flank lifted him to power, and who spoke to the former president this week — is now staring down a potential crisis.

Lawmakers are tentatively not expected back at work until Tuesday, just two days from June 1, when Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has said the U.S. could start running out of cash to pay its bills and face

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a federal default. Biden will also be away, departing Friday for the presidential retreat at Camp David, Maryland, and Sunday for his home in Wilmington, Delaware. The Senate is on recess and will be until after Memorial Day.

Meanwhile, Fitch Ratings agency placed the United States' AAA credit on "ratings watch negative," warning of a possible downgrade.

Democratic lawmakers lined up on the House floor as the workday ended to blame "extreme" Republicans for the risky potential default. "Republicans have chosen to get out of town before sundown," said House minority leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York.

Weeks of negotiations between Republicans and the White House have failed to produce a deal — in part because the Biden administration has resisted negotiating with McCarthy over the debt limit, arguing that the country's full faith and credit should not be used as leverage to extract other partisan priorities.

McCarthy is holding out for steep spending cuts that Republicans are demanding in exchange for their vote to raise the nation's borrowing limit. The White House has offered to freeze next year's 2024 spending at current levels and restrict 2025 spending, but the Republican leader says that's not enough.

One idea is to set those topline budget numbers but then add a "snap-back" provision that enforces the cuts if Congress is unable during its annual appropriations process to meet the new goals.

"We have to spend less than we spent last year. That is the starting point," said McCarthy.

Pressure is bearing down on McCarthy from the House's right flank not to give in to any deal, even if it means blowing past the June 1 deadline.

"Don't take an exit ramp five exits too early," said Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, a Freedom Caucus member. "Let's hold the line."

Trump, the former president who is again running for office, has encouraged Republicans to "do a default" if they don't get the deal they want from the White House.

McCarthy said Trump told him, "Make sure you get a good agreement."

Failure to raise the nation's debt ceiling, now at \$31 trillion, to pay America's already incurred bills would risk a potentially chaotic federal default. Anxious retirees and social service groups are among those already making default contingency plans.

Even if negotiators strike a deal in coming days, McCarthy has promised lawmakers he will abide by the rule to post any bill for 72 hours before voting — now likely Tuesday or even Wednesday. The Democratic-held Senate has vowed to move quickly to send the package to Biden's desk, right before next Thursday's possible deadline.

Pushing a debt ceiling increase to the last minute is not uncommon for Congress, but it leaves little room for error in a volatile political environment. Both Democrats and Republicans will be needed to pass the final package in the split Congress.

"We still have a ways to go," said top Republican negotiator Rep. Garret Graves of Louisiana as he juggled leading a Capitol tour for players and supporters of the championship Louisiana State University women's basketball team.

The contours of a deal have been within reach for days, but Republicans are unsatisfied as they press the White House team for more.

In one potential development, Republicans may be easing their demand to boost defense spending, instead offering to keep it at levels the Biden administration proposed, according to one person familiar with the talks and granted anonymity to discuss them.

The Republicans may achieve their goal of rolling back bolstered funding for the Internal Revenue Service if they agree to instead allow the White House to push that money into other domestic accounts, the person said.

The teams are also eyeing a proposal to boost energy transmission line development from Sen. John Hickenlooper, D-Colo., that would facilitate the buildout of an interregional power grid, according to a person familiar with the draft.

The White House has continued to argue that deficits can be reduced by ending tax breaks for wealthier households and some corporations, but McCarthy said he told the president as early as their February

meeting that raising revenue from tax hikes was off the table.

While Biden has ruled out, for now, invoking the 14th Amendment to raise the debt limit on his own, Democrats in the House announced they have all signed on to a legislative "discharge" process that would force a debt ceiling vote. But they need five Republicans to break with their party and tip the majority to set the plan forward.

Other issues remain unresolved. Republicans also want to beef up work requirements for government aid to recipients of food stamps, cash assistance and the Medicaid health care program that Democrats say are a nonstarter. It remains an issue where both sides have "dug in," according to another person familiar with the talks and granted anonymity to discuss them.

They are all but certain to claw back some \$30 billion in unspent COVID-19 funds now that the pandemic emergency has officially been lifted.

The White House has countered by proposing to keep defense and nondefense spending flat next year, which would save \$90 billion in the 2024 budget year and \$1 trillion over 10 years.

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Associated Press writers Chris Megerian, Josh Boak, Zeke Miller and Mary Clare Jalonick contributed to this report.

## **UN peacekeeping on 75th anniversary: successes, failures and challenges ahead in a divided world**

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — On the 75th anniversary of U.N. peacekeeping, the United Nations chief said Thursday that peacekeepers are increasingly working in places where there is no peace and praised the more than 4,200 who have given their lives to the cause of peace since the U.N. authorized its first military deployment in 1948.

It was a day to look back at the successes of peacekeeping from Liberia to Cambodia and its major failures in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, but also to the challenges ahead, including dealing with more violent environments, fake news campaigns, and a divided world that is preventing peacekeeping's ultimate goal: successfully restoring stable governments.

And it was a day to honor the more than 2 million peacekeepers from 125 countries who have served in 71 operations since the U.N. Security Council sent those first military observers to supervise implementation of Israeli-Arab armistice agreements following their war.

At a ceremony honoring the fallen peacekeepers, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres asked the hundreds of uniformed military officers and diplomats to stand for a moment of silence in their memory and then presented medals for the 103 peacekeepers killed in 2022 to ambassadors from their 39 home countries. And at the start of a U.N. Security Council meeting on peace in Africa shortly after, all those in the chamber stood in tribute to peacekeepers who paid the ultimate price.

The secretary-general told the ceremony, after laying a wreath at the Peacekeepers Memorial on the lawn at U.N. headquarters, that what began 75 years ago "as a bold experiment" in the Mideast "is now a flagship enterprise of our organization." For civilians caught in conflict, he said, peacekeepers are "a beacon of hope and protection."

But peacekeepers trying to help countries move away from conflict are now "on the front lines in some of the world's most dangerous places," he said.

Guterres stressed the need for "a new generation" of regional operations to end conflicts and combat terrorism that are mandated and financed by the U.N.'s 193 member nations.

That has been a major goal of the African Union for years, and the continent's nations are urging quick action to make this happen.

At the Security Council meeting, there was widespread support for Guterres' view but differences on how the U.N. should do this.

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U.N. political chief Rosemary DiCarlo told the council that putting AU peace operations "on solid footing is increasingly pressing" and the case for adequate financing is "beyond solid." The U.N. therefore hopes the council will provide financing from U.N. member states for AU-led peace operations, she said.

Adeoye Bankole, the African Union commissioner for political affairs, peace and security, welcomed "the very constructive and positive thrust" of the secretary-general's comments.

"We cannot continue to use traditional peacekeeping methods in the face of the complex nature and scope of conflicts that traverse our beloved continent, particularly violent extremism, ideology of hate, terrorism, rebellion and insurgency," he said.

U.N. peacekeeping operations have grown dramatically. At the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, there were 11,000 U.N. peacekeepers. By 2014, there were 130,000 in 16 far-flung peacekeeping operations. Today, 87,000 men and women serve in 12 conflict areas in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

There have been two kinds of successes, U.N. peacekeeping chief Jean-Pierre Lacroix said in an interview Wednesday with The Associated Press. Those are the long list of countries that have returned to a reasonable degree of stability with the support of U.N. peacekeeping, including Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Mozambique, Angola and Cambodia, and the countries where peacekeepers are not only monitoring but preserving cease-fires like in southern Lebanon and Cyprus.

As for failures, he pointed to the failure of U.N. peacekeepers to prevent the 1994 Rwanda genocide, which killed at least 800,000 ethnic Tutsis and Hutus, and the 1995 massacre of at least 8,000 mostly Muslim men and boys at Srebrenica during the war in Bosnia, Europe's only acknowledged genocide since the Holocaust during World War II.

The U.N.'s reputation has also been tarnished by numerous allegations that peacekeepers charged with protecting civilians sexually abused women and children, including in Central African Republic and Congo. Another high-profile blunder was the cholera epidemic in Haiti that began in 2010 after U.N. peacekeepers introduced the bacteria into the country's largest river by sewage runoff from their base.

Despite that, Richard Gowan, the International Crisis Group's U.N. director, said "U.N. peacekeeping has a surprisingly decent track record" and "has done a good job of tamping down crises, protecting civilians and rebuilding broken states in cases from the Suez crisis in the 1950s to Liberia in the 2000s."

Looking ahead, the U.N.'s Lacroix said the major challenge peacekeeping is facing is the divided international community and especially divisions in the U.N. Security Council, which must approve its missions.

"The result of that is that we're not able to achieve what I call the ultimate goal of peacekeeping — to be deployed, support a political process that moves forward, and then gradually roll down when that political process is completed," he said.

Lacroix said peace processes aren't moving or aren't going fast enough so the U.N. has to be content with "what I call the intermediate goal of peacekeeping — preserving cease-fires, protecting civilians, we protect hundreds of thousands of them ... and doing our best, of course, to support political efforts wherever we can."

Lacroix pointed to other challenges peacekeepers are facing: more violent and dangerous operating environments and more sophisticated attacks and fake news and disinformation which are "a massive threat to the population and the peacekeepers." And old and new drivers of conflict — including transnational criminal activities, trafficking, drugs, weapons, the illegal exploitation of natural resources, and the impact of climate change exacerbating competition between herders and farmers — are also having an "absolutely massive influence."

The Crisis Group's Gowan told AP it's pretty clear that the U.N. is "trapped" in some countries like Mali and Congo where there aren't enough peacekeepers to halt recurring cycles of violence. Some African governments, including Mali's, are turning to private security providers like Russia's Wagner Group to fight insurgents, he said.

"I think we should be wary of dumping U.N. operations outright," Gowan said. "We have learned the hard way in cases like Afghanistan that even heavily armed Western forces cannot impose peace. The U.N.'s track record may not be perfect, but nobody else is much better at building stability in turbulent states."

## 'Romeo & Juliet' stars' lawsuit over 1968 film's teen nude scene tossed

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

A Los Angeles County judge on Thursday said she will dismiss a lawsuit that the stars of 1968's "Romeo and Juliet" filed over the film's nude scene, finding that their depiction could not be considered child pornography and they filed their claim too late.

Superior Court Judge Alison Mackenzie ruled in favor of a motion from defendant Paramount Pictures to dismiss the lawsuit brought by Olivia Hussey, who played Juliet at age 15 and is now 72, and Leonard Whiting, who played Romeo at 16 and is also 72.

Mackenzie determined that the scene was protected by the First Amendment, finding that the actors "have not put forth any authority showing the film here can be deemed to be sufficiently sexually suggestive as a matter of law to be held to be conclusively illegal."

In her written decision, she also found that the suit didn't fall within the bounds of a California law that temporarily suspended the statute of limitations for child sexual abuse, and that a February re-release of the film did not change that.

The actors' attorney denounced the decision and said they plan to file another version of the suit in federal court.

"We firmly believe that the exploitation and sexualization of minors in the film industry must be confronted and legally addressed to protect vulnerable individuals from harm and ensure the enforcement of existing laws," lawyer Solomon Gresen said in a statement.

The film and its theme song were major hits at the time, and — despite the nude scene that briefly shows Whiting's bare buttocks and Hussey's bare breasts — it was played for generations of high school students studying Shakespeare's tragedy.

Director Franco Zeffirelli, who died in 2019 at age 96, initially told the two that they would wear flesh-colored undergarments in the bedroom scene that comes late in the movie and was shot on the final days of filming, the suit alleged.

But on the morning of the shoot, Zeffirelli told Whiting and Hussey that they would wear only body makeup, while still assuring them the camera would be positioned in a way that would not show nudity, according to the suit.

Despite those assurances, they were filmed in the nude without their knowledge, in violation of California and federal laws against indecency and the exploitation of children, the suit alleged.

Zeffirelli told them they must act in the nude "or the Picture would fail" and their careers would be hurt, the suit said. The actors said that the opposite occurred, that neither had the career the film's success suggested, and that the fraud, sexual abuse and sexual harassment they underwent caused them emotional damage and mental anguish for decades. They had sought more than \$500 million in damages.

The judge, though, found that the plaintiffs "cherry-picked" from the law and failed to provide legal authority for why it should apply to "purported works of artistic merit, such as the award-winning film at issue here."

She quoted from an appeals court precedent that said child pornography is "particularly repulsive," but "not all images of nude children are pornographic."

The ruling relied on California law that is meant to protect the free speech of defendants from being squelched by lawsuits, and is often the first line of defense when lawsuits are filed.

An attorney for Paramount declined to comment about the ruling.

The Associated Press typically does not name people who say they have been sexually abused unless they come forward publicly, which Hussey and Whiting did.

## Target on the defensive after removing some products aimed at LGBTQ+

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO and DEE-ANN DURBIN AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — Target once distinguished itself as being boldly supportive of the LGBTQ+ community. Now that status is tarnished after it removed some products aimed at LGBTQ+ and relocated Pride Month displays to the back of stores in certain Southern locations in response to online complaints and in-store confrontations that it says threatened employees' well-being.

Target faces a second backlash from customers upset by the discount retailer's reaction to aggressive, anti-LGBTQ+ activism, which has also been sweeping through Republican state legislatures. Civil rights groups chided the company on Wednesday for caving to anti-LGBTQ+ customers who tipped over displays and expressed outrage over gender-fluid bathing suits.

"Target should put the products back on the shelves and ensure their Pride displays are visible on the floors, not pushed into the proverbial closet," Human Rights Campaign president Kelley Robinson said in a statement. "That's what the bullies want."

The uproar over Target's Pride Month marketing — and its response to critics — is just the latest example of how companies are struggling to cater to different groups of customers at a time of extreme cultural divides, particularly around transgender rights.

Bud Light is still dealing with the fallout from when it sent transgender influencer Dylan Mulvaney a beer can with her face on it, which Mulvaney then displayed in an Instagram post, igniting backlash. Bud Light's parent company is tripling its U.S. marketing spending this summer as it tries to restore lost sales.

