

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Groton Community Calendar

### Thursday, June 1

- Senior Menu: Baked cod, macaroni and cheese, spinach salad, fruit cocktail, whole wheat bread.
- Emmanuel Lutheran Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.
- CANCELLED: Legion hosts Webster, 6 p.m. (2)
- Jr. Teener at Selby, 6 p.m. (2)
- U12BB vs. Borge 11 at Aberdeen North Complex, 5:30 p.m. (2)
- U8BB R/B hosts Britton, 5:30 p.m. (2)

### Friday, June 2

- Senior Menu: Bratwurst on bun, sauerkraut, 3 bean salad, chocolate pudding with bananas.
- Legion hosts Lake Norden, 5 p.m. (1)
- Jr. Legion hosts Lake Norden/Badger, 7 p.m. (1)

### Saturday, June 3

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

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



"May no gift be too small to give, nor too simple to receive, which is wrapped in thoughtfulness and tied with *love*."

—L.O. Baird

Legion at Milbank Tourney  
Jr. Teener at Mobridge, 3 p.m. (2)

### Sunday, June 4

- United Methodist: Worship with communion: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.
- Emmanuel Lutheran worship with communion, 9 a.m.
- 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.
- St. John's worship with communion, 9 a.m.; Zion worship with communion, 11 a.m.
- Amateurs at Redfield, 7 p.m.
- Legion at Milbank Tourney

## **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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## JAMES VALLEY TELECOMMUNICATIONS 66<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING

Thursday, June 1st  
Groton Area High School Arena  
11:30am Registration & Lunch  
12:30pm Meeting

- Membership Gift
- Lunch catered by Ken's SuperFair Foods
- Door Prizes, including a \$500 JVT credit
- Call 605-397-2323 to reserve a free bus ride to the meeting
- JVT's Office will be closed 11am-2pm



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## The Bulletin

by Newsweek

JANUARY 24, 2023

### World in Brief

three newspapers that accused him of war crimes in Afghanistan. A judge found that the accusations were in fact true, though no charges were filed against him.

Jordan will celebrate the wedding of Crown Prince Hussein and Rajwa Al Saif with multiple lavish public events, as royal wedding fever sweeps the normally quiet Middle Eastern nation.

That '70s Show actor Danny Masterson has been found guilty of two counts of rape. The next hearing is set for August 4. The actor faces up to 30 years in prison.

The Biden Administration is preparing to expand the processing of asylum-seekers along the U.S.-Mexico border crossings to nearly 40,000 every month, up from over 20,000 each month.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, fresh Russian overnight strikes on Kyiv killed three people, including two children, and injured several others.

Former Vice President Mike Pence is expected to officially join the race for the 2024 GOP presidential nomination while in Iowa next week, according to multiple media reports.

Tens of thousands of people will head to Florida this weekend to attend Gay Day festivities despite travel warnings that the Sunshine State may not be safe for the LGBTQ+ community.

Australia's most-decorated living soldier Ben Roberts-Smith lost a highly publicized defamation case against

### WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAY AHEAD

Today marks the beginning of Pride Month 2023.

The 2023 Atlantic hurricane season starts and lasts through November. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is forecasting a range of 12 to 17 total named storms (winds of 39 mph or higher). Of those, 5 to 9 could become hurricanes.

President Joe Biden is scheduled to deliver the commencement address at the U.S. Air Force Academy in El Paso County, Colorado.

Donald Trump will participate in a Fox News town hall event hosted by Sean Hannity in Iowa.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis will visit Rochester, New Hampshire, for a fireside chat event as part of his 2024 presidential campaign swing through the state.

## Memorial Day brings up memories, call to thank service members

by Elizabeth Varin

Donald Pasch remembers the day he found out his brother Bill had been killed in action.

"The day they told us was May 12, Mother's Day of '68," he said. "We went into church, came home from church. Mom made dinner. Me and my brother Elroy were out throwing a rubber ball against the barn because baseball was coming up.

"And a green car with white lettering – I can still remember it, still see it – drove in the yard. They told us to come in the house," he said. "And that's when I found out I was a gold star family member."

Donald painted a picture for the crowd gathered Monday at Groton Union Cemetery, exposing the hurt his family felt and the continued impact felt after losing a family member in war.

"For a while I thought he was a POW because you couldn't kill my brother... my big brother," he said, getting choked up.

Pasch, a 1978 graduate of Groton High School, served as guest speaker during the annual Memorial Day Service.

Through his speech, Pasch recalled painful moments that shaped his family after his brother William E. Pasch was killed in action in Vietnam. Bill and his dad Walter got a hunting cabin near Sand Lake, but after Bill died, Walter would go out there to get drunk.

Donald's mother, Lois, had a mental break at one point and was admitted to the St. Luke's mental ward, Donald said. But these were things people didn't talk about back then. It was hard to see the hurt the family was going through.

More than 53,000 U.S. service men were killed in combat during World War I, Pasch said. More than 405,000 U.S. service men died in World War II. More than 36,000 died in the Korean War. More than 58,000 died in the Vietnam War.

"They all had mothers and dads," Pasch said. "Most of all of them had brothers. They're all Gold Star. They all went through what I'm going through. Can you comprehend how many people that is?"

"...We had five in our family. Well... six. But with Bill killed we had five Gold Star family members," he said.

Pasch's message wrapped up with a call for people to thank and respect those who have served in the military.

"Take pride in this place," he said. "Take pride in your country. These people all died for you to all go vote and keep this freedom. So that we can come and do what we're doing right now."

That message resonated with some in the crowd, including Dennis K. Larson. He and his wife have been going to the Memorial Day ceremony for quite a few years. It's a way to honor all the veterans.



**Donald Pasch was the main speaker at the program. He is a 1978 graduate of Groton High School. He is a Gold Star Family member. His brother, William, was KIA in Vietnam on May 11, 1968. He resides in Watertown.** (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

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Larson said he is grateful for those who have served "to protect our democracy. We wouldn't have it if it wasn't for all the sacrifices all the veterans have done over the years."

Bill Duncan also sees the Memorial Day event as a way to remember those who have served. Duncan, retired pastor from Groton Christian and Missionary Alliance, said he's lived here for more than 40 years, and the list of those who have died in service brings up a lot of familiar names.

"They gave to their country as a part of their military service," he said. "I appreciate that."



**Robert Wegner (at the podium) and Doug Hamilton read the list of names of those buried at the Groton Cemetery.**

(Photo by Elizabeth Varin)

**The Groton American Legion Post 39 Honor Guard await start of Memorial Day Service. (L-R) Bob Voss, Bob Wegner, Bruce Babcock, Doug Hamilton, Les Heins, Roger Overacker, Bud Bell, Dave McGannon, Dale Kerth, and Steve Dresbach. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)**



**The Memorial Day service was conducted at noon at the Groton Union Cemetery. Bruce Babcock, Groton American Legion Post Commander, lead the program. Donald Pasch, originally from Groton, was the guest speaker. The Groton American Legion Honor Guard conducted the military honors honoring fallen and past veterans. A luncheon was held by the Groton American Legion Auxiliary at the Groton Legion Hall.. (Photo by Elizabeth Varin)**



## Gov. Noem and Colleagues Oppose Changes to the Loan Level Pricing Adjustment

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem and 17 of her fellow Republican governors sent a letter to President Biden and Federal Housing Finance Agency Director Sandra Thompson opposing the mandated changes to the loan level pricing adjustment (LLPA). You can read the letter here.

“In short, the new LLPA framework will inevitably increase mortgage costs for lower-risk individuals and handicap those borrowers with larger down payments,” wrote Governor Noem and her colleagues. “Further, the changes provide no incentive to borrowers to maintain good credit and will confuse borrowers at all credit levels. Disincentivizing good credit behavior and penalizing responsible Americans during an inflation crisis – which required the Federal Reserve to increase interest rates 10 consecutive times in a year – is wrong and irresponsible.”

The new LLPA framework threatens the American housing system and upends the current financial model that relies on individual responsibility. This will only increase the uncertainty in the housing market and in the United States economy.

“As governors, we promote hard work, accountability, fairness, and opportunity for all our citizens.” continued Governor Noem and her colleagues. “The LLPA mandates blatantly contradict these goals. Therefore, we request you rescind the updated LLPA immediately. If you are unwilling to do so, Congress must take action.”

Governor Noem was joined by the following Republican governors in issuing the statement:

Georgia Governor Brian Kemp and Missouri Governor Mike Parson, Alabama Governor Kay Ivey, Arkansas Governor Sarah Sanders, Idaho Governor Brad Little, Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb, Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds, Mississippi Governor Tate Reeves, Montana Governor Greg Gianforte, Nebraska Governor Jim Pillen, Nevada Governor Joe Lombardo, New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine, Tennessee Governor Bill Lee, Texas Governor Greg Abbott, Utah Governor Spencer Cox, and Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon.

## Summer “Passport to Careers” to Help Young Adults Prepare for Future

PIERRE, S.D. – The Department of Labor and Regulation’s Summer Passport Series is back. Job Service offices have planned fun events for teens and young adults ages 14-24 to explore careers in their communities, engage with businesses and educators, and prepare for the world of work.

In-person sessions start as early as June 2 and run through the summer. Participants may be eligible to earn \$25 for every in-person event attended.

Youth can choose from a variety of sessions including financial literacy, life skills, job search readiness, dressing for success, applications and interviews, workplace etiquette, and much more.

Business and college/university tours are also offered at many locations.

View or download flyers for each Job Service office with a list of sessions offered by location at [dlr.sd.gov/summer-passport](http://dlr.sd.gov/summer-passport). Registration for in-person events is required. Click on the “Register” link for the corresponding location.

Individuals may attend events at more than one location. Some events may include lunch and/or transportation options which are noted on the flyer.

Virtual sessions will be offered five Tuesdays throughout the summer at 10:30 a.m. CDT starting June 6. Topics include social media, hot careers, personalities in the workplace, communication, and apprenticeship opportunities.

Registration is not required for virtual sessions. The link to each session will be made available on the summer-passport page before the day of the event.

Contact a Job Service office with questions or for additional information.



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **Carbon pipeline company loses attempt to hold farmer in contempt**

**Two sides make opposing claims about interaction with land surveyors**

**BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - MAY 31, 2023 6:13 PM**

ABERDEEN — A company proposing a carbon-capture pipeline lost its attempt to hold a farmer in contempt of court for allegedly threatening to shoot land surveyors.

Judge Richard Sommers presided over the hearing Wednesday at the Brown County Courthouse. He declined to hold the farmer, Jared Bossly, in contempt but ordered lawyers for both sides to determine an acceptable time for the surveyors to do their work.

State law allows pipeline companies that have requested a permit from the Public Utilities Commission to conduct surveys without a landowner's permission, after providing 30 days' notice to the landowner. Sommers recently upheld that right after a group of landowners sued to challenge it, and that decision is being appealed to the state Supreme Court; meanwhile, Summit claimed Bossly should be held in contempt for making threats that prevented surveyors from doing their job.

**Tie vote delays decision on carbon pipeline policy in Minnehaha County**

In an interview after Wednesday's proceeding on the contempt claim, Bossly denied the allegations against him and said his name has been tarnished. But the court did not give Bossly and his lawyer an opportunity to present their version of events.

Judge Sommers did not hear evidence regarding whether or not the allegation was true. He said the only point of Wednesday's hearing was to decide if Bossly was in contempt of court.

About 50 opponents of the pipeline project attended the hearing in support of Bossly. Some alleged in interviews with South Dakota Searchlight that the company fabricated the confrontation to make an example of Bossly, and to intimidate landowners. Craig Schaunaman, who farms near Bossly, said he saw Bossly around the time the alleged threatening phone call took place, but didn't see any strange behavior.