In Florida, Disney has been engaged in a legal battle with Gov. Ron DeSantis since expressing opposition to the state's classroom limits on discussing gender identity and sexual orientation.

Allen Adamson, the co-founder and managing partner of the marketing firm Metaforce, said Target should have thought through the potential for backlash and taken steps to avoid it, like varying the products it sells by region.

"The country is far less homogenous than it ever was," he said. "For any brand, it's not 'one size fits all' anymore."

Shares of Target, which is based in Minneapolis, extended their fall on Thursday, declining 2.6% in morning trading. On Wednesday, the stock closed down 3%.

According to a 2021 Gallup poll, 21% of people in Generation Z identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, compared with 3% of Baby Boomers. Gallup has also found that younger consumers are most likely to want brands to promote diversity and take a stand on social issues.

"Pulling back is the worst thing that they could have done," said Jake Bjorseth, who runs trndsttrs, an agency helping brands understand and reach Gen Z customers. "Not to expect potential backlash is to not understand what (LGBTQ+) members go through on a daily basis."

"Once they fold to the more extreme edges of the issue, then they've lost their footing," Adamson added. "If you can change a big brand just by knocking over a display, then they are on the defense, and you never win on the defense."

Target has long been seen as a trailblazer among retailers in the way it embraced LGBTQ+ rights and customers. It was among the first to showcase themed merchandise to honor Pride Month, which takes place in June, and it has been out front in developing relationships with LGBTQ+ suppliers.

It has also faced backlash. In 2016, when a national debate exploded over transgender rights, the company declared that "inclusivity is a core belief at Target" and said it supported transgender employees and customers using whichever restroom or fitting room "corresponds with their gender identity."

But even after being threatened with boycotts by some customers, Target announced months later that more stores would make available a single-toilet bathroom with a door that could be locked.

As recently as last year, law enforcement agencies were brought in to monitor a social media threat from a young Arizona man who said he was "leading the war" against Target for its Pride Month merchandise, and he encouraged others to take action.

But the company is operating in an even more politicized environment now.

There are close to 500 anti-LGBTQ+ bills that have gone before state legislatures since the start of this year, according to the American Civil Liberties Union. At least 17 states have enacted laws restricting or banning gender-affirming care for transgender minors, though judges have temporarily blocked their enforcement in some states.

Target declined on Thursday to say which items it was pulling from its stores. But "tuck friendly" women's swimsuits, which allow trans women who have not had gender-affirming operations to conceal their private parts, were among Target's Pride items that garnered the most attention. Target removed online this week designs by Abprallen, a London-based company that sells some occult- and satanic-themed LGBTQ+ clothing and accessories outside of Target.

Abprallen couldn't immediately be reached for comment but its website on Thursday said it was temporarily closed, with a message that read: "Thank you all for your unrelenting support and love. The positivity and beautiful vibes you've sent my way this past week has been overwhelming."

The controversy at Target has been exacerbated by several misleading videos circulating online. In some, people falsely claimed the retailer was selling "tuck-friendly" bathing suits for kids.

"Given these volatile circumstances, we are making adjustments to our plans, including removing items that have been at the center of the most significant confrontational behavior," Target said in a statement Tuesday.

The company pledged its continued support for the LGBTQ+ community and noted it is "standing with them as we celebrate Pride Month and throughout the year."

Indeed, it was business as usual at many Target locations on Wednesday.

At the Target in Topeka, Kansas, the Pride display remained up front, visible as shoppers passed a corral of shopping carts right after the entrance. It included Pride-themed clothing for kids, as well as T-shirts and women's bathing suits for adults.

"I like that our local stores here have it front and center, when you walk in," said Shay Hibler, a Topeka self-employed small business owner who was shopping with her 13-year-old daughter and supports LGBTQ+ rights.

Megan Rusch, a Kansas City-area resident who is studying criminal justice at Washburn University in Topeka, was shopping at the same store and said while other locations might worry about their image, "This is a pretty diverse area."

She said she believes it's good for the stores to have the Pride displays so that LGBTQ+ customers feel included.

Her shopping companion, Blake Ferguson, a Colorado resident who is studying accounting and finance student at Ottawa University, added simply: "Love is love."

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Durbin contributed from Detroit. AP Writer John Hanna in Topeka, Kansas contributed to this report.

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## **Oath Keepers founder Stewart Rhodes sentenced to 18 years for seditious conspiracy in Jan. 6 attack**

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN, ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press WASHINGTON (AP) — Oath Keepers extremist group founder Stewart Rhodes was sentenced Thursday to 18 years in prison for orchestrating a weeklong plot that culminated in his followers attacking the U.S. Capitol in a bid to keep President Joe Biden out of the White House after winning the 2020 election.

Rhodes, 58, is the first person convicted of seditious conspiracy in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack to receive his punishment, and his sentence is the longest handed down so far in the hundreds of Capitol riot cases.

It's another milestone for the Justice Department's sprawling Jan. 6 investigation, which has led to sedi-

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tious conspiracy convictions against the top leaders of two far-right extremist groups authorities say came to Washington prepared to fight to keep President Donald Trump in power at all costs.

"The Justice Department will continue to do everything in our power to hold accountable those criminally responsible for the January 6th attack on our democracy," Attorney General Merrick Garland said in a statement.

In a first for a Jan. 6 case, the judge agreed with the Justice Department that Rhodes' actions should be punished as "terrorism," which increases the recommended sentence under federal guidelines. That decision could foreshadow lengthy sentences down the road for other far-right extremists, including former Proud Boys leader Enrique Tarrío, who have also been convicted of the rarely used charge.

Before announcing Rhodes' sentence, U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta described a defiant Rhodes as a continued threat to the United States and democracy. The judge expressed fear that what happened on Jan. 6 could be repeated, saying Americans will "now hold our collective breaths every time an election is approaching."

"You are smart, you are charismatic and compelling and frankly that's what makes you dangerous," the judge told Rhodes. "The moment you are released, whenever that may be, you will be ready to take up arms against your government."

Rhodes did not use his chance to address the judge to express remorse or appeal for leniency, but instead claimed to be a "political prisoner," criticized prosecutors and the Biden administration and tried to play down his actions on Jan. 6.

"I'm a political prisoner and like President Trump my only crime is opposing those who are destroying our country," said Rhodes, who appeared in Washington's federal court wearing orange jail clothes.

Mehta fired back that Rhodes was not prosecuted for his political beliefs but for actions the judge described as an "offense against the people of the country."

"You are not a political prisoner, Mr. Rhodes," the judge said.

Another Oath Keeper convicted of seditious conspiracy alongside Rhodes — Florida chapter leader Kelly Meggs — was sentenced later Thursday to 12 years behind bars.

Meggs said he was sorry he was involved in the riot that left a "black eye on the country," but maintained that he never planned to go into the Capitol.

The judge found Meggs doesn't present an ongoing threat to the country the way Rhodes does, but told him "violence cannot be resorted to just because you disagree with who got elected."

Other Oath Keepers are expected to be sentenced Friday and next week.

A Washington, D.C., jury found Rhodes guilty of leading a plot to forcibly disrupt the transfer of presidential power. Prosecutors alleged Rhodes and his followers recruited members, amassed weapons and set up "quick reaction force" teams at a Virginia hotel that could ferry guns into the nation's capital if they were needed to support their plot. The weapons were never deployed.

It was one of the most consequential Capitol riot cases brought by the government, which has sought to prove that the attack by right-wing extremists such as the Oath Keepers was not a spur-of-the-moment protest but the culmination of weeks of plotting to overturn Biden's victory.

Rhodes' January 2022 arrest was the culmination of a decades-long path of extremism that included armed standoffs with federal authorities at Nevada's Bundy Ranch. After founding the Oath Keepers in 2009, the Yale Law School graduate built it into one of the largest far-right antigovernment militia groups in the U.S., though it appears to have weakened in the wake of the Oath Keepers' arrests.

The judge agreed to prosecutors' request for a so-called "terrorism enhancement" — which can lead to a longer prison term — under the argument that the Oath Keepers sought to influence the government through "intimidation or coercion." Judges in less serious Jan. 6 cases had previously rejected such requests.

Prosecutors had sought 25 years for Rhodes, arguing that a lengthy sentence was necessary to deter future political violence.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Kathryn Rakoczy pointed to interviews and speeches Rhodes has given from jail repeating the lie that the 2020 election was stolen and saying it would be again in 2024. In remarks just days ago, Rhodes called for "regime change," the prosecutor said.

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Rhodes, of Granbury, Texas, plans to appeal his conviction.

Defense lawyer Phillip Linder told the judge that prosecutors were unfairly trying to make Rhodes "the face" of Jan. 6, adding that Rhodes could have had many more Oath Keepers come to the Capitol "if he really wanted to" disrupt Congress' certification of the Electoral College vote.

"If you want to put a face on J6 (Jan. 6), you put it on Trump, right-wing media, politicians, all the people who spun that narrative," Linder said.

Rhodes' sentence may signal the punishment prosecutors will seek for Tarrío and other Proud Boys leaders convicted of seditious conspiracy. They will be sentenced in August and September.

The Oath Keepers said there was never any plan to attack the Capitol or stop Congress from certifying Biden's victory. The defense tried to seize on the fact that none of the Oath Keepers' messages laid out an explicit plan to storm the Capitol. But prosecutors said the Oath Keepers saw an opportunity to further their goal to stop the transfer of power and sprang into action when the mob began storming the building.

Messages, recordings and other evidence presented at trial show Rhodes and his followers growing increasingly enraged after the 2020 election at the prospect of a Biden presidency, which they viewed as a threat to the country and their way of life. In an encrypted chat two days after the election, Rhodes told his followers to prepare their "mind, body, spirit" for "civil war."

Before Thursday, the longest sentence in the more than 1,000 Capitol riot cases was 14 years for a man with a long criminal record who attacked police officers with pepper spray and a chair as he stormed the Capitol. Just over 500 of the defendants have been sentenced, with more than half receiving prison time and the remainder getting sentences such as probation or home detention.

Richer reported from Boston.

## **Pentagon says allies will unite to train Ukrainians on F-16s, but warns jets aren't 'magic weapons'**

By LOLITA C. BALDOR and TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said Thursday that European allies are developing a coordinated program to train Ukrainian forces on the F-16 fighter jet, but Pentagon leaders warned that it will be a costly and complex task and won't be a magic solution to the war.

Austin said the allies recognize that in addition to training, Ukraine will also need to be able to sustain and maintain the aircraft and have enough munitions. And he said air defense systems are still the weapons that Ukraine needs most in the broader effort to control the airspace.

"There are no magic weapons," said Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who spoke alongside Austin at a Pentagon press conference. He said providing 10 F-16s could cost \$2 billion, including maintenance.

"The Russians have a thousand fourth and fifth-generation fighters, so if you're going to contest Russia in the air, you're going to need a substantial amount of fourth and fifth-generation fighters."

As a result, he said, allies did the right thing by first providing Ukraine with a significant amount of integrated air defense to cover the battlespace. He said F-16s have a future role as part of Ukraine's air capabilities, but it's "going to take a considerable length of time to build up an air force that's the size and scope and scale that would be necessary."

Austin said the Dutch and Danish defense ministers are working with the U.S. on the effort, and that Norway, Belgium, Portugal and Poland have already offered to contribute to the training. In addition, he said the allies will set up a fund so that other nations can contribute to the overall effort.

"We expect more countries to join this important initiative," Austin said, adding that the training is "an important example of our long-term commitment to Ukraine security."

Austin earlier in the day said he hopes that training for Ukrainian pilots on American-made F-16 fighter jets will begin in the coming weeks, bolstering Ukraine in the long run but not necessarily as part of an anticipated spring counteroffensive against Russia.

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Austin and Milley spoke at the close of a virtual meeting of defense leaders from around the world to discuss the ongoing military support for Ukraine. Ukrainian leaders gave them an update on the war effort and the military gaps that troops are facing. Austin said the biggest gap continues to be ground-based air defense.

The leaders, in their 12th meeting, heard about ongoing combat operations and the counteroffensive and discussed how the allies, who have faced their own stockpile pressures, can continue to support Kyiv's fight against Russia. Ukrainian officials have not formally announced the launch of their much-anticipated counteroffensive, although some say it has already begun and the pace of attacks suggests it's underway.

"We're going to have to dig deeper, and we're going to have to continue to look for creative ways to boost our industrial capability," Austin said before the military leaders began their closed session. "The stakes are high. But the cause is just and our will is strong."

European leaders have said they are talking about which countries may have some of the F-16s available. The United States had long balked at providing the advanced aircraft to Ukraine, and only last weekend did President Joe Biden agree to allow other nations to send their own U.S.-made jets to Kyiv.

"We hope this training will begin in the coming weeks," Austin said. "This will further strengthen and improve the capabilities of the Ukrainian Air Force in the long term. And it will complement our short-term and medium-term security agreements. This new joint effort sends a powerful message about our unity and our long-term commitment to Ukraine's self-defense."

European allies have been vocal in their support for the fighter jet training in recent days.

Josep Borrell, the European Union's foreign policy chief, said Tuesday that training for Ukrainian pilots had begun in Poland and some other countries, though Polish Defense Minister Mariusz Blaszczak said training was still in the planning phase. The Netherlands and Denmark, among others, are also making plans for training.

"We can continue and also finalize the plans that we're making with Denmark and other allies to start these these trainings. And of course, that is the first step that you have to take," Dutch Defense Minister Kajsa Ollongren said.

Ukraine has long sought the sophisticated fighter to give it a combat edge as it battles Russia's invasion, now in its second year.

The Biden administration's decision was a sharp reversal after refusing to approve any transfer of the aircraft or conduct training for more than a year because of worries that doing so could escalate tensions with Russia. U.S. officials also had argued against the F-16 by saying that learning to fly and logistically support such an advanced aircraft would be difficult and take months.