"The accusations just don't hold up," Schaunaman said. "I saw him across the road that day."

Bossly's attorney, Brian Jorde, said the judge's decision was the right one, but Jorde wanted a chance to lay out evidence in support of his client.

"We want to clear his name," Jorde said during the court proceeding. "The allegations are still out there, and we want to correct the record."

Summit Carbon Solutions' lawyer, Justin Bell, said the company's only goal was to move forward with the surveying work while ensuring everyone's safety.

"If he's willing to do what the court says," Bell said of Bossly during the court hearing, "we wouldn't necessarily oppose that."

**Dueling accounts**

According to Bossly, the surveyors unexpectedly entered his house recently and began calling out for him while he was away in a field, alarming his wife who was at home showering. Bossly said the surveyors then proceeded to enter his workshop, which he said is on a section of land Summit Carbon Solutions is not permitted to enter without permission.

Bossly said his wife then called him, explained the situation, and held the phone up to the surveying contractors.

"The phone call that they allege all this stuff went on was a six-second phone call," Bossly told South Dakota Searchlight. "And all I said was, 'If it's the Summit surveyors, then the sheriff should be involved.'"

Summit Carbon Solutions alleged Bossly told the surveyors he'd shoot the first person he saw.

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Last month, Summit Carbon Solutions initiated dozens of eminent domain proceedings in state court – including against Bossly. Eminent domain is a legal process for gaining access to build a project on private land when the landowner won't grant permission.

## Summit Carbon Solutions project

The estimated \$4.5 billion Summit Carbon Solutions pipeline would collect carbon dioxide emitted from more than 30 ethanol plants in Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota and North Dakota, and transport it in liquefied form to be stored underground in North Dakota.

The pipeline would cover 1,958 miles, with 474 miles crossing 18 counties in South Dakota. The company says it would transport up to 12 million tons of carbon per year.

Carbon sequestration would enable ethanol plants to sell more of their fuel in states and countries with stricter emission standards, and also could make projects eligible for billions of dollars in federal tax credits and position them to sell carbon offsets to other companies that emit carbon dioxide.

The pipeline needs a permit from South Dakota's Public Utilities Commission. A public hearing on the application is scheduled for Sept. 11-22.

A separate company, Navigator CO2 Ventures, is proposing another carbon pipeline that would also cross South Dakota. The PUC hearing on the Heartland Greenway pipeline project is scheduled for July 25-Aug. 3.

*Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.*

## Slower growth, sluggish borrowing expected to impact South Dakota economy

Financial advisers point to housing, child care, labor shortage, interest rates as state-level pressure points

BY: JOHN HULT - MAY 31, 2023 4:22 PM

Higher interest rates, inflation, a cooling housing sector and a dip in consumer spending are expected to slow economic growth in South Dakota, according to the state Bureau of Finance and Management.

The agency's projections for two years of lower growth in the state came during Wednesday's meeting of the Governor's Council of Economic Advisers.

The state's general fund revenue is also \$1.2 million lower than the South Dakota Legislature's adopted budget had anticipated, though that represents less than a percentage point of the state's nearly \$2 billion in annual revenue.

A drop in lottery revenues, as well as dips in sales and use, tobacco and severance taxes are to blame for the shortfall, according to State Economist Derek Johnson, though he said the most recent figures fit within the typical ebb and flow of tax dollars.

The overall growth projections speak to a slowdown several lawmakers cited as a concern during debates over the reduction in the state's sales and use tax from 4.5% to 4.2%. That tax cut ultimately passed both the House of Representatives and Senate on its way to the desk of Gov. Kristi Noem, who signed it into law in March. The reduction will take effect on July 1.

Voters may be asked to cut the sales tax on food during the 2024 general election, if petition circulators gather enough signatures to put it on the ballot. Gov. Kristi Noem's proposal to exempt food from sales taxes failed during the legislative session last winter, and a dry-up of federal dollars was also a talking point during that debate.

Johnson's presentation didn't reference the sales tax cut directly, but it did factor in the federal money issue. The state's coffers swelled from an influx of one-time stimulus dollars during the pandemic years, but that spending has ceased. Higher Medicaid reimbursement rates are phasing out, as well.

During the pandemic, Johnson said, federal payments to individuals leapt to as high as 30% of U.S. gross domestic product, which is the sum of goods and services produced within the nation. Prior to that,



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those payments held steady for years at 10-12%.

"It's come back down closer to that range, although it's a little bit elevated from where it was from 2012 to 2020," Johnson said.

## Worker issues top of mind in SD

The members of the Council of Economic Advisers, however, were most concerned about staffing, housing and interest rates. Council members include bankers, a hotel developer, investment advisers, state finance staffers and a farm economist from South Dakota State University. Their charge is to review the bureau's projections and the national and local metrics that color them, and to offer insight on local conditions and emerging concerns.

Following Johnson's rundown of state and national economic trends on Wednesday, each of the advisers had a turn to offer those provincial points of view.

Several advisers noted that slowing growth for housing development and worries about an increasingly sluggish pace of borrowing – an outgrowth of higher interest rates – are concerning trends for South Dakota. The housing problems factor into a lack of workers, according to Caleb Arceneaux, the CEO of Liv Hospitality, a Rapid City-based hospitality management group.

Were it not for federal foreign worker visas, Arceneaux said, the Black Hills wouldn't be prepared for summer tourism. The J-1 and H-2B visa programs have drawn 130 workers to temporary West River jobs in his facilities, he said.

"Without that program, we would be really hurting," Arceneaux said. "We would ask you all to clean your own rooms."

Adviser Doug Sharp of Watertown, who runs a car dealership and employs about 70 people, mentioned housing as an issue for the labor market, but also talked about child care and nursing home closures as factors undercutting employers' ability to recruit and retain talent.

Sharp could use a half dozen or more mechanics and auto body specialists, but he's yet to find the right candidates.

"There's a lot of people out there who I think would go to work if they had reliable child care," Sharp said. "That's as big a part of keeping our small towns going as anything I can think of."

Caring for older relatives because of a nursing home shortage also contributes, he said.

Jim Terwilliger, commissioner of the Bureau of Finance and Management, pointed out that lawmakers took steps to firm up the finances of nursing homes this session.

"Nursing homes got a pretty good injection of funding in the '24 budget cycle," Terwilliger said.

Even so, he added, the funding increase doesn't fully solve the problem.

Carla Gatzke, a human resources executive for Daktronics, trumpeted the success of Brookings in terms of housing development and general growth trends. Increasing wages and the proliferation of remote work options have complicated hiring, though, particularly with manufacturing jobs and others that require an employee to be physically present at the job site.

Gatzke would like to see the state collect more data on the shifting balance between remote and on-site employment trends for South Dakota in the coming years.

It's more common for South Dakota companies, including Daktronics, to employ people who don't live within the state's borders for jobs that don't require their physical presence.

"The internet enables companies to source from anywhere and enables many people to choose to live anywhere, and we do see an outmigration of folks from South Dakota elsewhere," Gatzke said.

## Interest rates, debt ceiling debates

Interest rate hikes, pushed by the Federal Reserve as an antidote to inflation, loomed large over the roundtable portion of Wednesday's meeting, as did the March collapse of two mid-sized banks, Silicon Valley Bank of California and Signature Bank of New York.

Those failures came after the council's February meeting, and the discussions on potential banking regulations that followed at the federal level put South Dakota Bankers Association President Karl Adam on the defensive.

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"I spent an inordinate amount of time talking to the media and putting out comments to our member banks," said Adam. "Our financial system in South Dakota and across the country is resilient and strong. These were outlier situations."

A hike in capital requirements for small banks would be unfair to smaller community banks, Adam said. On the interest rate side, financier John Hemmingstad of Avalon Capital Group said worries about another quarter-point hike in rates would further slow lending for a host of large-scale projects.

The Federal Reserve had signaled a willingness to hold off on further hikes, but the most recent inflation figures suggest that another round of interest-rate increases to cool off a hot economy isn't out of the question.

"Don't underestimate how high those rates can go," Hemmingstad said.

Near the end of the discussion, SDSU Economist Evert Van der Sluis offered an update on agricultural conditions – farm incomes are expected to drop, but not precipitously – before pivoting to concerns about the debt limit.

The U.S. House was set to take a vote on a debt limit compromise on Wednesday, but had yet to take up the issue as the advisers spoke.

Van der Sluis talked about the significant global impact a debt default could have, at least according to the national economists "in the know" on the issue.

The potential for a loss of Social Security income, for example, could constrain economic growth. A drop in consumer confidence and a hit to the value of the stock market could also follow a default if Congress fails to approve the debt ceiling deal hammered out between House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and President Joe Biden.

A hit to the nation's credit rating is also a concern, Van der Sluis said.

"That isn't something we should take for granted. We in the U.S. are one of the few countries with a high credit rating," Van der Sluis said.

Projections on the impact of a default are "educated guesses," Terwilliger said, since the nation has never defaulted. South Dakota's balanced budgeting is preferable to the ballooning debt rates common at the federal level, the commissioner said, which should help inoculate the state from the worst effects of such a crisis.

"Hopefully we can avoid any major negative economic fallouts from that, but time will tell," Terwilliger said. "It's out of our hands at this point."

The debt default dust-up in Washington, D.C., has echoes of far too many previous near-crises in recent years, said Curt Everson, a former director of the Bankers Association who remains on the council. The longest government shutdown in history took place in late 2018 and extended 35 days into 2019. The threat of further shutdowns has flared up several times since then.

"A significant part of the population of this country has just kind of gotten to the point where we don't expect Congress and the administration, regardless whether it's Republican or Democrat, to be able to easily come together and find solutions and do the right thing," Everson said. "We've come to expect that we're just going to have one impasse after another because both sides believe it's politically expedient, from their perspective, not to come to agreements. That, in my view, is not a good situation."

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

## Housing cash one step closer for South Dakota builders

**Sioux Falls lawmaker says he'll bring a fix to open funding program up to tribes**

**BY: JOHN HULT - MAY 31, 2023 4:21 PM**

The rules for a \$200 million infrastructure funding program are headed to lawmakers for a final sign-off. The board of the South Dakota Housing Development Authority voted unanimously to approve its rules for the program on Wednesday after about an hour of public comments from local economic development offices, attorneys, home builders and others.

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Commenters largely supported the rules, with a handful asking questions to clarify which kinds of projects are eligible and what the timeline might be for accessing funding.

The hope is for the Legislature's Rules Review Committee to take up and vote yes on the rules on June 13, according to Chas Olson, interim director of the housing authority. The authority could begin taking applications 20 days later, he said.

The hearing puts the money one step closer to available for the home builders who lawmakers had hoped to boost a year ago. The housing money first passed the Legislature in 2022, but legal wrangling held it up until a rewritten bill cleared up those concerns early in the 2023 legislative session. Hiccups in the rulemaking process have further delayed the funding.

The authority released its draft rules in early May.

By Wednesday afternoon, the authority had already revised them based on written comments and a review from the Legislative Research Council. Among the changes: for-profit entities are once again entitled to apply for funding, but tribal entities are not. The latter adjustment is tied to the language of the bill authorizing the program, which requires that a "political subdivision" of the state take over the maintenance of streets, sidewalks, water and sewer or street lights built with the aid of program dollars.

Tribal governments are not political subdivisions of the state.

Olson told the virtual and in-person audience Wednesday that South Dakota's nine tribes could still access the funding to boost housing projects if they partner with a city or county to apply for the funds.

"Aside from that, we feel it would likely take a legislative fix," Olson said.

Rep. Tyler Tordsen, R-Sioux Falls, intends to bring such a fix to the Capitol next year. Tordsen is an enrolled member of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate.

Lawmakers did not intend to write tribes out of the program, he said, pointing to the infrastructure program's support from tribal entities earlier this year.

"Everybody thought it was good to go," Tordsen said. "It was just kind of an unintended consequence on some of the language."

Tribal communities often have greater housing needs than the rest of South Dakota. They also represent the kinds of rural communities where housing projects struggle to get off the ground for lack of funding.

The lawmaker hopes to address the verbiage in the infrastructure program early in the 2024 session, but he also said the situation should spark a conversation on how to update state statutes on political subdivisions and economic development in general.

"It could also be a good precedent going forward to find a way to make sure we get the language right in state law, so that we can do future grant and loan projects with tribes as partners," Tordsen said. "We can turn it into a positive."

Some of the infrastructure funding will likely be gone by the time any bill on tribal access passes. The money is split in two, with \$50 million in grants coming from federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars and another \$150 million in state funding coming in the form of loans.

Because ARPA dollars must be spent by next year, Olson said Wednesday, builders who launched their projects as long ago as March 2021 could apply for the federal money. The \$150 million in revolving loan funds will be available to anyone who broke ground after February of this year, and will continue to be available in the coming years.

The Rules Review Committee meeting on the infrastructure rules is set to begin at 10 a.m. Central on June 13. Audio of the meeting will be streaming on SD.net.

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

## U.S. House approves debt limit package, sending it to Senate days before default deadline

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - MAY 31, 2023 9:03 PM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. House took a broadly bipartisan vote Wednesday night on the debt limit package, sending it to the U.S. Senate where lawmakers are expected to vote quickly to clear the measure.

The bill would suspend the nation's borrowing limit through Jan. 1, 2025 and set caps on discretionary spending for two years. It would also make changes to work requirements on some federal safety net programs and overhaul aspects of the energy permitting process. The House approved the bill following a 314-117 vote, with Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, voting yes.

While members of both political parties broadly backed the legislation, they each criticized the compromises negotiators made to broker an agreement.

North Carolina Rep. Patrick McHenry, one of the Republican negotiators who brokered the deal, said the bill was the product of a "long, laborious and tough" process.

The measure, he said, is the "most conservative spending package" he's voted on during his time in Congress, though he noted it's a product of divided government where the GOP controls the House while Democrats control the Senate and White House.

"This rates as one of the largest deficit reduction bills in American history and it will fundamentally change the spending trajectory here in Washington — with more work to do and more work ahead," McHenry said.

Washington Democratic Rep. Suzan DelBene said that while the "deal is far from perfect" lawmakers "can't let perfect be the enemy of the good when the stakes are this high."

The agreement, she said, would shield veterans, senior citizens, law enforcement and schools from the more severe budget cuts that Republicans proposed in their original debt limit bill.

"This deal will protect American families and our economy from a devastating default on our nations' bills in just five days," DelBene said.

"Compromise means that no one gets everything they want, so we have a choice between a catastrophic outcome or a chance to move forward with a bipartisan compromise," she added later.

New Jersey Democratic Rep. Bill Pascrell criticized Republicans for ruling out all changes to the tax code during negotiations and for rescinding some money to boost the Internal Revenue Service's budget.

"We want to make sure everybody pays their fair share — what in God's name is wrong with that," Pascrell said.

If Congress doesn't update the tax code, Pascrell said, lawmakers haven't done their jobs.

The package would set federal spending at \$886 billion for defense and \$704 billion for nondefense during the fiscal year slated to begin Oct. 1. The following year, fiscal 2025, it would cap defense spending at \$895 billion for defense and \$711 billion for nondefense.

The 100-page bill holds numerous additional provisions, including changes to how the federal government permits energy projects as well as language to claw back \$28 billion in COVID-19 funds and about \$2 billion in funding for the Internal Revenue Service.

The measure would make changes to work requirements for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office's assessment of the legislation says the package's provisions on discretionary spending would reduce outlays by \$1.332 trillion during the next decade.

Clawing back some of the \$80 billion in funding that Democrats included for the Internal Revenue Service in their signature climate change, healthcare and tax package known as the Inflation Reduction Act, or IRA, would actually increase the deficit during the next decade, according to CBO.

CBO Director Phillip Swagel wrote the cut to IRS funding would decrease spending "by \$1.4 billion and decrease revenues by \$2.3 billion over the 2023–2033 period, resulting in a net increase in the deficit of \$900 million over that period."

"CBO anticipates that rescinding those funds would result in fewer enforcement actions over the next decade and in a reduction in revenue collections," Swagel wrote.

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Changing some work requirements and expanding eligibility for SNAP would increase federal spending by \$2.1 billion while changes to TANF would reduce it by \$5 million, according to CBO.

The section of the bill that rescinds or claws back \$27.1 billion in COVID-19 budget authority would reduce federal spending outlays by \$11 billion during the 10-year budget window, according to CBO.

The majority of those funds, CBO said, "would come from the Public Health and Social Service Emergency Fund and from certain infrastructure and disaster relief programs."

The Congressional Research Service explains that budget authority "allows federal agencies to incur obligations, such as entering into contracts, employing personnel, and submitting purchase orders" while outlays "represent the actual payment of these obligations, usually in the form of electronic transfers or checks issued by the Treasury Department."

Overall, CBO said, the debt limit package would reduce the deficit by \$1.5 trillion during the next decade.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat, said Wednesday morning that senators should prepare to vote quickly on the package after it arrives from the House.

"I cannot stress enough that we have no margin for error," Schumer said. "Either we proceed quickly and send this bipartisan agreement to the president's desk, or the federal government will default for the first time ever."

Schumer indicated during an afternoon press conference he might not allow amendment votes that some Republicans have been calling for in order to allow the bill to move quickly to final passage.

"We can't send anything back to the House. That would risk default," Schumer said.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen warned last week that the country could begin a default on June 5 without a new debt limit law.

A default would have prevented the federal government from borrowing any more money to pay all of the country's bills in full and on time. That would have meant delayed payments for hundreds of federal programs, including military paychecks, Social Security and Medicare. It also would have negatively impacted the global economy.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, a Kentucky Republican, said once the debt limit package reaches that chamber, he'll "be proud to support it without delay."

McConnell, however, expressed disappointment with the caps on defense spending, saying it was the "worst part of the deal."

"I don't think it's as good as I would like," McConnell said. "But if you look at the totality of the agreement, I think, it should be supported and our defense needs will still be there."

McConnell said his hope is that if senators who want amendment votes are given those votes, they would yield back time, allowing the chamber to vote on final passage Thursday or Friday.

After that vote, the package will go to President Joe Biden for his signature.

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

## Decarbonization ambitions ignite debate over mining, permitting

**BY: ROBERT ZULLO - MAY 31, 2023 6:45 PM**

The decarbonized, electrified future envisioned by the Biden administration, state governments, automakers, utility companies and corporate sustainability goals depends to a huge degree on minerals and metals.

Lots more lithium will be needed for car and truck batteries, as well as the big banks of batteries that are increasingly popping onto the electric grid to balance the intermittency of wind and solar power. Those batteries, as well as wind turbines and solar panels, also need copper, cobalt, nickel, zinc and "rare earth" elements used in electric car motors and other clean technologies, among other materials.

The problem is that not enough of those materials are mined in the United States or other friendly countries to meet the projected demands of a decarbonizing nation. At present, China dominates the market for most battery raw materials, for example, which "presents geopolitical and environmental risks," per a presentation on May 10 by S&P Global on challenges facing the global battery sector.

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"This is part of what the legislative environment is gearing up to help us counter," said Graham Evans, an S&P Global research director focused on auto supply chain and technology. "We don't want to be too heavily reliant on any one country."

But even as new federal legislation like the Inflation Reduction Act and the bipartisan infrastructure law created big incentives for renewable power, electric vehicles and production tax credits for critical minerals, mining operations under development in Nevada, North Carolina, Minnesota and Arizona, among other locations, haven't exactly been met with open arms.

And mining organizations and renewable trade groups say the long permitting timelines and litigation delays for mining projects are incompatible with the urgent demand for materials needed to decarbonize the economy.

## 'You need the natural resources'

That dynamic has in part led to some clean energy groups joining with traditional industry, fossil fuel interests and their allies in Congress in a push for permitting reform that's emerged as part of the deal between President Joe Biden and Congressional Republicans to raise the debt limit that's currently being debated in Washington. In the wake of a controversial federal court decision involving an Arizona copper mine project, there's also separate bipartisan legislation in the Senate to clarify rules around where mining-support activities like waste or processing can take place on federal land.

"You need the supply chains, you need the natural resources. ... We don't do that unless we do more domestic production," said Harrison Godfrey, managing director at Advanced Energy United, a clean energy trade group.

"We need permitting reform if we're going to undertake this mining. We think you can maintain reasonable environmental regulations and move forward around this. ... Our permitting regime has been misused to try and stop anything and everything really in excess of what's reasonable to protect the environment and communities."

Numerous environmental groups, though, have blasted the debt ceiling deal, which includes provisions intended to get the contentious Mountain Valley Pipeline — a natural gas project through West Virginia and Virginia that has been plagued by environmental violations and seen numerous critical permits tossed out by federal courts — over the finish line.

They also assailed attempts to streamline the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in order to speed projects up. The Sierra Club urged Congress to reject it while the Center for Biological Diversity called it "an injustice and moral failure to have to choose between defaulting on our national debt or bankrupting the health of people and the planet."

## 'Benign neglect'

Mark Compton, executive director the American Exploration and Mining Association, a trade group, said there's been a long history of "benign neglect" of the American mining industry that has resulted in a dependence on foreign sources, a problem that's been underscored by the fallout from the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the global pandemic.

"To decarbonize our economy is causing a demand increase in minerals that really is staggering," he said. "The supply chain issues have really come to the forefront."

Compton said new American mining projects average seven to 10 years to make it through the permitting stages, compared to two to three years in Canada and Australia, which have comparable environmental protections.

"We're not talking about needing to lower environmental standards," he said. "The environmental standards, the regulations that are in place, that's not the problem. It's really an inefficient and often duplicative permitting process through NEPA that simply takes longer than it has to."

The permitting process is only part of the picture, he added. Most hard-rock mining, Compton said, happens on federal lands in the western U.S. About half of it is currently off limits to mining.

"Minerals are located where they are and we can't move them," he said, noting that economically viable pockets are rare. "We have to have access to federal lands to be able to develop and explore for minerals."

Allowing mining on public lands, however, can be extremely fraught, as in the case of the long-contested

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Twin Metals project in the Superior National Forest in Minnesota. "Copper for wind power and broadband networks. Nickel for electric cars and medical devices," the company website says. "Cobalt for smart phones and batteries. The world demands more and more metals every day. The minerals we have in Minnesota can help supply this demand."

But environmental groups have warned the deposits lie too close for comfort to the Boundary Waters area, which the state tourism office calls "one of America's most beautiful and remote places." The Sierra Club says on its website that "there is currently no sulfide mine in existence that is not polluting the groundwater." And in January, the Biden administration imposed a 20-year mining ban on 225,000 acres of federal land near the wilderness area.

Twin Metals said it was "stunned."

"This region sits on top of one of the world's largest deposits of critical minerals that are vital in meeting our nation's goals to transition to a clean energy future, to create American jobs, to strengthen our national security and to bolster domestic supply chains," the company said in a statement.

There are also major concerns over irreversible impacts to Native American sites, as in the case of the Lithium Americas project in Thacker Pass, Nevada, where the project has divided tribal communities and sparked protests and litigation, and the Resolution copper mine project in Arizona. According to Morgan Stanley Capital International, 97% of nickel, 89% of copper, 79% of lithium and 68% of cobalt reserves and resources in the U.S. are located within 35 miles of Native American reservations.