## **Tom Hanks urges Harvard grads to defend the truth and resist indifference**

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (AP) — Tom Hanks told graduates of Harvard University on Thursday to be superheroes in their defense of truth and American ideals, and to resist those who twist the truth for their own gain.

"For the truth to some is no longer empirical. It's no longer based on data, nor common sense, nor even common decency," said the two-time Academy Award winner during his keynote address. He invoked the Latin word for truth, "veritas," Harvard's motto.

"Telling the truth is no longer the benchmark for public service," he said. "It's no longer the salve to our fears, or the guide to our actions. Truth is now considered malleable, by opinion and by zero sum endgames."

That left the more than 9,000 graduates at Harvard's 372nd commencement with a choice to make, said the Hollywood icon, who has played an astronaut, a soldier, a little boy in a man's body and even a Harvard professor in a decades-long movie career.

"It's the same option for all grownups who have to decide to be one of three types of Americans: Those who embrace liberty and freedom for all; those who won't; or those who are indifferent," he said. "Only the first do the work of creating a more perfect union, a nation indivisible. The others get in the way."

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Near the end of the speech, he drove the point home to a group that included not just undergraduates but those who graduated from Harvard's professional and extension schools.

"The responsibility is yours. Ours. The effort is optional. But the truth, the truth is sacred. Unalterable. Chiseled into the stone and the foundation of our republic," he said.

Hanks, who was awarded an honorary doctor of arts degree, poked fun at his own lack of academic credentials on a stage filled with some of the world's brightest minds and most accomplished scientists.

"It's not fair, but please don't be embittered by this fact," Hanks said. "Now, without having done a lick of work, without having spent any time in class, without once walking into that library — in order to have anything to do with the graduating class of Harvard, its faculty, or its distinguished alumni — I make a damn good living playing someone who did," he said in reference to his depiction of fictional Harvard professor Robert Langdon in three movies based on Dan Brown's novels — "The Da Vinci Code," "Angels & Demons" and "Inferno."

"It's the way of the world, kids," he said to a chorus of laughter.

Before Hanks headed to the podium to give his speech, Harvard President Lawrence Bacow, presiding over his last commencement before stepping down, called Hanks, "Wilson's bestie, Buzz's buddy, Ryan's savior, America's dad," and presented him with a Harvard volleyball, in tribute to his role in "Cast Away," where to stay sane his character talks to an old volleyball.

Hanks proved to be the most popular person on stage, posing for selfies with faculty members before the ceremony and giving congratulatory fist bumps to dozens of Harvard students who graduated summa cum laude.

"May goodness and mercy follow you all the days," he said, referencing a biblical verse. "All the days of your lives. Godspeed."

## **Alex Murdaugh's longtime friend admits helping to steal \$4 million wrongful death settlement**

CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) — A longtime friend of convicted murderer Alex Murdaugh admitted Thursday he helped his old college roommate steal more than \$4 million meant for a wrongful death settlement after Murdaugh's housekeeper died in a fall.

Cory Fleming, 54, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit wire fraud in federal court. He faces up to five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine when he is sentenced at a later date.

After Murdaugh's maid, Gloria Satterfield, died following a fall at the family's home, Murdaugh convinced Satterfield's sons to hire Fleming as their lawyer, saying they could help get the family money for a wrongful death settlement.

Fleming got \$4.3 million from Murdaugh's insurers, according to an indictment.

But Fleming and Murdaugh never sent any money to Satterfield's sons, instead splitting it among themselves, prosecutors said.

Satterfield's sons later hired different attorneys who have managed to get millions for them.

Fleming's plea came a day after federal prosecutors charged Murdaugh with 22 financial crimes for stealing money from the Satterfield family as well as other clients and committing bank and wire fraud.

Murdaugh's lawyers said in a statement he is cooperating with federal investigators and suggest the charges will be resolved with a guilty plea.

Murdaugh, 54, is currently serving a life sentence without parole in protective custody at an undisclosed state prison after being convicted in March of the shooting deaths of his 22-year-old son, Paul and 52-year-old wife, Maggie, at their home. Prosecutors said he decided to kill them because his millions of dollars of theft was about to be discovered, and he was hoping their deaths would buy him sympathy and time to figure out a cover-up.

The once prominent South Carolina attorney is also awaiting trial on around 100 other state charges including insurance fraud, tax evasion and theft.

Fleming is the second person affiliated with Murdaugh's schemes to be convicted in federal court. In

November, Murdaugh's banker friend, Russell Laffitte, was convicted of six wire and bank fraud charges. Prosecutors said Murdaugh and Laffitte worked together to take settlement money out of clients' accounts. Laffitte is appealing and has not been sentenced.

## **Air Force fighter pilot tapped by Biden to be next Joint Chiefs chairman has history of firsts**

By TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Air Force fighter pilot tapped to be the next chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff got his call sign by ejecting from a burning F-16 fighter jet high above the Florida Everglades and falling into the watery sludge below.

It was January 1991, and then-Capt. CQ Brown Jr. had just enough time in his parachute above alligator-full wetlands for a thought to pop into his head. "Hope there's nothing down there," Brown said in an interview at the Aspen Security Forum last year.

He landed in the muck, which coated his body and got "in his boots and everything." Which is how the nominee to be the country's next top military officer got his call sign: "Swamp Thing."

President Joe Biden announced he was nominating Brown during a Rose Garden event on Thursday, praising him as an "unflappable and highly effective leader."

If confirmed, Brown, now a four-star general and the Air Force chief, would replace Army Gen. Mark Milley, whose term ends in October.

Milley described Brown as "absolutely superb." Speaking earlier in the day at a Pentagon news conference, he said he was "looking forward to a speedy confirmation."

The call sign reveal was a rare inner look into Brown, who keeps his cards close to his chest. He's spent much of his career being one of the Air Force's top aviators, one of its few Black pilots and often one of the only African Americans in his squadron.

To this day, his core tenets are to "execute at a high standard, personally and professionally," Brown said this month at an Air Force Association conference in Colorado. "I do not play for second place. If I'm in, I'm in to win — I do not play to lose."

Biden referenced Brown's comments in his praise.

"Gen. Brown doesn't play for second place," the president said, with Brown by his side. "He plays to win and that's obvious. That mindset is going to be an enormous asset to me as commander in chief of the United States of America as we navigate challenges in the coming years."

He's been many firsts, including the Air Force's first Black commander of the Pacific Air Forces, and most recently its first Black chief of staff, making him the first African American to lead any of the military branches.

If confirmed, he would be part of another first — the first time the Pentagon's top two posts were held by African Americans, with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin the top civilian leader. Brown would not be the first African American to be chairman, the Pentagon's top military post; that distinction went to the late Army Gen. Colin Powell.

Brown, 60, has commanded the nation's air power at all levels. Born in San Antonio, he is from a family of Army soldiers. His grandfather led a segregated Army unit in World War II and his father was an artillery officer and Vietnam War veteran. Brown grew up on several military bases, which helped instill in him a sense of mission.

His nomination caps a four-decade military career that began with his commission as a distinguished ROTC graduate from Texas Tech University in 1984. He was widely viewed within military circles as the frontrunner for the chairmanship, with the right commands and a track record of driving institutional change, attributes seen as needed to push the Pentagon onto a more modern footing to meet China's rise.

For the past two years Brown has pressed "Accelerate, Change or Lose" within the Air Force. The campaign very much has China in mind, pushing the service to shed legacy warplanes and speed its efforts to counter hypersonics, drones and space weapons, where the military's lingering Cold War-era inventory

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does not match up.

In person, Brown is private, thoughtful and deliberate. He is seen as a contrast to Milley, who has remained outspoken throughout his tenure, often to the ire of former President Donald Trump and Republican lawmakers.

"He's not prone to blurt out something without some serious thought in his own mind, some serious kind of balancing of the opportunities or options," said retired Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Michael Moseley, who knows Brown from when Brown worked for him as a member of the Air Staff.

Brown has more than 3,000 flying hours and repeat assignments to the Air Force Weapons School — an elite aerial fighting school similar to the Navy's TOPGUN. Only about 1% of Air Force fighter pilots are accepted, Moseley said.

When Brown had to eject from the burning F-16 in 1991, after the fuel tank broke off mid-flight, he said the timing couldn't have been worse.

"I was a bit frustrated because it happened just before the selection for weapons school," he said at the Aspen forum. He said he had to apply three times before he got in, noting that it's "pretty competitive."

But he rose to the top there, too, earning a spot as an instructor, "which is like 1% of the 1%," Moseley said.

Brown returned to the weapons school as its commandant. By then it had expanded from fighter-only exclusivity to teaching combined airpower operations, with tankers, bombers and cargo planes.

Brown saw that the school "required a different approach and attitude," said retired Air Force Lt. Gen. Bill Rew. Earlier commandants had tried to institute a new mantra, "Humble, Approachable, Credible," but it had not taken root.

Under Brown the cultural shift took hold and remains in place today, said Rew, who was one of Brown's instructors at the weapons school and wing commander during Brown's time as commandant.

"It takes a certain kind of leadership, that doesn't force cultural change on people but explains it and motivates them on why that change is important," Rew said.

In June 2020, Brown was just a week from being confirmed by the Senate to serve as chief of staff of the Air Force when he felt the need to speak out on George Floyd's murder.

It was risky and inopportune time for the general to draw public attention and pull back the curtain on his private thoughts. But he did so anyway, after discussions with his wife and sons about the murder, which convinced him he needed to say something.

In a June 2020 video message to the service titled "Here's What I'm Thinking About," Brown described how he'd pressured himself "to perform error-free" as a pilot and officer his whole life, but still faced bias. He said he'd been questioned about his credentials, even when he wore the same flight suit and wings as every other pilot.

It's been 30 years since Powell became the first Black chairman, serving from 1989 to 1993. But while African Americans make up 17.2% of the 1.3 million active-duty service members, only 9% of officers are Black, according to a 2021 Defense Department report.

"I'm thinking about my mentors and how I rarely had a mentor that looked like me," Brown said in the video.

"I'm thinking about how my nomination provides some hope, but also comes with a heavy burden — I can't fix centuries of racism in our country, nor can I fix decades of discrimination that may have impacted members of our Air Force.

"I'm thinking about how I can make improvements, personally, professionally and institutionally," so all airmen could excel.

His decision to speak out did not cost him. His Senate confirmation vote was 98-0.

But like the brief moment in Aspen, the personal video message was a rarity. After confirmation, he lowered his public profile again, and got to work.

## **Nvidia stuns markets and signals how artificial intelligence could reshape technology sector**

Associated Press undefined

WASHINGTON (AP) — Shares of Nvidia, already one of the world's most valuable companies, skyrocketed Thursday after the chipmaker forecast a huge jump in revenue, signaling how vastly the broadening use of artificial intelligence could reshape the tech sector.

The company based in Santa Clara, California, is close to joining the exclusive club of \$1 trillion companies like Alphabet, Apple and Microsoft, after its shares jumped more than 24%.

Late Wednesday the maker of graphics chips for gaming and artificial intelligence reported a quarterly profit of more than \$2 billion and revenue of \$7 billion, both exceeding Wall Street expectations.

Yet its projections for sales of \$11 billion this quarter is what caught Wall Street off guard. It's a 64% jump from last year during the same period, and well above the \$7.2 billion industry analysts were forecasting.

"It looks like the new gold rush is upon us, and NVIDIA is selling all the picks and shovels," Susquehanna Financial Group's Christopher Rolland and Matt Myers wrote Thursday.

Chipmakers around the globe were pulled along. Shares of Taiwan Semiconductor rose 3%, while South Korea's SK Hynix gained 6%. ASML based in the Netherlands added 5%.

Nvidia founder and CEO of Jensen Huang said the world's data centers are in need of a makeover given the transformation that will come with AI technology.

"The world's \$1 trillion data center is nearly populated entirely by (central processing units) today," Huang said. "And \$1 trillion, \$250 billion a year, it's growing of course but over the last four years, call it \$1 trillion worth of infrastructure installed, and it's all completely based on CPUs and dumb NICs. It's basically unaccelerated."

AI chips are designed to perform artificial intelligence tasks faster and more efficiently. While general-purpose chips like CPUs can also be used for simpler AI tasks, they're "becoming less and less useful as AI advances," a 2020 report from Georgetown University's Center for Security and Emerging Technology notes.

"Because of their unique features, AI chips are tens or even thousands of times faster and more efficient than CPUs for training and inference of AI algorithms," the report adds, noting that AI chips can also be more cost-effective than CPUs due to their greater efficiency.

Analysts say Nvidia could be an early look at how AI may reshape the tech sector.

"Last night Nvidia gave jaw dropping robust guidance that will be heard around the world and shows the historical demand for AI happening now in the enterprise and consumer landscape," Wedbush's Dan Ives wrote. "For any investor calling this an AI bubble ... we would point them to this Nvidia quarter and especially guidance which cements our bullish thesis around AI and speaks to the 4th Industrial Revolution now on the doorstep with AI."

## **Navy SEALs training plagued by pervasive problems, according to investigation after death of sailor**

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The training program for Navy SEALs is plagued by widespread failures in medical care, poor oversight and the use of performance-enhancing drugs that have increased the risk of injury and death to those seeking to become elite commandos, according to an investigation triggered by the death of a sailor last year.

Medical oversight and care were "poorly organized, poorly integrated and poorly led and put candidates at significant risk," the nearly 200-page report compiled by the Naval Education and Training Command concluded.

The highly critical report said flaws in the medical program "likely had the most direct impact on the health and well being" of the SEAL candidates and "specifically" on Kyle Mullen, the sailor who died. It

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said if the shortcomings had been addressed, his death may have been preventable.

The investigation also dug deep into the longstanding problem of sailors using steroids and similar banned drugs as they try to pass the SEAL qualification course. The report recommends far more robust testing for the drugs — a move the Navy and the military more broadly have been slow to make — and better education for service members in order to prevent their use.

Mullen collapsed and died of acute pneumonia just hours after completing the grueling Hell Week test last year. A report released in October by Naval Special Warfare Command concluded that Mullen, 24, from Manalapan, New Jersey, died “in the line of duty, not due to his own misconduct.”

It said there was no evidence of performance-enhancing drugs, but that he had an enlarged heart that contributed to his death. The report said, however, that he was not tested for some steroids because needed blood and urine samples were not available, and that multiple vials of drugs and syringes were later found in his car.

His death shined a light on the brutal test that pushes SEAL candidates to their limits. During the five-and-a-half day test, which involves basic underwater demolition and survival and other combat tactics, sailors are allowed to sleep just twice, for two-hour periods only. It tests physical, mental and psychological strength along with leadership skills, and is so grueling that at least 50% to 60% don't finish it.

Navy leaders conducted multiple reviews and investigations in the wake of his death, and this latest report makes a lengthy series of recommendations for changes to medical care staffing and training and to drug testing.

Rear Adm. Keith Davids, who heads Naval Special Warfare Command, said the Navy will learn from the tragedy and was already taking steps to prevent it from happening again.

“Our effectiveness as the Navy's maritime special operations force necessitates demanding, high-risk training,” Davids said in a statement. “While rigorous and intensely demanding, our training must be conducted with an unwavering commitment to safety and methodical precision.”

He said the command will “honor Seaman Mullen's memory by ensuring that the legacy of our fallen teammate guides us towards the best training program possible for our future Navy SEALs.”

U.S. Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., said in a statement that the probe “exposed a culture that needs radical change, and the Navy has given every indication that they will implement serious changes to address the egregiously flawed command structure and failure after failure that led to Kyle's death.”

Smith was briefed on the investigation Thursday along with Mullen's mother, Regina, a registered nurse who has vowed to work to force changes to ensure this doesn't happen to another family.

“Looking at the egregious failures that went on, there needs to be serious accountability,” she said. “The next stage of accountability is where I am focused.”

Already the command has taken steps to overhaul procedures, add medical staff and improve their training, particularly on heart and breathing problems commonly seen during Hell Week. Commanders are also doing more drug testing and heart screenings.

The latest report notes that special operations forces are routinely required to carry out high-risk military operations, and thus require demanding training. But it said SEAL instructors in recent years appeared to focus on weeding out candidates, rather than teaching or mentoring. Compounding that problem, the report said, is that candidates were often reluctant to seek medical care because it would be seen as weak and could get them removed from the course or delay their completion. According to the Navy, about 888 SEAL candidates are considered every year, and the goal is to graduate 175.

The “ability to continue training through discomfort and some degraded physical condition was seen as a positive trait by instructors and this was understood by candidates,” the report said.

As a result, candidates would push on and not tell medical staff or leaders about injuries, and there was pressure to use drugs to help keep them going.

The use of performance-enhancing drugs has been a persistent problem. Investigations in 2011, 2013 and 2018 into suspected steroid use by SEAL candidates led to discipline and requests for enhanced testing.

The use of hair follicle testing was denied at least twice by Navy leaders over that time. Random testing

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for steroids wasn't authorized by the Defense Department. The Navy has asked the department to do a study on testing and to allow random tests and sweeps for drugs, but those requests have not been approved by the Pentagon. In the wake of Mullen's death, however, the command began some additional testing.

The new report, however, suggests there may have been conflicting messages to candidates. In one case, it noted that during a discussion about the policy with Mullen's class, an instructor, who was not identified, told sailors that all types of people make it through the course, including "steroid monkeys and skinny strong guys. Don't use PEDS, it's cheating, and you don't need them. And whatever you do, don't get caught with them in your barracks room."

The report said that after an "awkward silence" the instructor added, "that was a joke." It said some candidates interpreted it as an implicit endorsement of using the drugs. Barracks are subject to routine inspections, which the report said were done about once a week during Mullen's class, and it noted several instances where the drugs were found or sailors admitted to their use.

According to the report, Mullen told his mother that he was thinking about buying some of the performance-enhancing drugs, "because he did not want to be at a disadvantage since many other candidates were taking PEDS." It said his mother encouraged him not to. The report details that in addition to drugs in his car, his phone also had text messages discussing their use and attempts to buy them.

The report concluded that Mullen's death was not "unforeseeable," noting that candidates had sought medical treatment for pneumonia 11 times in 2021 and early 2022, and there were 112 visits for other similar issues.

Three Navy officers received administrative "non-punitive" letters as a result of Mullen's death. Navy Capt. Brian Drechsler, who was commander of the Naval Special Warfare Center, received a letter and was pulled out of the job this month. Capt. Brad Geary, commanding officer of Naval Special Warfare's Basic Training Command, and an unnamed senior medical officer also got letters. The report never names the medical officer, but notes a number of concerns with his command.

## **3 healthy kittens born to mountain lion tracked by biologists in wilderness near Los Angeles**

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A mountain lion studied by biologists in wilderness areas near Los Angeles has given birth to three healthy kittens, the National Park Service said Thursday.

The three females estimated to be a month old were found May 18 nestled in a patch of poison oak in the Simi Hills area about 40 miles (65 km) northwest of downtown LA, the park service said in a statement.

They were born to a 5-year-old cougar dubbed P-77 that has been tracked since November 2019. Scientists are calling the babies P-113, P-114 and P-115.

The father isn't immediately known. Biologists aren't currently following any male cougars in P-77's habitat, so they suspect the father might have come from nearby mountains and then went back.

P-77 makes her home in an area between the 101 and 118 freeways overlapping the Santa Monica and Santa Susana mountain ranges.

It's the third mountain lion litter found in the Simi Hills in recent years. P-62 gave birth in 2018 and P-67 delivered a litter in 2020, officials said.

The park service has been studying mountain lions since 2002 in and around the Santa Monica Mountains to determine how they survive in a fragmented and urbanized environment.

## **Head of Russian private army Wagner says his forces are handing control of Bakhmut to Moscow**

By SUSIE BLANN and ELISE MORTON Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The head of the Russian private military contractor Wagner claimed Thursday that his forces have started pulling out of Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine and handing over control to the Russian

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military, days after he said Wagner troops had captured the ruined city.

Yevgeny Prigozhin, a convicted criminal and Wagner's millionaire owner with longtime links to Russian President Vladimir Putin, said in a video published on Telegram that the handover would be completed by June 1. Russia's Defense Ministry didn't confirm this and it wasn't possible independently to verify whether Wagner's pullout from the bombed-out city has begun after a nine-month battle that killed tens of thousands of people. Prigozhin said his troops would now rest in camps, repair equipment and await further orders.

Ukraine's deputy defense minister, Hanna Maliar, said Thursday that regular Russian troops had replaced Wagner units in the suburbs but that Wagner fighters remained inside the city. Ukrainian forces maintain a foothold in the southwestern outskirts, she said.

Prigozhin's Bakhmut triumph delivered a badly needed victory for Putin, whose invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has lost momentum and now faces a Ukrainian counteroffensive using advanced weapons that Kyiv's Western allies have provided.

According to top Ukrainian presidential advisor Mykhailo Podolyak, that counteroffensive is already underway. He said Thursday that it should not be anticipated as a "single event" starting "at a specific hour of a specific day." Writing on Twitter, Podolyak said that "dozens of different actions to destroy Russian occupation forces" had "already been taking place yesterday, are taking place today and will continue tomorrow."

Prigozhin has long feuded with the Russian military leadership, dating back to Wagner's creation in 2014. He has also built a reputation for inflammatory — and often unverifiable — headline-grabbing statements from which he later backtracks. During the 15-month war in Ukraine, he has repeatedly and publicly accused the Russian military leadership of incompetence, failure to properly provision his troops as they spearheaded the battle for Bakhmut, and failure to credit his troops for their successes and sacrifices.

Wagner's involvement in the capture of Bakhmut has added to Prigozhin's standing, which he has used to set forth his personal views about the war's conduct.

"Prigozhin is ... using the perception that Wagner is responsible for the capture of Bakhmut to advocate for a preposterous level of influence over the Russian war effort in Ukraine," the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington think tank, said.

His frequent critical commentary about Russia's military performance is uncommon in Russia's tightly controlled political system, in which only Putin can usually air such criticism.

Seth Jones, director of international security at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said Prigozhin appears to be pressuring the Russian Defense Ministry to take a more active role and responsibility in Bakhmut but he questioned whether regular troops are capable of taking over from Wagner.

"If you pull those forces out of Bakhmut, you lose your entire sort of first line of offensive and then defensive operations, because the Russians aren't going to use — haven't used -- their seasoned military forces" for major advances, he said. "You don't want to waste well trained capable forces in areas where they're likely to get killed. So removing them would almost certainly allow the Ukrainians to retake territory."

With Russian forces suffering high casualties and their inability to integrate their forces, he added, they "just they look miserable."

Nikolai Petrov, senior Russia and Eurasia research fellow at Chatham House, was skeptical about Prigozhin's claim the Russian military will take over.

"Nobody knows if that will happen," Petrov said, adding that Prigozhin is a "populist and he's playing the cards of hatred" against ineffective Russian military commanders.

Earlier this week, Prigozhin again broke with the Kremlin line on Ukraine, saying its goal of demilitarizing the country had backfired, acknowledging Russian troops had killed civilians and agreeing with Western estimates that he lost more than 20,000 men in the battle for Bakhmut.

Meanwhile, Russia unleashed a barrage of Iranian-made Shahed 36 drones against Kyiv in its 12th nighttime air assault on the Ukrainian capital this month but the city's air defenses shot them all down, Ukrainian authorities said Thursday.

The Kremlin's forces also launched 30 airstrikes and 39 attacks from multiple rocket launchers, as well as artillery and mortar attacks across Ukraine, the Ukrainian military said.

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At least one civilian was killed and 13 others were wounded in Ukraine on Wednesday and overnight, the Ukrainian presidential office said Thursday.

In other developments Thursday:

—Russia attacked a dam on the Vovcha River in Karlivka, 40 kilometres (24 miles) west of Donetsk, destroying it and raising a flooding risk for three villages, Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko said. The villages might be evacuated, he said on Telegram.

— Russia and Belarus signed a deal formalizing deployment of Russian nuclear weapons on Belarusian territory. Control of the weapons will remain with Moscow. Putin had announced in March that his country planned to deploy tactical, comparatively short-range and small-yield nuclear weapons in Belarus.

— A U.K.-based technology firm says pro-Russia hackers faked the location data to form a giant letter "Z" — a symbol of Russia's war in Ukraine — in the Black Sea. Geolcollect says location data for commercial ships has been remotely spoofed so vessels near Crimea appear to form a 65-mile (105-kilometer) long "Z" on open-source maritime tracking sites. Russia seized the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine in 2014. The false location data increased the risk of collisions, the firm warned.

—A total of 106 Ukrainian prisoners of war have been released in another major exchange with Russia, chief Ukrainian presidential aide Andriy Yermak said. The eight officers and 98 soldiers released fought in the battle for Bakhmut. The bodies of two foreigners and a Ukrainian were also returned to Ukraine. Prigozhin posted a video of himself standing next to two wooden coffins, one draped with an American flag and another with a Turkish flag. Prigozhin said the bodies were being handed over to Ukrainian forces and provided the American's name but the State Department couldn't confirm it, pending an investigation and due to privacy concerns. Russian officials confirmed the swap, without providing any details on how many Russians were returned.

— The Russian Foreign Ministry announced that five Swedish diplomats are to be expelled from the country. A statement said the decision is a response to Stockholm's "openly hostile step" to declare five employees of Russian foreign missions in Sweden "personae non grata" in April. Moscow additionally announced its decision to close its consulate in Goteborg in September, as well as its "withdrawal of consent" to the activities of the Swedish consulate in St. Petersburg. Russia and Western countries have often expelled each other's diplomats since the war began.

Morton reported from London.

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

## **Kids could fill labor shortages, even in bars, if these lawmakers succeed**

By HARM VENHUIZEN Associated Press/Report for America

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Lawmakers in several states are embracing legislation to let children work in more hazardous occupations, for more hours on school nights and in expanded roles, including serving alcohol in bars and restaurants as young as 14.

The efforts to significantly roll back labor rules are largely led by Republican lawmakers to address worker shortages and, in some cases, run afoul of federal regulations.

Child welfare advocates worry the measures represent a coordinated push to scale back hard-won protections for minors.

"The consequences are potentially disastrous," said Reid Maki, director of the Child Labor Coalition, which advocates against exploitative labor policies. "You can't balance a perceived labor shortage on the backs of teen workers."

Lawmakers proposed loosening child labor laws in at least 10 states over the past two years, according to a report published last month by the left-leaning Economic Policy Institute. Some bills became law,

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while others were withdrawn or vetoed.

Legislators in Wisconsin, Ohio and Iowa are actively considering relaxing child labor laws to address worker shortages, which are driving up wages and contributing to inflation. Employers have struggled to fill open positions after a spike in retirements, deaths and illnesses from COVID-19, decreases in legal immigration and other factors.

The job market is one of the tightest since World War II, with the unemployment rate at 3.4% — the lowest in 54 years.

Bringing more children into the labor market is, of course, not the only way to solve the problem. Economists point to several other strategies the country can employ to alleviate the labor crunch without asking kids to work more hours or in dangerous settings.

The most obvious is allowing more legal immigration, which is politically divisive but has been a cornerstone of the country's ability to grow for years in the face of an aging population. Other strategies could include incentivizing older workers to delay retirement, expanding opportunities for formerly incarcerated people and making child-care more affordable, so that parents have greater flexibility to work.

In Wisconsin, lawmakers are backing a proposal to allow 14-year-olds to serve alcohol in bars and restaurants. If it passed, Wisconsin would have the lowest such limit nationwide, according to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

The Ohio Legislature is on track to pass a bill allowing students ages 14 and 15 to work until 9 p.m. during the school year with their parents' permission. That's later than federal law allows, so a companion measure asks the U.S. Congress to amend its own laws.

Under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act, students that age can only work until 7 p.m. during the school year. Congress passed the law in 1938 to stop children from being exposed to dangerous conditions and abusive practices in mines, factories, farms and street trades.