Compton acknowledged that past practices have created a reputation problem for the mining industry.

"It is true that mining projects meet a lot of resistance. I think that stems from a long history of mining in this country before we as a nation even thought about environmental laws or regulations," he said, though he added that today's industry is highly regulated and the most "environmentally responsible in the world."

## How much to mine?

However, even modern mining, of course, is inherently destructive. Open pit mining opens vast holes in the ground, creates huge quantities of waste rock that must be managed and potential water contamination problems from processing, seepage from tailings, which consist of the rock, chemicals and other waste products remaining after extraction, and acid rock drainage. There is also loss of wildlife habitat. Although there are efforts to produce, for example, lithium in new and more sustainable ways, the race for crucial minerals and metals has prompted some to question the eagerness for more extraction.

"Large-scale mining entails social and environmental harm, in many cases irreversibly damaging landscapes without the consent of affected communities," says a January report from the University of California-Davis' Climate and Community Project, which recommends achieving zero emissions and minimizing new mining by reducing car dependence, shrinking battery sizes and maximizing recycling.

"As societies undertake the urgent and transformative task of building new, zero-emissions energy systems, some level of mining is necessary," the report says. "But the volume of extraction is not a given. Neither is where mining takes place, who bears the social and environmental burdens, or how mining is governed."

Others see ensuring that a robust recycling and reuse chain comes with the new clean energy economy as key to reducing the impact of mining minerals. CNBC reported last month that a growing number of start up businesses are getting to work on solar, wind and battery recycling operations.

"Over the medium-to-long-term, the development of domestic recycling and reuse sectors will not only help to mitigate the need for new critical mineral production but will also help reduce our reliance on geo-strategic competitors for these resources and technologies," Advanced Energy Economy says in a policy paper.

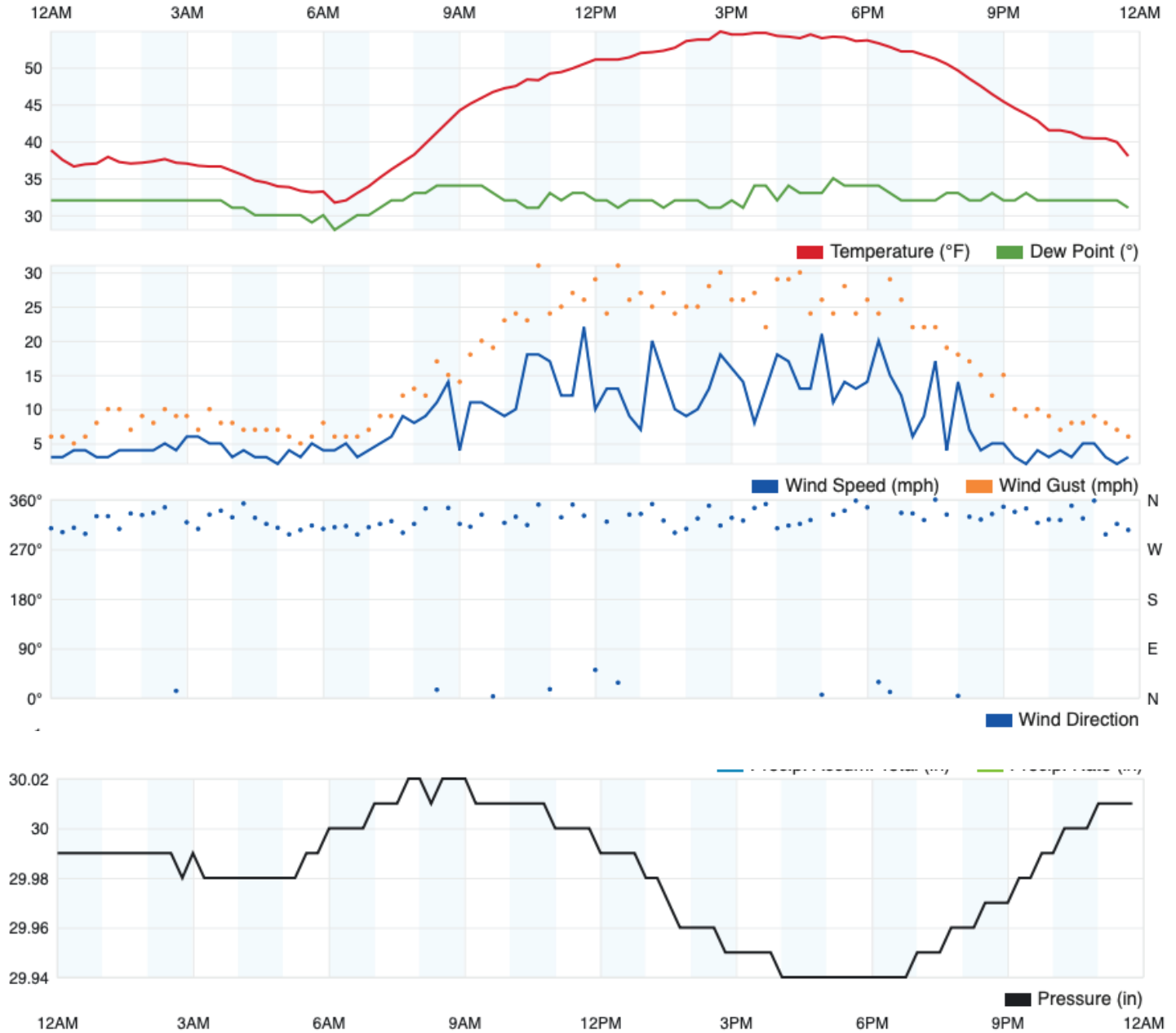
Max Wilbert, an environmental activist who had helped organize a protest camp at the Thacker Pass site in Nevada, favors what many consider a radical "degrowth" solution to climate change, pollution and ecological collapse rather than trying to maintain current lifestyles with new sources of power that come with their own environmental problems.

"Some people might say that's a dream," he said. "I think the real dream is trying to maintain the status quo with a new energy source."

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs






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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
						
20%	20%	40%	30%	40%	30%	20% 30%
Mostly Sunny then Slight Chance T-storms	Slight Chance T-storms	Mostly Sunny then Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms	Sunny then Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms	Slight Chance Showers then Chance T-storms
High: 91 °F	Low: 64 °F	High: 89 °F	Low: 64 °F	High: 89 °F	Low: 64 °F	High: 89 °F




## Continued Warm

### With Daily Chances for Moisture

June 1, 2023  
2:19 AM

Thursday




20-30%

**Highs:**  
About 90°

15-25 mph

Friday




30-50%

**Highs:**  
About 90°

15-30 mph

Saturday




30-50%

**Highs:**  
Upper 80s

15-25 mph

Sunday




30-50%

**Highs:**  
Upper 80s

10-20 mph


Monday



10-20%

**Highs:**  
About 90°

10-20 mph



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

The weather pattern remains mostly static with highs in the upper 80s to around 90 with modest humidity and daily chances for moisture. Severe weather looks unlikely any time soon with this weather pattern.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 86 °F at 11:42 AM

Low Temp: 62 °F at 6:33 AM

Wind: 22 mph at 4:53 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 29 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 99 in 1933

Record Low: 34 in 1946

Average High: 76

Average Low: 51

Average Precip in June.: 0.10

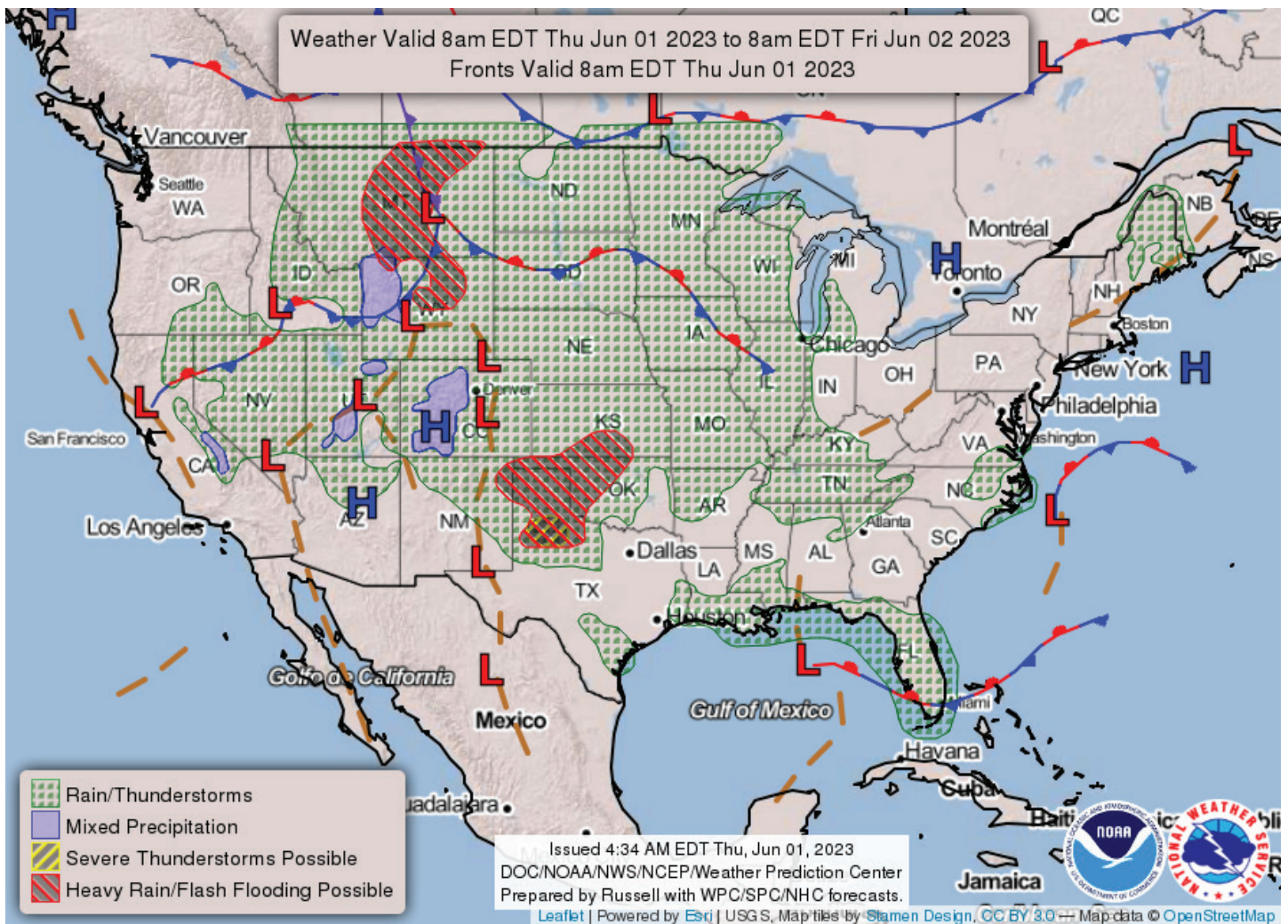
Precip to date in June.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 7.35

Precip Year to Date: 7.91

Sunset Tonight: 9:15:06 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:44:51 AM



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## Today in Weather History

June 1, 1990: A small F0 tornado blew over two mobile homes on the north side of Groton. Numerous trees were either blown down or lost limbs. Also, high winds of 65 mph occurred 5 miles south and 1 mile east of Mellette.

June 1, 2008: Severe thunderstorms developed along the eastern slopes of the Black Hills and dropped large hail and heavy rain over eastern Custer and Shannon Counties. Softball sized hail was reported south of Hermosa.