Republican Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders signed a law in March eliminating permits that required employers to verify a child's age and a parent's consent. Without work permit requirements, companies caught violating child labor laws can more easily claim ignorance.

Sanders later signed separate legislation raising civil penalties and creating criminal penalties for violating child labor laws, but advocates worry that eliminating the permit requirement makes it significantly more difficult to investigate violations.

Other measures to loosen child labor laws have been passed into law in New Jersey, New Hampshire and Iowa.

Iowa Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds signed a law last year allowing teens aged 16 and 17 to work unsupervised in child care centers. The state Legislature approved a bill this month to allow teens of that age to serve alcohol in restaurants. It would also expand the hours minors can work. Reynolds, who said in April she supports more youth employment, has until June 3 to sign or veto the measure.

Republicans dropped provisions from a version of the bill allowing children aged 14 and 15 to work in dangerous fields including mining, logging and meatpacking. But it kept some provisions that the Labor Department says violate federal law, including allowing children as young as 14 to briefly work in freezers and meat coolers, and extending work hours in industrial laundries and assembly lines.

Teen workers are more likely to accept low pay and less likely to unionize or push for better working conditions, said Maki, of the Child Labor Coalition, a Washington-based advocacy network.

"There are employers that benefit from having kind of docile teen workers," Maki said, adding that teens are easy targets for industries that rely on vulnerable populations such as immigrants and the formerly incarcerated to fill dangerous jobs.

The Department of Labor reported in February that child labor violations had increased by nearly 70% since 2018. The agency is increasing enforcement and asking Congress to allow larger fines against violators.

It fined one of the nation's largest meatpacking sanitation contractors \$1.5 million in February after investigators found the company illegally employed more than 100 children at locations in eight states. The child workers cleaned bone saws and other dangerous equipment in meatpacking plants, often using

hazardous chemicals.

National business lobbyists, chambers of commerce and well-funded conservative groups are backing the state bills to increase teen participation in the workforce, including Americans for Prosperity, a conservative political network and the National Federation of Independent Business, which typically aligns with Republicans.

The conservative Opportunity Solutions Project and its parent organization, Florida-based think tank Foundation for Government Accountability, helped lawmakers in Arkansas and Missouri draft bills to roll back child labor protections, The Washington Post reported. The groups, and allied lawmakers, often say their efforts are about expanding parental rights and giving teenagers more work experience.

"There's no reason why anyone should have to get the government's permission to get a job," Republican Arkansas Rep. Rebecca Burkes, who sponsored the bill to eliminate child work permits, said on the House floor. "This is simply about eliminating the bureaucracy that is required and taking away the parent's decision about whether their child can work."

Margaret Wurth, a children's rights researcher with Human Rights Watch, a member of the Child Labor Coalition, described bills like the one passed in Arkansas as "attempts to undermine safe and important workplace protections and to reduce workers' power."

Current laws fail to protect many child workers, Wurth said.

She wants lawmakers to end exceptions for child labor in agriculture. Federal law allows children 12 and older to work on farms for any amount of time outside of school hours, with parental permission. Farm workers over 16 can work at dangerous heights or operate heavy machinery, hazardous tasks reserved for adult workers in other industries.

Twenty-four children died from work injuries in in 2021, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Around half of deadly work incidents happened on farms, according to a report from the Government Accountability Office covering child deaths between 2003 and 2016.

"More children die working in agriculture than in any other sector," Wurth said. "Enforcement isn't going to help much for child farm workers unless the standards improve."

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Harm Venhuizen is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues. Follow Venhuizen on Twitter.

## Twitter's launch of DeSantis' presidential bid underscores platform's rightward shift under Musk

By ALI SWENSON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Two years ago, signing a bill intended to punish Twitter and other major social media companies, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis blasted the platforms as "suppressing ideas" during the COVID-19 pandemic and silencing conservative voices.

What a turnaround.

The new Elon Musk-owned version of Twitter helped DeSantis launch his bid for the Republican presidential nomination Wednesday. Though it was marred by technical glitches and skewered by the candidate's critics, the forum nevertheless underscored Twitter's unmistakable shift to the right under Musk, who bought it for \$44 billion and took over in October.

"The truth was censored repeatedly, and now that Twitter is in the hands of a free speech advocate, that would not be able to happen again on this Twitter platform," DeSantis said during the Twitter Spaces event.

Musk, co-hosting the event, responded to the praise by saying, "Twitter was indeed expensive, but free speech is priceless."

While Musk has promoted his platform as a haven for free expression, the site has been flooded with extremist views and hate speech since he bought it and fired or laid off roughly 80% of its staff.

That is raising alarms that Twitter — heavily used by candidates and government agencies, including

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those providing voting information — will become an open forum for conspiracy theories, fake content and election misinformation as a bitterly divided country heads into the 2024 presidential election.

Many Republicans have hailed Musk's takeover of Twitter as creating one of the last mainstream online spaces where they can share their views without fear of removal. Prominent figures in conservative media, like former Fox News host Tucker Carlson and the podcasts hosts of The Daily Wire, say they plan to start streaming content on the site.

Democrats and anti-hate watchdogs, meanwhile, say Musk's partisan comments and policy changes have effectively given a megaphone to far-right extremists.

Since Musk bought Twitter, he has overhauled the site's verification system, removing safeguards against impersonation for some government accounts and political candidates. He also has personally indulged in far-right conspiracy theories on the site, reinstated accounts with a history of extremist rhetoric and gutted the team that had been responsible for moderating the content flowing across the platform.

That has coincided with a deluge of conspiracy theory rhetoric, according to the Anti-Defamation League, which reported that QAnon hashtags surged 91% on Twitter between May 2022 and May 2023, with about three-fourths of those messages posted after Musk's takeover.

Several believers of the baseless QAnon theory, centered on the idea that former President Donald Trump is waging a secret war against "deep state" enemies and pedophiles, have committed acts of violence, including the attack on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

Musk's decision to reinstate influential Twitter accounts with a history of spreading extremist views also has created spaces in their tweet reply threads where users are sharing antisemitic tropes, conspiracy theories and other types of hate, the ADL reported Wednesday.

The group's vice president Yael Eisenstat, who leads its Center for Technology and Society, said Musk's content moderation choices have "served to silence marginalized voices" by giving harassers and internet trolls free reign.

"It is one thing to say we want free speech on the platform," she said. "It's another thing to say we are going to allow extremists — conspiracy theorists — to contribute to normalizing this kind of rhetoric and antisemitism and racism."

Twitter didn't provide comment after repeated requests. It sent automated replies instead, as it does to most media inquiries.

Musk's free speech rhetoric also has attracted conservatives who have been knocked off other platforms — or fired, in the case of Carlson.

Shortly after his ouster, Carlson went on Twitter May 9 to announce that he would be doing some version of his show on that platform. It's still not clear what that would entail, or when he would start.

"There aren't many platforms left that allow free speech," Carlson said in a two-minute message viewed more than 132 million times. "The last big one remaining in the world, the only one, is Twitter, where we are now."

Free speech and truth aren't the same thing, however, and Carlson had been accused of spreading misinformation on his Fox show, most recently about the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection.

DeSantis has been a frequent guest on Fox News, and on the night of his presidential campaign announcement he appeared on the network for an interview — after the Twitter event.

Though DeSantis' Twitter launch was severely delayed with site crashes and strained servers, his choice to debut his campaign on the platform illustrates that Fox will have more competition as a Republican kingmaker. His campaign said it had taken in \$1 million online in the first hour after the announcement. Fox's ratings have declined dramatically during its 8 p.m. Eastern hour, which Carlson used to fill.

The Daily Wire, whose podcast hosts include popular conservative influencers such as Ben Shapiro and Candace Owens, said Tuesday that it would bring its shows to stream on Twitter starting next week.

At the same time, Wednesday's botched live event with DeSantis calls into question whether Musk's ambitions to turn Twitter into a destination for politicians, businesses and others to make big announcements is realistic. For one, only about half a million people listened to the DeSantis webcast. A similar announcement on television would attract millions of people.

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The other snag: Twitter's audience size. Less than a quarter of U.S. adults use Twitter, according to Pew Research Center, and most of them rarely tweet, if at all. The site's most active users are power players, politicians, public figures and journalists, which raises doubts about whether Musk's desire to reach voters directly, without traditional media as a go-between, can succeed.

Doug Heye, a Republican strategist and former Republican National Committee communications director, said Twitter is "certainly going to be an increasing part" of GOP campaign strategies for the 2024 presidential primary.

"And that's all because of what Elon Musk has said over the past few months as he's taken Twitter over and sought to make it a space more friendly to conservatives," he said.

Musk has leaned into Republican politics, tweeting in 2022 that Democrats "have become the party of division & hate." While he has tweeted support for both DeSantis and South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, who also entered the GOP field this week, he said Tuesday he was not yet endorsing any particular presidential candidate.

Even as Democrats wince at the direction Musk has taken Twitter, most are staying put — at least for now. A recent Pew survey found that when looking to the future, just slightly more Democratic users than Republicans said it's unlikely they will be on Twitter in a year.

Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon said he has been experimenting with the Twitter alternative BlueSky as a "more casual, fun and positive environment" than Twitter. But he also has continued to use Twitter to communicate with his constituents.

Jimmy Williams, a longtime Democratic political consultant, said he would advise Democrats not to "cede the space." Indeed, Musk said Wednesday that his forum would be available to any politician.

"Twitter's a two-way street," Williams said.

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Associated Press technology writer Barbara Ortutay in San Francisco and media writer David Bauder in New York contributed to this report.

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The Associated Press receives support from several private foundations to enhance its explanatory coverage of elections and democracy. See more about AP's democracy initiative here. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## **A public person in a private country: Tina Turner reveled in 'normal' life in her Swiss home**

By BORIS HEGER and ARND WIEGMANN Associated Press

KUESNACHT, Switzerland (AP) — In her adoptive country, Tina Turner was more than just a swivel-hipped rock, R&B and pop superstar. She unapologetically moved to Switzerland for its discretion and calm, carrying her very public persona into a very private country. She relished her life as a Swiss citizen — and the feeling was mutual.

It seems love's got to do with it, too: In her 2018 memoir, "My Love Story," Turner shared her emotion for longtime boyfriend-turned-husband Erwin Bach — a German record producer who had set up in Switzerland. She moved to join him in the mid-1990s, nearly a decade after they first met.

Mourners laid flowers and candles Thursday outside the gate of the couple's lakeside villa rental, "Chateau Algonquin," in the upscale town of Kuesnacht, southeast of Zurich, where they settled, got married in 2013, and lived for decades until her death on Wednesday at age 83.

It was an understated tribute — reflective of the Swiss discretion that had drawn her to the rich Alpine country in the first place.

Neighbors didn't gawk, hound her for autographs or snap photos. Many Swiss felt a sense of pride that she could retreat here from the pressures of the media spotlight. It afforded her the semblance of a normal life after a turbulent one in her native United States, including at the hands of her late former husband

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Ike who discovered her, married her and — according to her memoirs — violently beat her.

Celebrities of the past including Charlie Chaplin and Freddie Mercury, as well as living stars like Sophia Loren and Shania Twain, have been drawn to Switzerland — often for its reputed respect for private lives. Roman Polanski holed up in an Alpine chalet briefly to skirt U.S. justice, and some of the world's financial magnates and business gurus have been attracted by the country's relatively low taxes and secrecy about money matters.

Turner, who moved in the mid-1990s and took Swiss citizenship in 2013 — dispensing with her U.S. passport — was arguably the most famous resident in recent years.

Swiss President Alain Berset tweeted a tribute to Turner, calling her an icon and saying his "thoughts are with the relatives of this impressive woman, who found a second homeland in Switzerland."

Markus Ernst, the mayor of Kuesnacht, a bucolic town on the shores of Lake Zurich, said Turner was engaged in the community — regularly lighting the annual Christmas tree and once inaugurating a municipal rescue boat that has been christened "Tina" — but locals went out of their way to help an overwhelmingly public figure enjoy a private life, too.

"One of the reasons she came to Switzerland was to have a completely normal life," he said by phone. "She could go to restaurants without being photographed all the time ... in the street, people didn't stare at her or ask for her autograph."

Dropping by to pay her respects, art dealer Renate Fetscherin, who has lived in the town for decades, said people in Switzerland "would never bother anybody, you know?" and the couple could rest easy: "They don't worry about paparazzi because we don't have them!"

"Kuesnacht was very proud of having such a famous person here," Fetscherin said. She recalled how Turner and Bach — clearly ensconced in Switzerland for good — had reportedly bought a villa last year just down the lake from the town.

At his upscale eatery just a couple hundred meters from the villa, restaurateur Rico Zandonella recalled Turner as "very dear friend" and a frequent guest who once celebrated a birthday there with colleagues "who sang for her: It was a really great celebration."

"Tina Turner is a very big personality when she enters a room. She has a really great aura — a personality that explodes like a bomb, like she is on stage."

A statement from her longtime manager, Bernard Doherty, said a private funeral ceremony among close family and friends was planned, adding: "Please respect the privacy of her."

Years ago, Turner narrated milestones of her life and her affection and affinity for Switzerland in a glitzy TV ad for communications company Swisscom, featuring young actors who portrayed her in both early life and in highlight moments of her career.

It alluded to stereotypes about Switzerland such as the home of William Tell or a hub of ice-skating prowess; she sat in a rocking rowboat in a lake ringed by majestic mountains, mobile phone in hand. Turner recounted how her friends had to adapt to her Swiss tastes, as one actor portraying her carried out a pot of cheese fondue to quizzical looks from fictionalized guests.

Another actor waved off fans as flash bulbs popped while she clambered into the backseat of a limousine next to the real Turner, and the superstar quipped: "As time went by, I learned more and more about Switzerland, like that security and discretion are people's top priority — just like they are for me."

"And when I finally moved to Switzerland, it felt like home right away," she mused. "People respect each other's privacy here, take care of each other."

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Jamey Keaten contributed to this report.

## Man arrested after car collides with gates of Downing Street; police don't suspect terror attack

By JILL LAWLESS and SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A car collided Thursday with the gates of Downing Street in central London, where the British prime minister's home and offices are located, setting off a rapid, intense security response at one of London's most-fortified sites.

No one was injured and police said they were not treating the incident as terror-related. Police arrested a man on suspicion of criminal damage and dangerous driving, and local officers, rather than counterterrorism detectives, were handling the investigation.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak was in his office at the time of the crash, which revived memories of attacks on London's government district.

It was not immediately clear whether the crash was deliberate. Video footage posted on social media showed a silver hatchback car heading straight for the gates at low speed across Whitehall, the main thoroughfare in London's government district.

"I heard a bang and looked up and saw loads of police with taser guns shouting at the man," said witness Simon Parry, 44. "A lot of police vehicles came very quickly and were very quick to evacuate the area."

The BBC showed a photo of officers leading away a man with handcuffed hands behind his back.

Footage shot soon after showed a car with its trunk open up against the tall metal gates. Several police officers minutely inspected the vehicle, removing items from the trunk and inside the car and placing them in evidence bags.

About two hours after the crash, a car transporter arrived to take the vehicle away.

Officers cordoned off a wide area of London's government district, but lifted the barriers less than two hours after the collision took place, allowing people back into Whitehall. The street normally teems with civil servants and tourists keen to see the nearby Houses of Parliament and other historic buildings.

"A small cordon remains in place outside Downing Street after a car collided with the gates earlier this afternoon," the Metropolitan Police said in a statement. "The incident is being dealt with by local officers in Westminster and isn't currently being treated as terror-related."

Downing Street is a narrow street with a row of Georgian houses that includes the prime minister's official residence at No. 10.

Public access to the street is restricted and the heavy steel gates are protected at all times by armed police officers. Bollards and metal crowd barriers also help keep threats at bay.

The gates were erected in 1989 in response to threats from Irish Republican Army militants. In 1991 the IRA fired three mortars at the street, one of which exploded in the backyard of No. 10 while Prime Minister John Major was leading a Cabinet meeting inside. Three police officers and a civil servant suffered minor injuries.

The area was targeted in 2017, when an extremist inspired by the Islamic State group killed four people with a vehicle on Westminster Bridge before stabbing a police officer to death outside Parliament.

Seats of power around the world are often magnets for protest, and sometimes violent attack. The incident came three days after a man crashed a rented truck into a security barrier outside the White House in Washington, got out and began waving around a Nazi flag. Sai Varshith Kandula, 19, has been charged with damaging U.S. property.

## Colorado embraces broad law requiring patient consent for pelvic exams while sedated

By JESSE BEDAYN Associated Press/Report for America

DENVER (AP) — Colorado medical providers will need to get patients' prior consent before medical students can perform pelvic exams on them while they are unconscious for a procedure under a bill signed into law Thursday.

In signing off on the law in her capacity as acting governor, Lt. Gov. Dianne Primavera put Colorado with at least 20 other states that have consent laws on the books. But Colorado's goes far beyond other states' because it requires that the medical students be named ahead of time and meet the patient — a step one bioethicist is concerned might impede students' chances to learn.

Proponents of the law, which had bipartisan support, say every aspect protects patients from feeling violated and, in certain cases, retraumatized after surviving sexual assault. They hope it will set the standard for states that have weaker consent laws or none at all.

"Learning of a non-consensual intimate exam is traumatic, forcing patients to relive some of the worst moments of their life. We're putting an end to this unethical practice," Democratic state Rep. Lorena Garcia, who co-sponsored the bill, said in a statement.

The goal is to ensure that a patient is fully aware of, and agrees to, having students replicate breast, pelvic, prostate or rectal exams that can involve the insertion of fingers or devices inside someone's vagina or anus.

It's difficult to quantify how often students perform such exams without informed consent, in part because patients might never know that they were practiced on and students might be afraid to raise concerns to their superiors.

Typically, patients fill out a number of forms giving broad consent for procedures that might be medically necessary while they are sedated, including for students to participate in their care.

For such procedures to take place under Colorado's new law, patients would have to sign a consent form that explains what will happen and will include the names of any students who might take part.

Kayte Spector-Bagdady, a clinical ethicist who co-authored a 2019 recommendation by the Association of Professors of Gynecology and Obstetrics, worried that determining which students can and cannot be involved prior to the procedure could limit learning opportunities.

Schedules, especially in a hospital setting, can change rapidly, Spector-Bagdady argued. If the named students aren't available, the Colorado law wouldn't allow others to step in and learn. Those educational opportunities are critical for future doctors to be proficient in treating women, she said.

Elizabeth Newman, public policy director at the Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault who supports the law, said naming the students and having them meet the patient are integral components of complete, informed consent and ensure that students learn the rules governing the consent process.

There are certain caveats, including that licensed practitioners can perform exams in emergency situations in which getting consent ahead of time isn't possible. The law includes whistleblower protections for medical students, and doctors and hospitals could face liability if they violate the consent rules.

Those who have opposed the bills and laws across the U.S. say they're examples of government unnecessarily meddling in patient and provider trust, and that guidance should come from medical associations.

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Bedayn is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

## **COVID pill Paxlovid gets full FDA approval after more than a year of emergency use**

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Pfizer received full approval on Thursday for its COVID-19 pill Paxlovid that's been the go-to treatment against the coronavirus.

More than 11 million prescriptions for Paxlovid have been dispensed since the Food and Drug Administration allowed emergency use in late 2021. The emergency status was based on early studies and was intended to be temporary pending follow-up research.

The FDA granted full approval for adults with COVID-19 who face high risks of severe disease, which

can lead to hospitalization or death. That group typically includes older adults and those with common medical conditions like diabetes, asthma and obesity.

The decision allows Pfizer's drug to remain on the market indefinitely and to be marketed similarly to other drugs.

The pill is still available for children ages 12 to 17 under a separate emergency authorization.

The U.S. government has stockpiled millions of doses of Paxlovid and patients will continue to receive it at no charge, the FDA said in a statement. More than 14,000 new COVID-19 cases were reported each week last month, although most U.S. cases are no longer reported to health authorities.

Paxlovid is the fourth drug for COVID-19 to receive full FDA approval and the first one that is a pill. The previously approved therapies are IV or injectable drugs, typically given at clinics or hospitals.

Pfizer originally studied Paxlovid in the highest-risk COVID-19 patients: unvaccinated adults with other health problems and no evidence of prior coronavirus infection. In that group, the FDA said the drug lowered the risk of hospitalization or death by 86% when given shortly after symptoms emerged.

But that doesn't reflect the U.S. population today, where more than 95% of people have protection from at least one vaccine dose, a prior infection or both.

In more recent studies of people who have had COVID-19, Paxlovid still significantly decreased the chance of hospitalization or death by more than 85%.

As Paxlovid became widely used in 2021, doctors and patients reported cases of COVID-19 symptoms returning several days after treatment with the drug. But the FDA said Thursday "there is not a clear association," between Pfizer's drug and rebound cases.

That conclusion was backed by an independent panel of FDA advisers, who voted to recommend the drug's full approval at a meeting earlier this year.

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The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Science and Educational Media Group. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## **Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy delivers surprise commencement speech to Johns Hopkins**

By LEA SKENE Associated Press

BALTIMORE (AP) — During a surprise commencement address to graduates of Johns Hopkins University on Thursday morning, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told them to take advantage of the time and resources they have to pursue their passions and uphold the democratic values at stake in his country's war against Russia.

He spoke via livestream from Ukraine, where the ongoing conflict has impacted the futures of countless young Ukrainians, robbing them of opportunities and loved ones, Zelenskyy said. He told Hopkins graduates to make the most of every moment.

"Time is the most valuable resource on the planet," he said. "Some people realize this sooner, and these are the lucky ones. Others realize it too late, when they lose someone or something."

He also thanked U.S. leaders for their support since the Russian invasion, including significant investments in humanitarian and military aid.

President Joe Biden announced last week an agreement between the United States and European nations to supply Ukraine with F-16 fighter jets, finally fulfilling a longstanding request from Ukrainian leaders. Zelenskyy spent months pressing the West to provide his forces with American-made jets as his troops continue trying to repel Russian forces, with the conflict now in its second year.

During his remarks Thursday, Zelenskyy described a recent visit with Ukrainian troops on the front lines, saying many have dreams and aspirations similar to those of the American graduating students. The difference is young Ukrainians are forced to endure the collective tragedy of war before chasing their dreams, he said.

"You have to know exactly what you need today — and what you want your tomorrows to look like."

The commencement ceremony took place at the school's Homewood Field on the university's Baltimore campus.

The university announced Zelenskyy's address with the ceremony already underway, just minutes before his remarks were set to begin.

"His appearance will be a complete surprise for those in attendance," a news release said.

Zelenskyy, whose response to the Russian invasion has made him an international symbol of democracy, said he's confident future generations of American leaders will continue championing democratic values around the world.

University President Ron Daniels awarded Zelenskyy an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree after his speech.

Daniels had sent a letter to Zelenskyy asking him to speak at the ceremony, according to university spokesperson Jill Rosen. In the letter, Daniels expressed his hope that "one of our era's great democratic leaders would speak to the next generation of leaders, reinforcing in them the importance of holding fast to one's principles and meeting with fortitude and humility the challenging moments of history that they will surely face in the years ahead."

## **Tina Turner created a career on her terms, not defined by her trauma**

By KRISTIN M. HALL AP Entertainment Writer

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — In 1976, a young Tina Turner, bloodied and beaten by her husband and musical partner Ike Turner, fled in the dark across a Dallas freeway dodging trucks and cars with only pennies in her pocket.

That moment when she decided she'd had enough of the physical, sexual and emotional abuse was a turning point for the "Queen of Rock 'n' Roll," who would go on to have a musical renaissance in the 1980s. After the Rock & Roll Hall of Famer and worldwide star died Wednesday at 83, tributes often remarked on her courage in the face of horrifying violence.

But her story of surviving and thriving was so much more than a comeback, cultural and domestic abuse experts say. Turner's reclaiming of her career and her humanity on her own terms made her a pioneering Black woman who refused to be defined by abuse.

Turner detailed that night in her 2021 documentary, "Tina," describing the euphoria she felt: "I was very proud. I felt strong. I had never done this." She made the difficult decision to tell that part of her life in interviews and a biography, later adapted into the hit biopic "What's Love Got To Do With It."

Raven Maragh-Lloyd, an assistant professor at Washington University in St. Louis, said the thread of the strong Black woman is limiting when applied to women like Turner, whose career blended multiple musical genres, acting and a distinct visual aesthetic.

"So much of her story has been told through the lens of being a survivor or how much she has overcome to be the superstar, all of which is relevant and true," Maragh-Lloyd said. "At the same time, we risk erasing her emotions, her feelings, what that must have been like to go through that abuse.

"That's a part of her story, not her full humanity," Maragh-Lloyd said.

The public image of Ike and Tina Turner, a name he gave her and then trademarked to try to keep her from using, was a brand she had to dismantle, even at personal cost.

"I wanted to stop people from thinking that Ike and Tina was so positive," she said in the documentary. "It was that we were such a love team or great team. And it wasn't like that. So I thought, if nothing else, at least people would know."

Author Francesca Royster explored Turner's country roots in her 2022 book, "Black Country Music: Listening for Revolutions," and noted that her decision to leave Ike stymied her career because of the financial impact and stigma of the divorce.

"She experienced lack of interest by music companies who saw her as a kind of novelty act or as a nostalgia act or washed up," said Royster, a professor of English at DePaul University. "She hadn't been

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credited as having the kind of creative power.”

Carolyn West, a professor of clinical psychology at the University of Washington who focuses her research on marginalized women experiencing sexual and domestic violence, said Turner was facing down a long history and pattern of discrediting Black women who are abused.

“It probably was very difficult for people to really believe Ike would have done these things or that she was in fact a survivor or wasn’t somehow responsible for the abuse,” West said.

The threads of Turner’s experience in the 1970s stretch all the way to the present-day misogynoir faced by Black female artists like Meghan Thee Stallion and Rihanna, who have both experienced intimate partner violence, West said.

“There’s really almost no space, particularly for Black women, to talk about these experiences,” West said. “In the way Meghan was attacked, the way Rihanna was attacked, it’s almost like you just become revictimized again.”

Turner was undeterred. As she sang in “Proud Mary,” she wasn’t going to approach anything “nice and easy.”

She had control of her career revolution in the 1980s with the album “Private Dancer” and its hit “What’s Love Got To Do With It.” She was a triple threat — singer, actor and author — and became a worldwide touring phenomenon. She sold more than 150 million records worldwide, won 12 Grammys, was voted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame both as a duo and as a solo artist, and was honored at the Kennedy Center in 2005.

Her visual representation on screen and stage as strong, sexual and feminine with her big, bold hair and toned legs projected her own identity, Royster said.

“She really invented her own unique look with her lion’s mane and her combination of leather and denim and her ability also to really move on those high heels,” Royster said. “Those became trademarks.”

In her later years after her musical retirement in the 2000s, Turner lived a long private life with longtime partner Erwin Bach in Switzerland, no longer beholden to anybody. Maragh-Lloyd said Turner’s acumen served her well till the end.

“She wanted not to be gazed upon by anybody, not to perform for anybody,” Maragh-Lloyd said. “That’s also a lesson: You’re not going to use me up.”

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For more information, contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at <https://www.thehotline.org/> or 1-800-799-SAFE (7233).

## Russia signs deal to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — Russia and Belarus signed a deal Thursday formalizing the deployment of Moscow’s tactical nuclear weapons on the territory of its ally, although control of the weapons remains in the Kremlin.

Russian President Vladimir Putin announced the deployment of the shorter-range weapons in Belarus earlier this year in a move widely seen as a warning to the West as it stepped up military support for Ukraine.

When the weapons would be deployed wasn’t announced, but Putin has said the construction of storage facilities in Belarus for them would be completed by July 1.