June 1, 2011: High water levels coming into June along with above average June rainfall kept water levels up on Blue Dog, Bitter, Rush, and Waubay Lakes in Day County throughout the month. The high lake levels continued to cause extensive road and property damage. Many families remained away from their homes and cabins. Also, hundreds of acres of farmland remained flooded along with many roads. Road and property damage would be in the several millions of dollars. The high lake levels and flooding would continue for the next several months. In Hamlin County, Lake Poinsett, including several other lakes, continued to flood and damage several homes along with several county and township roads. High lake levels and flooding would continue for the next several months.

1812 - Apple trees at New Haven CT did not blossom until the first of June, the latest such occurrence during the period beginning in 1794. Snow whitened the ground in Cleveland OH and Rochester NY. (David Ludlum)

1903: During the early afternoon, one of the most destructive tornadoes in the history of Georgia up to this time, struck the outskirts of Gainesville. The track of the storm was about four miles in length and varied between 100 to 200 feet in width. The tornado touched down about one mile southwest of Gainesville, striking a large cotton mill at 12:45 pm, Eastern Time, just 10 minutes after 750 employees filed into the great structure from dinner. On the top floor of the mill were employed 250 children, and it was here that the greatest loss of life occurred. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the Monthly Weather Review.

1919: Snowfall of almost a half-inch fell at Denver, Colorado. This storm produced their greatest 24-hour snowfall recorded in June. Two temperature records were set: The low temperature of 32 degrees was a record low for the date, and the high of only 40 degrees was a record low maximum. Cheyenne, Wyoming recorded 1.6 inches of snow, which is one of only six times that at least one inch of snow has fallen at Cheyenne in June.

1934: June started off on a warm note as high temperatures surpassed the century mark across parts of the Midwest. Several locations tied or set a record high temperatures for June including: Rockford, IL: 106°, Mather, WI: 105°, Hatfield, WI: 103°, Mondovi, WI: 102°, Chicago, IL: 102° and Grand Rapids, MI tied their June record high with 102°.

1999: A tornado with an intermittent damage path destroyed 200 homes, businesses, and other buildings in the southern portion of St. James, Missouri. Of these, 33 homes were destroyed along with the St. James Golf Course clubhouse and two Missouri Department of Transportation buildings. The tornado then moved east, south of the downtown St. James area and intensified. F2 to F3 damage occurred with a 200 to 300-yard damage path. Several homes and farm buildings were severely damaged or destroyed. Further north, severe thunderstorms produced many tornadoes around central Illinois. The most intense tornado touched down in Montgomery County south of Farmersville and moved into southwest Christian County. One person was killed when a semi-trailer overturned at a rest area on I-55. Across eastern parts of the state, high winds up to 70 mph caused damage to trees, power lines, and some buildings. The Mattoon area also reported flooding from these storms, producing \$3 million dollars in damage.

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### KNOWING AND DOING

In 1927 many businesses had financial difficulties that forced them to close. One was an insurance company in Savannah, Georgia. There were more than 500 stockholders who lost hundreds of thousands of dollars. The owner, a man named Mercer, and his son, promised to repay each one of them.

Twenty-eight years later the final debt was paid. Even though the father had died, the son paid each debt in full.

The son had become a famous songwriter, and it was one of the songs he wrote that enabled him to pay the debts. The songwriter was Johnny Mercer and the song that paid the debt was, "Accentuate the Positive and Eliminate the Negative."

Choosing to do the right thing is often difficult, sometimes painful. There are times when it may mean the loss of money or some valued object. It may cost a friendship with someone who is destroying us and our walk with the Lord. It may mean giving up a job that would cause us to compromise our values. Honoring God always forces us to choose to do what He has asked us to do: obey His teachings. Knowing what is right is rarely the problem. Doing what is right, however, is. Remember: "I can do all things through Him who gives me His strength!"

Prayer: Lord, may we always honor You by accepting, believing, and living Your Word. Help us to take You at Your Word, and live as though we thoroughly believed it! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: I know, my God, that you examine our hearts and rejoice when you find integrity there. You know I have done all this with good motives, and I have watched your people offer their gifts willingly and joyously. 1 Chronicles 29:17



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

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## 2023 Community Events

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

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.30.23

13 16 40 64 68 21

MegaPlier: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$203,000,000**

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 49

DRAW: Mins 53 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.31.23

4 15 27 28 49 5

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$3,420,000**

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 49

DRAW: Mins 53 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.31.23

10 19 43 45 47 11

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT 15 Hrs 19 Mins 54

DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.31.23

5 14 23 28 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$80,000**

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 49

DRAW: Mins 54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.31.23

15 36 61 66 68 23

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 48

DRAW: Mins 54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.31.23

2 4 54 61 62 14

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$262,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 48

DRAW: Mins 54 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### Know any airplane mechanics? A wave of retirements is leaving some US industries desperate to hire

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Kwasi Bandoh, a senior recruiter for an airline, stood before a group of aviation mechanic students at their graduation ceremony last month and congratulated them for all having jobs.

As some of the students began nudging each other, Bandoh realized that perhaps not every one of them had already been hired.

“Who doesn’t have a job?” Bandoh demanded, surveying the 15 graduates before him at the Pittsburgh Institute of Aeronautics’ training facility in Hagerstown, Maryland. “Who doesn’t? Because I have a job for you.”

The crowd of about 70 friends and relatives, gathered in a hangar where the students had been trained, laughed appreciatively. Fourteen of the 15 graduates did have jobs, and the only one who didn’t had an interview lined up for the next day.

As happy as the moment was for the graduates, it epitomized the struggles of recruiters like Bandoh, who are desperately seeking mechanics for the airlines, plane manufacturers and repair shops that need them. Most of their existing mechanics are aging, and demand for travel is growing.

Across the U.S. economy, other industries, too, face the same formidable challenge: Replenishing a workforce diminished by a surge of retirements that began during the pandemic and has continued since. It’s a growing problem in such fields as construction, manufacturing, nursing and some professional industries like accounting.

Since 2019, the proportion of retirees in the U.S. population has risen from 18% to nearly 20%, according to research by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York — equivalent to about 3.5 million fewer workers. And the trend seems sure to accelerate: The percentage of workers who are 55 or older is nearly 24%, up from only about 15% two decades ago.

The surge of retirements, along with a slowdown in immigration that began during the pandemic, are the primary factors behind the labor shortages that continue to bedevil some employers.

The aging workforce also helps explain the confounding nature of the economy right now. Even as the Federal Reserve has relentlessly pumped up interest rates to fight high inflation, hiring has remained surprisingly robust. Regardless of where interest rates are, many employers simply need to replace people who have left.

Job growth has been stronger, in fact, than economic growth would suggest. The economy expanded at a mediocre 1.3% annual rate in the first three months of 2023. Yet hiring was robust, averaging nearly 300,000 jobs a month. In April, the unemployment rate reached a half-century low of 3.4%. On Friday, the government will issue the May employment report, which economists predict will show another solid gain of about 190,000 jobs.

Companies that must fill jobs tend to raise pay to attract and keep workers — a trend that can fuel inflation as those same employers typically raise their prices to cover their higher labor costs. That dynamic is complicating the Fed’s efforts to tame inflation.

In the airline industry, more than one-third of mechanics are between 55 and 64, according to government data. Fewer than one in 10 are under 30.

“Everybody’s getting ready to retire, and not enough people are coming in to take the jobs,” said Mike Myers, a maintenance manager for Piedmont Airlines, in Hagerstown, a regional feeder for American Airlines.

The new graduates of the Pittsburgh Institute of Aeronautics have been awed by how much they’re in demand. One of them, Will Gower, said he weighed multiple job offers at nearly twice the \$15-an-hour wage he had earned at the retail job he held while in school.

“It was almost overwhelming how many companies were throwing jobs at you,” said Gower, 21. “Any-



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where there's an airport you can go work."

Next month, Gower will join Commute Air, Bandoh's company, along with three of his classmates, and will receive further training in Houston.

In the past year, the air travel industry has hired roughly 45,000 people, enlarging its workforce by 9%, to more than a half-million. That's triple the pace of the U.S. economy's overall hiring.

United Airlines has said it plans to hire 15,000 workers this year and more in coming years. It expects to add 2,300 pilots, in part to offset about 500 retirements. Kate Gebo, United's executive vice president of human resources, said she foresees a shortage of airplane mechanics, with up to half of United's mechanics already eligible to retire.

In the construction industry, the proportion of workers ages 55 and older doubled from 2003 to 2020, to nearly one-quarter, according to the government.

Anirban Basu, chief economist for the Associated Builders and Contractors trade group, said that in addition to aging, industries like aviation maintenance and construction share another challenge: Fewer young people want to take jobs in what are often perceived as less-secure, blue-collar work.

When the now-retiring baby boomers began working, Basu said, "there was the notion that being a blue-collar tradesperson was a solid and secure path to prosperity." But as factories shut down across the country, "the notion increasingly became that for one to become part of the American middle class, one would likely need to have more formal education, namely, a bachelor's degree."

The result, he said, is an economy short of factory workers, backhoe operators, welders, electricians and other skilled trade workers.

If there's one trend that might ease, if not solve, the problem it's that Americans below retirement age have been re-entering the job market, likely drawn by steady hiring and higher pay levels. The proportion of these adults who either have a job or are looking for one now exceeds pre-pandemic levels.

Yet for now, an aging workforce remains a problem even for some white-collar jobs, particularly accounting. About three-quarters of accountants are "nearing 60" and approaching retirement, according to the Association of International Certified Professional Accountants.

Tom Hood, an executive vice president of the association, said the industry is finding it hard to attract young college graduates. Many of them prefer data science or finance, while accounting struggles with a stuffier, more old-fashioned image.

"We're getting squeezed from the older part and the younger part as well," Hood said.

Nela Richardson, chief economist at the payroll provider ADP, said research shows that countries that have many retirees who spend money and consume and have fewer people working typically face higher inflation. In those countries, demand for goods and services tends to exceed the supply.

"This is the missing piece in terms of our dialogue about, can the Fed drive inflation back down to" its 2% target? Richardson said.

Some economists have said they worry that the job market's resilience, and the resulting fear that inflation will remain high, will lead the Fed to send its benchmark rate even higher, which could derail the economy and cause a recession.

Gower, who is from Covington, Louisiana, near New Orleans, isn't exactly worried about a recession. His new job as a line mechanic at Commute Air will pay \$30 an hour to start, plus higher wages for night shifts.

"We've all got great futures ahead of us," he said.

Brian Prentice, a partner at the OliverWyman consulting firm, estimates that the aviation industry will endure a shortage of up to 18,000 mechanics this year — about 12% of current staffing levels. It will likely boost pay levels across the industry.

Mindy Pavlonis, associate director of career services for the aeronautics institute, noted that entry-level pay has jumped from about \$18 an hour in 2018 to the upper-\$20s an hour now.

More financial aid for young people to receive training can help address the worker shortfall, Prentice said, a benefit that some airlines are starting to provide. Myers, the manager at Piedmont, said his company now offers scholarships that pay full tuition to schools like the Pittsburgh Institute of Aeronautics. In return, the student must work at Piedmont for two years.

They will even set up new students with a \$6,500 tool box, he added.

Erik Hansen, a lobbyist for the U.S. Travel Association, says his group is pushing for more funding for a federal development program that would subsidize aviation maintenance training schools and support more outreach to high schools to promote the industry as a career.

Without more workers, he said, further flight delays will inevitably result.

"You have an airplane that has a mechanical issue, and it needs to be fixed before it's turned around," Hansen said. "It takes longer for the mechanics to get to it. There's going to be a flight delay. So it's absolutely something we need to address."

## Revised DACA program to be debated before Texas judge who previously ruled against it

By JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — A revised version of a federal policy that prevents the deportation of hundreds of thousands of immigrants brought to the U.S. as children is set to be debated Thursday before a federal judge who previously ruled the program illegal.

Attorneys representing the nine states that have sued to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, lawyers for the U.S. Justice Department and DACA recipients were scheduled to appear at a court hearing before U.S. District Judge Andrew Hanen.

In 2021, Hanen declared DACA illegal, ruling that the program had not been subjected to public notice and comment periods required under the federal Administrative Procedures Act. Hanen also said the states seeking to stop it had standing to file their lawsuit because they had been harmed by the program.

The states claimed they incur hundreds of millions of dollars in health care, education and other costs when immigrants are allowed to remain in the country illegally. The states that sued are Texas, Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Nebraska, South Carolina, West Virginia, Kansas and Mississippi.

The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans upheld Hanen's ruling in 2022 but sent the case back to him to review changes made to the program by the Biden administration.

The new version of DACA took effect in October and was subject to public comments as part of a formal rule-making process.

In court filings, Texas and the other states argued that the updated program is essentially the same as the 2012 memo that first created it and remains "unlawful and unconstitutional." The states also argued that the White House overstepped its authority by granting immigration benefits that are for Congress to decide.

The U.S. Justice Department argued in court filings that the states failed to show any direct injury because of DACA and that Congress has given the Department of Homeland Security the "authority and duty to set immigration enforcement policies."

"DACA is lawful. DACA is consistent with the many policies of the U.S. government in the past under different presidents," said Nina Perales, with the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, who will be speaking before Hanen on behalf of DACA recipients.

Hanen has left the Obama-era program intact for those already benefiting from it. But he ruled there can be no new applicants while appeals are pending.

There were 580,310 people enrolled in DACA at the end of December, according to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Hanen is not expected to immediately rule after Thursday's court hearing. But whatever decision he makes is expected to end up before the U.S. Supreme Court for a third time.

In 2016, the Supreme Court deadlocked 4-4 over an expanded DACA and a version of the program for parents of DACA recipients. In 2020, the high court ruled 5-4 that the Trump administration improperly ended DACA, allowing it to stay in place.

President Joe Biden and advocacy groups have called on Congress to pass permanent protections for "Dreamers," which is what people protected by DACA are commonly called. Congress has failed multiple

times to pass proposals called the DREAM Act to protect DACA recipients.

Follow Juan A. Lozano on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/juanlozano70>

## Jordan's royal wedding day gets underway with surprise arrival of Britain's William and Kate

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

AMMAN, Jordan (AP) — Jordan's highly anticipated royal wedding day got underway on Thursday with the surprise announcement that Britain's Prince William and his wife Kate had arrived to witness the nuptials of Crown Prince Hussein and his Saudi Arabian bride.

The attendance of the British royals had been kept under wraps, and was only confirmed by Jordanian state media a few hours before the start of the palace ceremony.

The wedding of Jordan's 28-year-old heir to the throne and Rajwa Alseif, a 29-year-old architect linked to her own country's monarch, emphasizes continuity in an Arab state prized for its longstanding stability. The festivities, which are to start Thursday afternoon, also introduce Hussein to a wider global audience.

The celebration buttresses the royal family's order of succession, refreshes its image after a palace feud and may even help resource-poor Jordan forge a strategic bond with its oil-rich neighbor, Saudi Arabia.

On Thursday morning, Saudi wedding guests and tourists — the men wearing white dishdasha robes and the women in brightly colored abayas — filtered through the sleek marbled lobby of the Four Seasons Hotel in Amman. Noura Al Sudairi, an aunt of the bride, was wearing sweatpants and sneakers on her way to breakfast.

"We are all so excited, so happy about this union," she said. "Of course it's a beautiful thing for our families, and for the relationship between Jordan and Saudi Arabia."

Excitement over the nuptials — Jordan's biggest royal event in years — has been building in the capital of Amman, where congratulatory banners of Hussein and his beaming bride adorn buses and hang over winding hillside streets. Shops had competing displays of royal regalia. Royal watchers speculated about which dress designer Alseif would select— still an official secret,

Nancy Tirana, a 28-year-old law intern, said she spent the last week scrutinizing Alseif's every move and stitch of clothing.

"She's just so beautiful, so elegant, and it's clear from her body language how much she loves the queen," she said, referring to Hussein's glamorous mother, Rania. "I feel like all of Jordan is getting married," Tirana gushed as she ate mansaf, Jordan's national dish of milky mutton and rice, before heading to a wedding-themed concert.

Jordan's 11 million citizens have watched the young crown prince rise in prominence in recent years, as he increasingly joined his father, King Abdullah II, in public appearances. Hussein has graduated from Georgetown University, joined the military and gained some global recognition speaking at the U.N. General Assembly. His wedding, experts say, marks his next crucial rite of passage.

"It's not just a marriage, it's the presentation of the future king of Jordan," said political analyst Amer Sabaileh. "The issue of the crown prince has been closed."

The wedding may create a brief feel-good moment for Jordanians during tough economic times, including persistent youth unemployment and an ailing economy.

Palace officials have turned the event — a week after Jordan's 77th birthday — into something of a PR campaign. Combining tradition and modernity, the royal family introduced a wedding hashtag (#Celebrating Al Hussein) and omnipresent logo that fuses the couple's initials into the Arabic words "We rejoice"

Photos and reels from Alseif's henna party — a traditional pre-wedding celebration featuring the bride and her female friends and relatives — and the couple's engagement ceremony in Saudi Arabia last summer have splashed across state-linked media.

The kingdom declared Thursday a public holiday so crowds of people could gather after the wedding service to wave at the couple's motorcade of red Land Rover jeeps — a nod to the traditional procession

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of horse riders clad in red coats during the reign of the country's founder, King Abdullah I. Tens of thousands of well-wishers are expected to flock to free concerts and cultural events. Huge screens have been set up nationwide for crowds to watch the occasion unfold.

The signing of the marriage contract will take place at Zahran Palace in Amman, which hasn't seen such pomp and circumstance since 1993, when, on a similarly sunny June day, Abdullah married Rania, who was born in Kuwait to Palestinian parents. Decades earlier, Abdullah's father, the late King Hussein, sealed his vows in the same garden with his second wife, the British citizen Antoinette Gardiner.

In addition to the Prince and Princess of Wales, the guest list includes an array of foreign aristocrats and dignitaries, including senior royals from Europe and Asia, as well as First Lady Jill Biden and U.S. climate envoy John Kerry. Other likely attendees include Saudi aristocrats, as Alseif's mother traces her roots to the influential wife of Saudi Arabia's founder, King Abdul-Aziz Al Saud, Her billionaire father owns a major construction firm in the kingdom.

After the ceremony, the wedding party will move to Al Husseinia Palace, a 30-minute drive away, for a reception, entertainment and a state banquet. The royals are expected to greet more than 1,700 guests at the reception.

Experts consider the marriage an advantageous alliance for the Hashemites, historic rivals of the Al Saud family to the east. Jordan has recently sought closer ties with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab petrostates, which once doled out billions of dollars to the aid-dependent country but since have reined in their spending.

Even as restaurants blared call-and-response Arabic wedding songs and cars honked in celebration downtown, some signaled the royal fairy tale was fraught as Jordanians struggle to make ends meet.

Osama, a 25-year-old bookseller, was thrilled about the occasion and festooned his car and shop windows with portraits of the royal family. But he also knew reality would return quickly.

"Of course, it's joyful," he said, declining to give his last name for fear of reprisals. "But in a couple days, we'll just go back to our problems."

## Defying taboos, Shiite cleric in Iran takes in street dogs and nurses them back to health

By The Associated Press undefined

QOM, Iran (AP) — It's rare these days for a turbaned cleric in Iran to attract a large following of adoring young fans on Instagram, but Sayed Mahdi Tabatabaei has done it by rescuing street dogs in defiance of a local taboo.

Tabatabaei posts regularly — to his more than 80,000 followers — heartbreaking stories of abused and neglected dogs that he has treated in his shelter. His young fans ask for updates on the rescues and send well wishes in the hundreds of comments he receives on almost every post.

In some parts of the Muslim world, dogs are considered unclean, driven away with shouting, sticks and stones, and sometimes even shot by city workers in failed attempts to control the feral population.

Iran's ruling theocracy views keeping dogs as pets as a sign of Western decadence, and hard-liners have been pushing for laws that would prohibit walking them in public.

But that hasn't stopped Tabatabaei from opening a shelter in the city of Qom — home to several major religious schools and shrines — where he takes in street dogs and strays and nurses them back to health. He has become an unlikely advocate for animal rights in a society deeply divided over the role of religion in public life.

Islam prohibits animal cruelty and promotes feeding those in need. Across the Middle East, people put out food and water for stray cats, often seen safely wandering in and out of public buildings. But in Iran and other countries, dogs are shunned by many and local authorities periodically shoot and poison them.

Iran's clerical establishment, which has ruled the country since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, proclaimed dogs to be "unclean" and advocates against keeping them as pets. Many younger Iranians ignore such

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calls, as they do other religious edicts.

Tabatabaei, an animal lover who wears the Shiite black turban signifying he is a descendant of Islam's Prophet Muhammad, seeks to bridge the divide.

"It's pretty interesting and kind of weird for them to witness a religious figure doing this stuff," he said. "My videos seem to leave a good impression on people too. They say they feel a wave of kindness, peace, and friendship coming through those videos."

It's gotten him into trouble with fellow clerics. When pictures surfaced of him tending to dogs while wearing his clerical robes, a religious court ordered him to be defrocked in 2021. The ruling was later suspended, but he remains cautious. These days Tabatabaei wears ordinary clothes while tending to the dogs and cleaning their kennels at Bamak Paradise, the shelter he established two years ago.

"We take in dogs with disabilities that cannot survive in the wild and have a hard time finding adoptive homes," he said. "Many of them are dogs I've personally nursed back to health. They stay here until they fully recover and regain their strength."

He relies on donations from animal lovers in Iran and abroad. He says the funds available for such pursuits have dried up in recent years as the United States has ramped up economic sanctions over Iran's disputed nuclear program. The country's banking system is almost completely cut off from the outside world, making it extremely difficult to transfer funds.

Within Iran, the economy has cratered, with the local currency plunging to a record low over the past year. With many Iranians struggling to get by, there is little left over for the cleric's furry friends.

"I appeal to Western governments, particularly the U.S. government and others capable of influencing the lifting of sanctions, to consider making exceptions for organizations like ours that engage in humanitarian and peaceful endeavors," he said.

"By allowing us to establish bank accounts and verifying our identities, we would be able to receive assistance from individuals and charities outside of Iran without them breaching the sanctions and risking legal complications," he added.

He also hopes for change within Iran — specifically, a lifting of the ban on dog-walking in parks.

"Pet owners must take their dogs and other pets out for walks," he said. "Sadly, we still don't have laws to protect animal rights, and there are no regulations in place to prevent animal cruelty."

Many Iranians, especially young people, have expressed frustration with clerical rule over the years, in waves of protests and in smaller acts of defiance. During nationwide protests last fall, following the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini while in custody of the country's morality police, Iranians posted videos online showing young men sneaking up behind clerics and batting their turbans off their heads.

But despite the recent tensions, Tabatabaei remains a beloved figure for many.

Zahra Hojabri recently found a puppy dying on the side of the road. The gentle cleric was the first person she thought of to help the tiny canine. "I think he is an angel, more than a human. I can't put it into words," she said.

## AI chips are hot. Here's what they are, what they're for and why investors see gold

By DAVID HAMILTON AP Business Writer  
SAN FRANCISCO (AP) —

The hottest thing in technology is an unprepossessing sliver of silicon closely related to the chips that power video game graphics. It's an artificial intelligence chip, designed specifically to make building AI systems such as ChatGPT faster and cheaper.