Also unclear is how many nuclear weapons would be kept in Belarus. The U.S. government believes Russia has about 2,000 tactical nuclear weapons, which include bombs that can be carried by aircraft, warheads for short-range missiles and artillery rounds.

Tactical nuclear weapons are intended to destroy enemy troops and weapons on the battlefield. They have a relatively short range and a much lower yield than nuclear warheads fitted to long-range strategic missiles that are capable of obliterating whole cities.

Speaking in Moscow, Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko said “the movement of the nuclear weapons has begun,” but was not clear whether any actually had arrived in his country. Lukashenko, who sparked

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rumors of being seriously ill when he cut short a Victory Day appearance in Red Square on May 9 before resurfacing in public May 15, was attending a meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council with Putin and leaders of Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

The signing of the deal came as Russia prepared for a counteroffensive by Ukraine. Both Russian and Belarusian officials also framed the step as driven by hostilities from the West.

"Deployment of nonstrategic nuclear weapons is an effective response to the aggressive policy of countries unfriendly to us," Belarusian Defense Minister Viktor Khrenin said in Minsk at a meeting with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Shoigu.

"In the context of an extremely sharp escalation of threats on the western borders of Russia and Belarus, a decision was made to take countermeasures in the military-nuclear sphere," Shoigu added.

Putin has argued that by deploying its tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, Russia was following the lead of the United States, noting that the U.S. has nuclear weapons based in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey.

Exiled Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya condemned the move.

"We must do everything to prevent Putin's plan to deploy nuclear weapons in Belarus, as this will ensure Russia's control over Belarus for years to come," Tsikhanouskaya told The Associated Press. "This will further jeopardize the security of Ukraine and all of Europe."

Independent Belarusian military analyst Aliaksandr Alesin said about two-thirds of Russia's arsenal of medium-range nuclear-tipped missiles were held in Belarus during the Cold War, adding that there are dozens of Soviet-era storage facilities that could still be used.

Soviet nuclear weapons stationed in Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan were moved to Russia in a U.S.-brokered deal after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.

"Documents in Minsk on the return of nuclear weapons were defiantly signed just at the moment when Ukraine declared a counteroffensive and Western countries are handing over weapons to Kyiv," Alesin told the AP.

"This Belarusian nuclear balcony should spoil the mood for politicians in the West, since nuclear missiles are capable of covering Ukraine, all of Poland, the Baltic states and parts of Germany."

Khrenin also announced plans to "build up the combat potential of the regional grouping of Russia and Belarusian troops," including the transfer to Minsk of the Iskander-M missile system, capable of carrying a nuclear charge, and the S-400 anti-aircraft missile system.

Russia and Belarus have an alliance agreement under which the Kremlin subsidizes the Belarusian economy, via loans and discounted Russian oil and gas. Russia used Belarusian territory as a staging ground for invading neighboring Ukraine and has maintained a contingent of troops and weapons there.

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

## Companies are finding it's not so simple to leave Russia. Some are quietly staying put

By DAVID McHUGH AP Business Writer

When Russia invaded Ukraine, global companies were quick to respond, some announcing they would get out of Russia immediately, others curtailing imports or new investment. Billions of dollars' worth of factories, energy holdings and power plants were written off or put up for sale, accompanied by fierce condemnation of the war and expressions of solidarity with Ukraine.

More than a year later, it's clear: Leaving Russia was not as simple as the first announcements might have made it seem.

Increasingly, Russia has put hurdles in the way of companies that want out, requiring approval by a government commission and in some cases from President Vladimir Putin himself, while imposing painful discounts and taxes on sale prices.

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Though companies' stories vary, a common theme is having to thread an obstacle course between Western sanctions and outraged public opinion on one side and Russia's efforts to discourage and penalize departures on the other. Some international brands such as Coke and Apple are trickling in informally through third countries despite a decision to exit.

Many companies are simply staying put, sometimes citing responsibility to shareholders or employees or legal obligations to local franchisees or partners. Others argue that they're providing essentials like food, farm supplies or medicine. Some say nothing.

One is Italian fashion chain Benetton, whose store at Moscow's now ironically named Evropeisky Mall — meaning "European" in Russian — was busy on a recent weekday evening, with customers browsing and workers tidying piles of brightly colored clothing. At Italian lingerie retailer Calzedonia, shoppers looked through socks and swimwear. Neither company responded to emailed questions.

For consumers in Moscow, what they can buy hasn't changed much. While baby products store Mothercare became Mother Bear under new local ownership, most of the items in the Evropeisky Mall shop still bear the Mothercare brand.

That's also what student Alik Petrosyan saw as he shopped at Maag, which now owns Zara's former flagship clothing store in Moscow.

"The quality hasn't changed at all, everything has stayed the same," he said. "The prices haven't changed much, taking into account the inflation and the economic scenarios that happened last year."

"Overall Zara — Maag — had competitors," Petrosyan said, correcting himself, "but I wouldn't say that there are any now with whom they could compete equally. Because the competitors who stayed are in a higher price segment, but the quality doesn't match up."

The initial exodus from Russia was led by big automakers, oil, tech and professional services companies, with BP, Shell, ExxonMobil and Equinor ending joint ventures or writing off stakes worth billions. McDonald's sold its 850 restaurants to a local franchisee, while France's Renault took a symbolic single ruble for its majority stake in Avtovaz, Russia's largest carmaker.

Since the initial wave of departures, new categories have emerged: companies that are biding their time, those struggling to shed assets and others attempting business as usual. Over 1,000 international companies have publicly said they are voluntarily curtailing Russian business beyond what's required by sanctions, according to a database by Yale University.

But the Kremlin keeps adding requirements, recently a "voluntary" 10% departure tax directly to the government, plus an understanding that companies would sell at a 50% discount.

Putin recently announced that the government would take over the assets of Finnish energy company Fortum and Germany's Uniper utility, barring a sale with an eye to offsetting any Western moves to seize more Russian assets abroad.

Danish brewer Carlsberg announced its intention to divest its Russia business — one of Russia's largest brewing operations — in March 2022 but faced complications clarifying the impact of sanctions and finding suitable buyers.

"This is a complex process, and it has taken longer than we originally hoped for" but now is "almost completed," said Tanja Frederiksen, global head of external communications.

She called the Russia business a deeply integrated part of Carlsberg. Separating it has involved all parts of the company and more than 100 million Danish kroner (\$14.8 million) in investment in new brewing equipment and IT infrastructure, Frederiksen said.

Another beer giant, Anheuser-Busch InBev, is trying to sell a stake in a Russian joint venture to Turkey-based partner Anadolu Efes and has forgone revenue from it.

Companies are lost in "a Bermuda Triangle between EU sanctions, U.S. sanctions and Russia sanctions," said Michael Harms, executive director of the German Eastern Business Association.

They must find a partner not sanctioned by the West. In Russia, major business figures are often people who are "well connected with the government," Harms said. "For one thing, they have to sell at a large discount or almost give assets away, and then they go to people whom politically we don't like — people

who are close to the regime.”

The 10% exit tax mandated by Russia is particularly tricky. American companies would have to get permission from the Treasury Department to pay it or run afoul of U.S. sanctions, said Maria Shagina, a sanctions expert at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in Berlin.

Hundreds of companies quietly decided not to leave.

In a rare, frank explanation, Steffen Greubel, CEO of German cash and carry firm Metro AG, said at this year’s shareholder meeting that the company condemns the war “without any ifs, ands or buts.”

However, the decision to stay was motivated by a responsibility for 10,000 local employees and is “also in the interest of preserving the value of this company for its shareholders,” he said.

Metro gets around 10% of its annual sales from Russia — more than 2.9 billion euros (\$3.1 billion).

Meanwhile, shelves are just as full as before the war at Globus superstores, a Germany-based chain with some 20 locations operating in Moscow.

A closer look reveals that most Western beer brands have vanished, and many cosmetic brands have jumped in price by some 50% to 70%. There are more vegetables from Russia and Belarus, which cost less. Procter & Gamble products are abundant even after the company said it would narrow its product range to essentials.

Globus says it has “drastically” cut new investment but kept its stores open to ensure food supply for people, noting that food has not been sanctioned and citing “the threat of confiscation of considerable asset value through a forced nationalization as well as severe consequences in criminal law for our local management.”

Similarly, Germany’s Bayer AG, which supplies medicine, agricultural chemicals and seeds, argues that doing some business in Russia is the right move.

“Withholding essential healthcare and agriculture products from the civilian populations — like cancer or cardiovascular treatments, health products for pregnant women and children as well as seeds to grow food — would only multiply the war’s ongoing toll on human life,” the company said in a statement.

Jeffrey Sonnenfeld, head of the Yale database, said leaving was the only valid business decision, citing research showing company share prices rising afterward.

“The companies that have pulled out have been rewarded for pulling out,” he said. “It is not good for shareholders to be associated with Putin’s war machine.”

Marianna Fotaki, professor of business ethics at Warwick Business School, says business is “not just about the bottom line. ... You don’t want to be an accomplice to what is a criminal regime.”

Even if competitors stay, she said, “following the race to the bottom” is not the answer.

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This story has been corrected to show that the name of the head of the Yale database was misspelled. He’s Jeffrey Sonnenfeld, not Jeffrey Sonnenberger.

## Supreme Court rules in favor of 94-year-old woman who got nothing when county took her condo

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A unanimous Supreme Court on Thursday gave a 94-year-old Minneapolis woman a new chance to recoup some money after the county kept the entire \$40,000 when it sold her condominium over a small unpaid tax bill.

The justices ruled that Hennepin County, Minnesota violated the constitutional rights of the woman, Geraldine Tyler, by taking her property without paying “just compensation.”

“The County had the power to sell Tyler’s home to recover the unpaid property taxes. But it could not use the foothold of the tax debt to confiscate more property than was due,” Chief Justice John Roberts wrote for the court.

Tyler, who now lives in an apartment building for older people, owed \$2,300 in unpaid taxes, plus inter-

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est and penalties totalling \$15,000, when the county took title to the one-bedroom apartment in 2015. The county said she did nothing to hold onto her one-time residence. The apartment sold the next year.

Minnesota is among roughly a dozen states and the District of Columbia that allow local jurisdictions to keep the excess money, according to the Pacific Legal Foundation, a not-for-profit public interest law firm focused on property rights that represented Tyler at the Supreme Court.

At least 8,950 homes were sold because of unpaid taxes and the former owners received little or nothing in those states between 2014 and 2021, according to Pacific Legal.

The other states are: Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Oregon and South Dakota, the group said.

There has been no explanation about why Tyler stopped paying her property taxes when she moved from the condo, where she had lived since 1999. She moved for "health and safety" reasons, Pacific Legal said.

The court rejected the county's arguments that Tyler could have sold the property and kept whatever was left after paying off the mortgage and taxes, refinanced her mortgage to pay the tax bill or signed up for a tax payment plan.

Lower courts had sided with the county before the justices agreed to step in.

The case is Tyler v. Hennepin County, Minnesota, 22-166.

## Expect big crowds for the summer travel season -- and big prices, too

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

The unofficial start of the summer travel season is here, with airlines hoping to avoid the chaos of last year and travelers scrounging for ways to save a few bucks on pricey airfares and hotel rooms.

Some travelers say they will settle for fewer trips than they hoped to take, or they will drive instead of fly. Others are finding different money-saving sacrifices.

Stephanie Hanrahan thought she'd save money by planning ahead for her daughter's birthday trip to Disney World in Florida. Instead, it ended up costing the same as the Dallas-area family's trip for four to California last summer, so now her husband and son are staying home.

"We just had to grit our teeth," said Hanrahan, a writer and speaker who also runs a nonprofit, as she and daughter Campbell waited for their flight last week at Dallas Love Field.

The number of people going through U.S. airports hit pandemic-era highs last weekend, and those records are almost certain to be broken over the Memorial Day holiday.

AAA predicts that 37 million Americans will drive at least 50 miles (80 kilometers) from home this weekend, an increase of more than 2 million from Memorial Day last year but still below pre-pandemic numbers in 2019. The Transportation Security Administration expects to screen 10 million travelers between Friday and Monday, a 14% increase over the holiday in 2022 and slightly more than in 2019.

With more travel comes more expense. The average rate for a U.S. hotel room last week was \$157 a night, up from \$150 in the same week last year, according to hotel data provider STR. And the average daily rate for other short-term rentals such as Airbnb and Vrbo rose to \$316 last month, up 1.4% from a year ago, according to AirDNA, which tracks the industry.

There is a bit of good news for drivers, however: The national average for a gallon of regular was \$3.56 at midweek, down from \$4.60 at this time last year, according to AAA. Renting a car is also cheaper than a year ago, when some popular destinations ran out of vehicles. Travel company Expedia said larger inventories let the companies rent more cars at lower prices.

For air travelers, airline industry officials say carriers have fixed problems that contributed to a surge in flight cancellations and delays last summer, when 52,000 flights were nixed from June through August. Airlines have hired about 30,000 workers since then, including thousands of pilots, and they are using bigger planes to reduce flights but not the number of seats.

"I don't have the hubris to tell you exactly how the summer is going to go, but we have prepared and

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we have a robust plan for it," said Andrew Watterson, chief operating officer at Southwest Airlines, which struggled at times over the summer of 2022 and suffered an epic meltdown around Christmas, canceling nearly 17,000 flights.

David Seymour, the chief operating officer of American Airlines, said his staff has fine-tuned a system it uses to predict the impact of storms on major airports and devise a plan for recovering from disruptions. He said it is reducing cancellations.

"It's going to be a solid summer for us," Seymour said.

In a report released last month, the Government Accountability Office blamed airlines for an increase in flight cancellations as travel recovered from the pandemic. It also said airlines are taking longer to recover from disruptions such as storms.

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg says the government will hold airlines responsible to treat passengers fairly when the carriers cause cancellations or long delays. But just like the airlines, the Federal Aviation Administration — the agency that manages the nation's air traffic — has had its own staffing shortages and occasional breakdowns of aging technology.