Such chips have suddenly taken center stage in what some experts consider an AI revolution that could reshape the technology sector — and possibly the world along with it. Shares of Nvidia, the leading designer of AI chips, rocketed up almost 25% last Thursday after the company forecast a huge jump in revenue that analysts said indicated soaring sales of its products. The company was briefly worth more than \$1 trillion on Tuesday.

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## SO WHAT ARE AI CHIPS, ANYWAY?

That isn't an easy question to answer. "There really isn't a completely agreed upon definition of AI chips," said Hannah Dohmen, a research analyst with the Center for Security and Emerging Technology.

In general, though, the term encompasses computing hardware that's specialized to handle AI workloads — for instance, by "training" AI systems to tackle difficult problems that can choke conventional computers.

## VIDEO GAME ORIGINS

Three entrepreneurs founded Nvidia in 1993 to push the boundaries of computational graphics. Within a few years, the company had developed a new chip called a graphics processing unit, or GPU, which dramatically sped up both development and play of video games by performing multiple complex graphics calculations at once.

That technique, known formally as parallel processing, would prove key to the development of both games and AI. Two graduate students at the University of Toronto used a GPU-based neural network to win a prestigious 2012 AI competition called ImageNet by identifying photo images at much lower error rates than competitors.

The win kick-started interest in AI-related parallel processing, opening a new business opportunity for Nvidia and its rivals while providing researchers powerful tools for exploring the frontiers of AI development.

## MODERN AI CHIPS

Eleven years later, Nvidia is the dominant supplier of chips for building and updating AI systems. One of its recent products, the H100 GPU, packs in 80 billion transistors — about 13 million more than Apple's latest high-end processor for its MacBook Pro laptop. Unsurprisingly, this technology isn't cheap; at one online retailer, the H100 lists for \$30,000.

Nvidia doesn't fabricate these complex GPU chips itself, a task that would require enormous investments in new factories. Instead it relies on Asian chip foundries such as Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. and Korea's Samsung Electronics.

Some of the biggest customers for AI chips are cloud-computing services such as those run by Amazon and Microsoft. By renting out their AI computing power, those services make it possible for smaller companies and groups that couldn't afford to build their own AI systems from scratch to use cloud-based tools to help with tasks that can range from drug discovery to customer management.

## OTHER USES AND COMPETITION

Parallel processing has many uses outside of AI. A few years ago, for instance, Nvidia graphics cards were in short supply because cryptocurrency miners, who set up banks of computers to solve thorny mathematical problems for bitcoin rewards, had snapped up most of them. That problem faded as the cryptocurrency market collapsed in early 2022.

Analysts say Nvidia will inevitably face tougher competition. One potential rival is Advanced Micro Devices, which already faces off with Nvidia in the market for computer graphics chips. AMD has recently taken steps to bolster its own lineup of AI chips.

Nvidia is based in Santa Clara, California. Co-founder Jensen Huang remains the company's president and chief executive.

## After sailing though House on bipartisan vote, Biden-McCarthy debt ceiling deal now goes to Senate

By LISA MASCARO, KEVIN FREKING, STEPHEN GROVES and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press WASHINGTON (AP) — Veering away from a default crisis, the House overwhelmingly approved a debt ceiling and budget cuts package, sending the deal that President Joe Biden and Speaker Kevin McCarthy negotiated to the Senate for swift passage in a matter of days, before a fast-approaching deadline.

The hard-fought compromise pleased few, but lawmakers assessed it was better than the alternative — a devastating economic upheaval if Congress failed to act. Tensions ran high as hard-right Republicans refused the deal, but Biden and McCarthy assembled a bipartisan coalition to push to passage on a robust 314-117 vote late Wednesday.

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"We did pretty dang good," McCarthy, R-Calif., said afterward.

Amid deep discontent from Republicans who said the spending restrictions did not go far enough, McCarthy said it is only a "first step."

Biden, watching the tally from Colorado Springs where Thursday he is scheduled to deliver the commencement address at the U.S. Air Force Academy, phoned McCarthy and the other congressional leaders after the vote. In a statement, he called the outcome "good news for the American people and the American economy."

Washington is rushing after a long slog of debate to wrap up work on the package to ensure the government can keep paying its bills, and prevent financial upheaval at home and abroad. Next Monday is when the Treasury has said the U.S. would run short of money and risk a dangerous default.

Biden had been calling lawmakers directly to shore up backing. McCarthy worked to sell skeptical fellow Republicans, even fending off challenges to his leadership.

A similar bipartisan effort from Democrats and Republicans will be needed in the Senate to overcome objections.

Overall, the 99-page bill would make some inroads in curbing the nation's deficits as Republicans demanded, without rolling back Trump-era tax breaks as Biden wanted. To pass it, Biden and McCarthy counted on support from the political center, a rarity in divided Washington.

A compromise, the package restricts spending for the next two years, suspends the debt ceiling into January 2025 and changes some policies, including imposing new work requirements for older Americans receiving food aid and greenlighting an Appalachian natural gas line that many Democrats oppose. It bolsters funds for defense and veterans, and guts new money for Internal Revenue Service agents.

Raising the nation's debt limit, now \$31 trillion, ensures Treasury can borrow to pay already incurred U.S. debts.

Top GOP deal negotiator Rep. Garret Graves of Louisiana said Republicans were fighting for budget cuts after the past years of extra spending, first during the COVID-19 crisis and later with Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, with its historic investment to fight climate change paid for with revenues elsewhere.

But Republican Rep. Chip Roy, a member of the Freedom Caucus helping to lead the opposition, said, "My beef is that you cut a deal that shouldn't have been cut."

For weeks negotiators labored late into the night to strike the deal with the White House, and for days McCarthy has worked to build support among skeptics. At one point, aides wheeled in pizza at the Capitol the night before the vote as he walked Republicans through the details, fielded questions and encouraged them not to lose sight of the bill's budget savings.

The speaker has faced a tough crowd. Cheered on by conservative senators and outside groups, the hard-right House Freedom Caucus lambasted the compromise as falling well short of the needed spending cuts, and they vowed to try to halt passage.

A much larger conservative faction, the Republican Study Committee, declined to take a position. Even rank-and-file centrist conservatives were unsure, leaving McCarthy searching for votes from his slim Republican majority.

Ominously, the conservatives warned of possibly trying to oust McCarthy over the compromise.

One influential Republican, former President Donald Trump, held his fire: "It is what it is," he said of the deal in an interview with Iowa radio host Simon Conway.

House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries said it was up to McCarthy to turn out Republican votes in the 435-member chamber, where 218 votes are needed for approval.

As the tally faltered on an afternoon procedural vote, Jeffries stood silently and raised his green voting card, signaling that the Democrats would fill in the gap to ensure passage. They did, advancing the bill that hard-right Republicans, many from the Freedom Caucus, refused to back.

"Once again, House Democrats to the rescue to avoid a dangerous default," said Jeffries, D-N.Y.

"What does that say about this extreme MAGA Republican majority?" he said about the party aligned with Trump's "Make America Great Again" political movement.

Then, on the final vote hours later, Democrats again ensured passage, leading the tally as 71 Republicans

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bucked their majority and voted against it.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said the spending restrictions in the package would reduce deficits by \$1.5 trillion over the decade, a top goal for the Republicans trying to curb the debt load.

In a surprise that complicated Republicans' support, however, the CBO said their drive to impose work requirements on older Americans receiving food stamps would end up boosting spending by \$2.1 billion over the time period. That's because the final deal exempts veterans and homeless people, expanding the food stamp rolls by 78,000 people monthly, the CBO said.

Liberal discontent, though, ran strong as nearly four dozen Democrats also broke away, decrying the new work requirements for older Americans, those 50-54, in the food aid program.

Some Democrats were also incensed that the White House negotiated into the deal changes to the landmark National Environmental Policy Act and approval of the controversial Mountain Valley Pipeline natural gas project. The energy development is important to Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., but many others oppose it as unhelpful in fighting climate change.

On Wall Street, stock prices were down Wednesday.

In the Senate, Democratic Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell are working for passage by week's end.

Schumer warned there is "no room for error."

Senators, who have remained largely on the sidelines during much of the negotiations, are insisting on amendments to reshape the package. But making any changes at this stage seemed unlikely with so little time to spare before Monday's deadline.

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AP White House Correspondent Zeke Miller, AP writers Mary Clare Jalonick, Seung Min Kim and Jill Colvin and video journalist Nathan Ellgren contributed to this report.

## **Judge agrees to seal court documents in Ralph Yarl shooting; suspect to be in court**

By MARGARET STAFFORD Associated Press

LIBERTY, Mo. (AP) — A Kansas City man accused of shooting a Black teenager who mistakenly came to his door last month is scheduled to be back in court Thursday, days after a judge ruled that court documents in the case will be sealed and kept from the public.

The hearing for 84-year-old Andrew Lester is to set new dates for future hearings in the case and is expected to be brief.

Lester has pleaded not guilty to first-degree assault and armed criminal action in the shooting of Ralph Yarl, who knocked on Lester's door on April 13 while trying to pick up his young brothers, who were at a home a block away.

Yarl, who has celebrated his 17th birthday since the shooting, suffered gunshot wounds to his head and wrist and continues to recover at home.

Lester remains free after posting \$20,000 — 10% of his \$200,000 bond.

The shooting drew international attention amid claims that Lester, who is white, received preferential treatment from investigators in the hours after he shot Yarl. President Joe Biden and several celebrities issued statements calling for justice for Yarl.

Lester admitted that he shot Yarl through the door without warning because he was "scared to death" he was about to be robbed by the Black person standing at his door.

On Tuesday, Clay County Judge Louis Angles granted a request from Lester's attorney to seal the court documents, saying the publicity led to threats against Lester, who his attorney says has been forced to move three times. He also said the publicity has made it more difficult for the case to be heard before a fair and impartial jury.

"The overwhelming majority of the reporting continues to assert that the alleged actions of (Lester)



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were racially motivated, which if believed, virtually eliminates the defense available to (Lester) related to the reasonableness of his actions," Angles wrote in the ruling.

The judge noted in his order that Lester's personal cell phone number was posted on a public platform after the shooting, leading to several text messages calling him a "murderer" who "should burn in hell." Others threatened to shoot up Lester's home, which has been vandalized since the shooting.

Angles also expressed concern that if defense documents were made public, potential witnesses for Lester's defense could be subjected to threats and other intimidation, making them unwilling to come forward or testify in the case. He said redacting the documents would not be sufficient.

Prosecutors had argued that legal precedents largely favored keeping court documents open to the public.

Yarl made his first public appearance since the shooting on Memorial Day, when he walked in a brain injury awareness event at a Kansas City park. He did not speak to the media, but his aunt, Faith Spoonmore, said he has intense headaches and balance issues. She said he is also struggling with his emotions and the trauma of the shooting.

## LGBTQ+ Pride month kicks off with protests, parades, parties

By DEEPTI HAJELA Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The start of June marks the beginning of Pride month around the U.S. and some parts of the world, a season to celebrate the lives and experiences of LGBTQ+ communities and to protest against recent attacks on hard-won civil rights gains.

This year's Pride takes place in a contentious political climate in which some state legislators have sought to ban drag shows, prohibit gender-affirming care and limit how teachers can talk about sexuality and gender in the classroom.

Events have been disrupted. Performers have been harassed. And in Colorado in November, five people were killed and several injured when a gunman shot them inside a gay nightclub.

"What we're seeing right now is probably the worst that it's been since the early days, in terms of the demonization of our communities," said Jay W. Walker, one of the co-founders of the Reclaim Pride Coalition, a New York City-based group.

But that won't stop people from coming out to mark Pride this month, he said.

"You can't keep our communities down. No one can. It's basic human rights," Walker said.