The FAA is training about 3,000 more controllers, but they won't be ready this summer. The agency resorted to nudging airlines to reduce flights in the New York City area this summer, and it opened 169 new flight paths over the East Coast to reduce bottlenecks.

"It's going to be an ordeal — it's always an ordeal to travel in the summer," said travel analyst Henry Harteveltdt, "but the airlines have done a lot to improve their ability to operate well this summer."

Airlines hope that limiting the number of flights will improve reliability and reduce delays. So far, it seems to be working. About one in every 70 U.S. flights have been canceled this year — half the rate of a year ago and lower than in 2019.

Limiting the number of flights also keeps prices above pre-pandemic levels.

A provider of travel data, Hopper, predicts that average domestic airfares will peak next month at \$328 for a round-trip ticket, which is down from last summer's record of \$400 but 4% higher than in 2019.

There are some last-minute deals on domestic flights, Hopper found, but international fares are their highest in more than five years, with prices to Europe up 50% from a year ago.

The same thing is happening within Europe, as airlines hold the line on capacity at a time of strong travel demand.

"There is no expectation of seeing cheaper fares in Europe in the next seven or eight months," says John Grant, an analyst for OAG, a U.K.-based travel-data provider.

For the travel industry, the big question is how long consumers can keep paying for airline tickets and accommodations while they try to deal with stubborn high inflation, news about layoffs and bank failures, and fear of a recession.

Industry executives say consumers are favoring the experience of travel over other types of spending, but some analysts see cracks in the strong demand for travel that began in early 2022.

Bank of America analysts say data from their credit and debit card customers showed a slowdown in spending in April, as card use fell below year-before levels for the first time since February 2021. They say spending on hotels, which rebounded relatively early from the pandemic, dipped this spring, while the late-recovering cruise industry is still steaming ahead — card spending on cruises rose 37% last month, although from very low levels a year ago.

"Travel remains a bright spot relative to other sectors, but we're also seeing signs of moderation in the travel space," said Anna Zhou, an economist for the bank.

## **Housing crisis remains in Kentucky's poor Appalachia region after flood waters recede**

By DYLAN LOVAN Associated Press

JACKSON, Ky. (AP) — Shirley Howard's feet splashed into nearly a foot of water when she stepped out of bed on a summer morning last July amid a torrential rainfall.

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A devastating flood swallowing up Kentucky's Appalachian region had reached her bedroom in the night. The family grabbed their dogs and fled their brick bungalow in Jackson as the water eventually rose to the ceiling.

Ten months later, they still haven't returned home. Howard, her husband, son and their three dogs, Maisey, Charlie and Lilly, have been living in a cramped trailer provided by the state. At least 100 other families are living in trailers and hundreds more remain displaced, living with relatives or in damaged homes while they rebuild.

"I am so dying to go home every day," the 65-year-old Howard said.

Howard's house and nearly 9,000 others in 13 counties were severely damaged or destroyed by the intense four-day storm that dumped up to 16 inches of rain in eastern Kentucky. The fast-rising waters shoved homes off foundations, blocked roadways and submerged mountain towns under several feet of muddy water. Thousands like Howard had to grab what they could and flee. More than 40 people died.

It was one of the worst floods in Kentucky's history, ravaging one of the poorest places in the country. Homeowners in the mountainous region settled by coal miners a century ago live in flood-prone valleys that offer the only flat land for building homes, an area already suffering a housing crisis before the flood hit.

Disaster recovery in poor areas like this stretch of eastern Kentucky presents a host of challenges for victims who already faced setbacks before flood waters rushed inside their homes. A single inch of water inside a house can cause more than \$26,000 in damage, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"There's food insecurity, there's lack of affordable housing, there's lack of access to resources ... and those things are just exacerbated after a disaster," said Sally Ray, director of domestic funds for the Center for Disaster Philanthropy, which helps guide private donations after disasters.

The challenges in Kentucky are replicated in disasters that strike poor areas nationwide. Low-income families can't qualify for disaster loans, and conflicting rules and separate thresholds for an array of federal aid can slow and complicate recovery, according to national experts.

"They're still recovering from Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana," Ray said of that 2005 disaster, which flooded most of New Orleans.

For a region with longstanding poverty and housing issues, Kentucky's massive flood plunged thousands of homeowners — nearly all without flood insurance — into a deeper crisis. One study estimates it could cost nearly \$1 billion to recover the region's housing losses.

"We had a housing crisis before the flood hit," said Scott McReynolds, executive director of the Housing Development Alliance, a nonprofit that provides housing and repairs for needy residents in southeastern Kentucky. The group was working with 400 families even before the flood.

The Howards are using FEMA dollars to restore the interior of their home, since they didn't have flood insurance, which can cost hundreds of dollars a month.

"It was just too much for us," Shirley Howard said.

Only about 5% of affected homeowners carried flood insurance, according to a report by the Ohio River Valley Institute and Appalachian Citizens Law Center. Traditional homeowner's insurance does not cover damage caused by flooding.

The report said 60% of the households damaged had annual incomes of \$30,000 or less. A full housing recovery in the flood-affected region would cost an estimated \$957 million, which would include moving some endangered homeowners out of flood-prone areas to avoid future costs, it said.

FEMA has doled out about \$106 million to victims of the Kentucky flood for repairs, cleanup, storage, moving costs and other short-term needs. The maximum FEMA payout is \$39,700, but the average grant was closer to \$20,000, McReynolds said.

A significant federal grant of \$298 million from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development was announced in March to fund long-term infrastructure and housing needs in the flood zone. Another \$20 million was allocated earlier this year by Kentucky lawmakers, funding to be split between flood victims and people who lost their homes in a 2021 tornado in western Kentucky.

But the large allocation of federal money could be slow to arrive, and it is unclear how much of it will

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go to housing, said Rebecca Shelton with the Appalachian Citizens Law Center, who co-authored the Kentucky flooding study.

"The big concern is really the timeline," Shelton said. "It will be many months before these (federal) funds are implemented and I don't know how much longer folks who are still inadequately housed can hang on."

In Jackson and surrounding communities in hard-hit Breathitt County, bare house foundations, eroded river and creek shorelines, and scattered debris are glaring signs of the destruction.

Jeff Noble, Breathitt County's top elected official, is still shocked when he speaks about the damage in his county, which was also hit by flooding in March 2021. One of his constituents has yet to find his wife's body after she disappeared in the July flood.

"It's just unbelievable, really," Noble said.

The Howards have been beset by delays in restoring their home. The interior has been gutted down to the wall studs; it needs flooring, electrical wiring and new drywall. They, like many in the disaster zone, have had trouble finding laborers to do the work, with at least one handyman skipping out on them. Howard is unsure their FEMA aid will be enough, with no flood insurance money coming in.

Many victims who lost their homes are rebuilding again in flood-prone areas, because that's all they can afford, McReynolds said. "We know there are a bunch of folks buying garden sheds and trying to convert them into tiny homes."

His Housing Development Alliance is among a coalition of six nonprofits that have received nearly 500 applications from flood victims wanting to build new homes, McReynolds said.

Nonprofit housing groups, along with Kentucky's governor, have their eye on a longer-term solution: moving vulnerable families out of flood-prone areas to higher ground. McReynolds said the incoming government funds could help transform the region.

Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear has launched a rebuilding effort on former mining lands, to create new housing developments outside the flood zone. So far, 125 acres in two counties have been donated, and state and federal funds, along with money from flood relief donations, will help fund the effort. Officials broke ground on the first home in February.

With help from McReynolds' nonprofit, houses are also being built on a new street near Jackson.

Peach Tree Street's first resident, Deborah Hansford, moved into a two-bedroom house on higher ground in late March. She was forced out of her Jackson home by the 2021 flood, and last year's flood walloped it again, removing any hope of returning.

Last year's disaster struck her family particularly hard. Her brother suffered a stroke as the flood waters surged and he died a month later, she said.

Hansford used her FEMA assistance to make a down payment on her new house with green siding and a wide front porch.

"I feel more secure now," she said, enjoying her porch on a mild spring day. "Hopefully a flood like that will never happen again."

## **Sherpa guide who climbed Mount Everest a record 28 times says he's not ready to retire**

By BINAJ GURUBACHARYA Associated Press

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — One of the greatest mountain guides said Thursday he's not ready to retire after climbing Mount Everest for a record 28th time.

Nepalese Sherpa Kami Rita reached the 8,849-meter (29,032-foot) summit of the world's highest mountain on Tuesday, beating his own record less than a week after setting it.

"I will continue to climb as long as my body allows," the 53-year-old guide told reporters after arriving from the mountain at Kathmandu's airport, where he was given a hero's welcome by supporters and family members.

He said his goal is not to compete for any records but to help his foreign clients scale the mountain.

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This year's climbing season is almost over, and his next climb will have to wait until next spring. Kami Rita reached the summit a day after fellow Sherpa guide Pasang Dawa matched his previous record of 27 climbs.

A race for the title began with Pasang Dawa climbing the peak for a 26th time on May 14, equaling Kami Rita's earlier record. Kami Rita reached the peak three days later for the 27th time.

Kami Rita first climbed Everest in 1994 and has done so nearly every year since then. He is one of many Sherpa guides whose expertise and skills are vital to the safety and success of foreign climbers who seek to reach the top of the mountain. His father was among the first Sherpa guides.

Kami Rita has scaled several of the world's highest peaks in addition to Everest, including K2, Cho Oyu, Manaslu and Lhotse.

Thousands of people have climbed Mount Everest since it was first conquered by New Zealander Edmund Hillary and Sherpa guide Tenzing Norgay in 1953. This year is the 70th anniversary of the first climb.

## Today in History: May 26, ABM treaty signed

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, May 26, the 146th day of 2023. There are 219 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 26, 1972, President Richard M. Nixon and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev signed the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in Moscow. (The U.S. withdrew from the treaty in 2002.)

On this date:

In 1864, President Abraham Lincoln signed a measure creating the Montana Territory.

In 1865, Confederate forces west of the Mississippi surrendered in New Orleans.

In 1938, the House Un-American Activities Committee was established by Congress.

In 1940, Operation Dynamo, the evacuation of some 338,000 Allied troops from Dunkirk, France, began during World War II.

In 1954, explosions rocked the aircraft carrier USS Bennington off Rhode Island, killing 103 sailors. (The initial blast was blamed on leaking catapult fluid ignited by the flames of a jet.)

In 1971, Don McLean recorded his song "American Pie" at The Record Plant in New York City (it was released the following November by United Artists Records).

In 1981, 14 people were killed when a Marine jet crashed onto the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz off Florida.

In 1994, Michael Jackson and Lisa Marie Presley were married in the Dominican Republic. (The marriage ended in 1996.)

In 2004, nearly a decade after the Oklahoma City bombing, Terry Nichols was found guilty of 161 state murder charges for helping carry out the attack. (Nichols later received 161 consecutive life sentences.)

In 2009, President Barack Obama nominated federal appeals judge Sonia Sotomayor to the U.S. Supreme Court. California's Supreme Court upheld the Proposition 8 gay marriage ban but said the 18,000 same-sex weddings that had taken place before the prohibition passed were still valid.

In 2011, Ratko Mladic (RAHT'-koh MLAH'-dich), the brutal Bosnian Serb general suspected of leading the massacre of 8,000 Muslim men and boys, was arrested after a 16-year manhunt. (Mladic was extradited to face trial in The Hague, Netherlands; he was convicted in 2017 on genocide and war crimes charges and is serving a life sentence.)

In 2020, Minneapolis police issued a statement saying George Floyd had died after a "medical incident," and that he had physically resisted officers and appeared to be in medical distress; minutes after the statement was released, bystander video was posted online. Protests over Floyd's death began, with tense skirmishes developing between protesters and Minneapolis police. Four police officers who were involved in Floyd's arrest were fired.

Ten years ago: A U.S. drone strike killed Waliur Rehman (wah-lee-UR' REH'-man), the No. 2 commander

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of the Pakistani Taliban. Minnesota Congresswoman Michele Bachmann, a conservative firebrand and a favorite of tea party Republicans, said she would not run for another term in the U.S. House. The Rev. Andrew Greeley, 85, an outspoken Roman Catholic priest, best-selling author and longtime newspaper columnist, died in Chicago.

Five years ago: Joshua Holt, who traveled to Venezuela from Utah in 2016 to marry a Spanish-speaking Mormon woman, but was jailed and labeled as the CIA's top spy in Latin America, was set free by Venezuela's anti-American government and returned to the United States with his wife. The leaders of North and South Korea met for the second time in a month in a surprise summit at a border village to discuss Kim Jong Un's potential meeting with President Donald Trump.

One year ago: It was revealed that the gunman who massacred 19 children and two teachers at a Texas elementary school was inside for more than an hour before he was killed in a shootout with police. The amount of time that elapsed stirred anger and questions among family members, who demanded to know why authorities did not storm the place and put a stop to the rampage more quickly. Moscow pressed the West to lift sanctions against Russia over the war in Ukraine, seeking to shift the blame for a growing food crisis. Ray Liotta, the actor best known for playing mobster Henry Hill in "Goodfellas" and baseball player Shoeless Joe Jackson in "Field of Dreams," died at age 67.

Today's Birthdays: Sportscaster Brent Musburger is 84. Rock musician Garry Peterson (Guess Who) is 78. Singer Stevie Nicks is 75. Actor Pam Grier is 74. Actor Philip Michael Thomas is 74. Country singer Hank Williams Jr. is 74. Former British Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn is 74. Actor Margaret Colin is 65. Actor Doug Hutchison is 63. Actor Genie Francis is 61. Comedian Bobcat Goldthwait is 61. Singer-actor Lenny Kravitz is 59. Actor Helena Bonham Carter is 57. Distance runner Zola Budd is 57. Rock musician Phillip Rhodes is 55. Actor Joseph Fiennes (FYNZ) is 53. Singer Joey Kibble (Take 6) is 52. Actor-producer-writer Matt Stone is 52. Singer Lauryn Hill is 48. Contemporary Christian musician Nathan Cochran is 45. Actor Elisabeth Harnois is 44. Actor Hrach Titizian is 44.