### HOW IT STARTED

June has been an important month for the LGBTQ+ rights movement since New York City's first Pride march — then dubbed the "Christopher Street Gay Liberation Day" march — on June 28, 1970.

That event marked an act of defiance from the year before, a 1969 uprising at New York City's Stonewall Inn. After a police raid at the gay bar, a crowd partly led by trans women of color channeled their anger to confront authorities. It was a catalyst to what became a global movement for LGBTQ+ rights.

For more than a half-century, the annual marches have been an opportunity to demand action on specific issues such as the AIDS epidemic and same-sex marriage while also serving as a public celebration.

### HOW IT'S GOING

These days, Pride celebrations and events can be found all over the country.

Many of the nation's largest cities — including New York, San Francisco, Chicago, Denver and Minneapolis — hold their main marches on the last weekend of June, while some cities host their events throughout the month or even at other times of the year.

Along with the marches, Pride organizers fill the month of June with events ranging from readings and performances to parties and street festivals.

In Florida this weekend, Orlando-area theme parks and hotels will play host to annual Gay Days events, which are going ahead even after Gov. Ron DeSantis and state legislators passed a series of anti-LGBTQ+ laws, some of which barred classroom discussion of sexual orientation.

Pride events are happening globally as well, drawing major crowds in places including Sao Paulo, Tel Aviv, Madrid and Toronto.

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At some past events, there have been concerns about commercialism and corporate presence that overshadow real issues that are still unresolved. In New York City for the past few years, there has been a second event on the same day of the larger Pride march. The Reclaim Pride Coalition says their event harkens back to the spirit of protest that animated Stonewall.

The New York City Dyke March channels the idea that Pride is about protest, not just parades.

WHAT ARE THE FLASHPOINTS?

Pride parades had plenty to celebrate in recent years, such as in 2015, when the U.S. Supreme Court recognized same-sex marriage in the Obergefell v. Hodges decision.

But the last several years have been more difficult; Pride events were restricted during the pandemic, and when they returned to in-person last year, it was with a sense of urgency, given the rise of hateful rhetoric and anti-LGBTQ legislative action.

Around the country, at least 17 states have put restrictions or bans on gender-affirming medical care for minors, and transgender athletes are facing restrictions at schools in at least 20 states.

"This is a year where sentiment is going to be revolving around resistance and about finding strength and community and centering our joy and our right to exist and our right to be here," said Cathryn Oakley, state legislative director and senior counsel for the Human Rights Campaign organization.

LGBTQ+ communities, Oakley said, need to "commit ourselves to continued resistance against the forces that are trying to prevent us from being our full, joyful, happy, thriving selves. ... And band together and fight back against the very oppressive forces that are coming for us."

## LGBTQ+ people flock to Florida for Gay Days festival

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Tens of thousands of LGBTQ+ people are flocking to central Florida this weekend to go on theme park rides, mingle with costumed performers, dance at all-night parties and lounge poolside at hotels during Gay Days, a decades-long tradition.

Even though Gov. Ron DeSantis and Florida lawmakers have championed a slew of anti-LGBTQ+ laws — spurring the most prominent gay rights group in the U.S. and other civil rights organizations to issue warnings that the Sunshine State may no longer be safe — Gay Days organizers are still encouraging visitors from around the world to come to one of Florida's largest gay and lesbian celebrations.

They say a large turnout will send a message that LGBTQ+ people aren't going away in Florida, which is continually one of the most popular states for tourists to visit. If the hoped-for 150,000 or more visitors come to the half-week of pool parties, drag bingo and thrill rides at Orlando's theme parks and hotels, then "that's the point," said Joseph Clark, CEO of Gay Days Inc.

"Right now is not the time to run. It's not the time to go away," Clark said. "It's time to show we are here, we are queer and we aren't going anywhere."

Unlike most of the country, which celebrates Pride in June, Orlando holds its Pride in October. Gay Days is a bonus celebration.

It's not lost on the organizers that the highlight of the weekend will be a Saturday meetup of LGBTQ+ visitors at the Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World, where the first Gay Days started as a single-day celebration in 1991. Traditionally, participants wear red shirts to identify themselves, and they meet for the afternoon parade in front of Cinderella's Castle.

Currently Disney is embroiled in a legal fight with DeSantis over the governor and Republican lawmakers' takeover of Disney World's governing district — after Disney officials publicly opposed legislation that critics have dubbed "Don't Say Gay."

At first, the law banned classroom instruction about sexual orientation and gender identity up to third grade, but this year it was expanded to apply to all grades. On top of that, Florida lawmakers recently passed bills making it a felony to provide gender-affirming health care to transgender minors, as well as banning people from entering bathrooms other than their sex assigned at birth, and prohibiting children from some performances, which takes aim at drag shows.

## Trump returns to campaign trail in Iowa as GOP rival DeSantis makes case to New Hampshire voters

By MICHELLE L. PRICE, STEVE PEOPLES and THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

LACONIA, N.H. (AP) — Former President Donald Trump returns to the campaign trail Thursday as his chief rival for the GOP presidential nomination, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, is undertaking his first swing through early voting states as an official candidate.

Trump is back in Iowa nearly three weeks after canceling his last event, a large rally near Des Moines, due to a tornado warning, reluctantly ceding the spotlight to DeSantis as the governor crisscrossed the state ahead of his campaign launch.

Trump, who has spent the last few weeks attacking DeSantis on social media and mocking his glitch-filled kickoff announcement, has a series of events scheduled around Des Moines followed by a town hall airing on Fox News Channel on Thursday night.

DeSantis is coming off a two-day burst of stops around Iowa, which leads off the GOP presidential primary contest next year. On Thursday, he will be in the early voting state of New Hampshire, with stops scheduled in Laconia, Rochester, Salem and Manchester, before taking his campaign on Friday to South Carolina, another state high on the presidential voting calendar.

The dueling appearances between Trump and DeSantis come as each man is portraying himself as the stronger fighter for conservative policies.

Although DeSantis had largely avoided hitting back at Trump's constant attacks before he announced his presidential run, the governor pledged in Iowa this week that he would "fight back." He accused Trump of discarding "America First" immigration principles and having "moved left" on issues.

Trump and his allies have continued to attack DeSantis on social media, with the former president sharing polls that showed him the heavy favorite in the GOP primary, criticizing DeSantis' leadership during the pandemic. Trump in recent days has also pledged to end the constitutional right to citizenship for babies of noncitizens and unauthorized immigrants born in the United States, something he's called for since he first campaigned for the White House in 2015 but didn't do in his first term as president.

Trump, after appearing Wednesday night at a GOP legislative dinner in Des Moines, is set to appear Thursday morning at one of the twice-monthly breakfasts of a conservative club at a restaurant in Urbandale. The Westside Conservative Breakfast events are a long-standing stop for Republican candidates for all levels of elected office, including presidential hopefuls.

The former president is later expected to have lunch with faith leaders, visit with activists and supporters and then participate in a town hall with Sean Hannity taped late afternoon in the Des Moines suburb of Clive. The town hall will air at 9 p.m. Thursday on Fox News.

DeSantis' stop in New Hampshire is scheduled to look similar to his Iowa swing, with a series of appearances around the state and one event billed as a "fireside chat" with his wife, Casey DeSantis.

As Trump and DeSantis make their pitch to GOP voters, the Republican presidential field is shaping up to become even more crowded.

Former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie is expected to launch a Republican presidential campaign June 6 in New Hampshire. The next day, both Mike Pence, Trump's former vice president, and North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum are expected to announce campaigns of their own.

U.S. Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina, former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, former Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson and biotech entrepreneur and "anti-woke" activist Vivek Ramaswamy are among the other candidates already in the race.

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Price reported from New York and Beaumont reported from Urbandale, Iowa.

## **FTC hits Amazon with \$25 million fine for violating child privacy with Alexa voice assistant**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Amazon agreed Wednesday to pay a \$25 million civil penalty to settle Federal Trade Commission allegations it violated a child privacy law and deceived parents by keeping for years kids' voice and location data recorded by its popular Alexa voice assistant.

Separately, the company agreed to pay \$5.8 million in customer refunds for alleged privacy violations involving its doorbell camera Ring.

The Alexa-related action orders Amazon to overhaul its data deletion practices and impose stricter, more transparent privacy measures. It also obliges the tech giant to delete certain data collected by its internet-connected digital assistant, which people use for everything from checking the weather to playing games and queueing up music.

"Amazon's history of misleading parents, keeping children's recordings indefinitely, and flouting parents' deletion requests violated COPPA (the Child Online Privacy Protection Act) and sacrificed privacy for profits," Samuel Levine, the FTC consumer protection chief, said in a statement. The 1998 law is designed to shield children from online harms.

FTC Commissioner Alvaro Bedoya said in a statement that "when parents asked Amazon to delete their kids' Alexa voice data, the company did not delete all of it."

The agency ordered the company to delete inactive child accounts as well as certain voice and geolocation data.

Amazon kept the kids' data to refine its voice recognition algorithm, the artificial intelligence behind Alexa, which powers Echo and other smart speakers, Bedoya said. The FTC complaint sends a message to all tech companies who are "sprinting to do the same" amid fierce competition in developing AI datasets, he added.

"Nothing is more visceral to a parent than the sound of their child's voice," tweeted Bedoya, the father of two small children.

Amazon said last month that it has sold more than a half-billion Alexa-enabled devices globally and that use of the service increased 35% last year.

In the Ring case, the FTC says Amazon's home security camera subsidiary let employees and contractors access consumers' private videos and providing lax security practices that enabled hackers to take control of some accounts.

Amazon bought California-based Ring in 2018, and many of the violations alleged by the FTC predate the acquisition. Under the FTC's order, Ring is required to pay \$5.8 million that would be used for consumer refunds.

Amazon said it disagreed with the FTC's claims on both Alexa and Ring and denied violating the law. But it said the settlements "put these matters behind us."

"Our devices and services are built to protect customers' privacy, and to provide customers with control over their experience," the Seattle-based company said.

In addition to the fine in the Alexa case, the proposed order prohibits Amazon from using deleted geolocation and voice information to create or improve any data product. The order also requires Amazon to create a privacy program for its use of geolocation information.

The proposed orders must be approved by federal judges.

FTC commissioners had unanimously voted to file the charges against Amazon in both cases.

## **US births in 2022 didn't return to pre-pandemic levels**

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. births were flat last year, as the nation saw fewer babies born than it did before the pandemic, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Thursday.

Births to moms 35 and older continued to rise, with the highest rates in that age group since the 1960s. But those gains were offset by record-low birth rates to moms in their teens and early 20s, the CDC found.

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Its report is based on a review of more than 99% of birth certificates issued last year.

A little under 3.7 million babies were born in the U.S. last year, about 3,000 fewer than the year before. Because the numbers are provisional and the change was small, officials consider births to have been “kind of level from the previous year,” said the CDC’s Brady Hamilton, the lead author of the report.

U.S. births were declining for more than a decade before COVID-19 hit, then dropped a whopping 4% from 2019 to 2020. They ticked up about 1% in 2021, an increase experts attributed to pregnancies that couples had put off amid the early days of the pandemic.

More findings from the report:

— The highest birth rates continue to be seen in women in their early 30s. The number of births for women that age was basically unchanged from the year before. Births were down slightly for women in their late 20s, who have the second-highest birth rate.

— Births to Hispanic moms rose 6% last year and surpassed 25% of the U.S. total. Births to white moms fell 3%, but still accounted for 50% of births. Births to Black moms fell 1%, and were 14% of the total.

— The cesarean section birth rate rose slightly, to 32.2% of births. That’s the highest it’s been since 2014. Some experts worry that C-sections are done more often than medically necessary.

— The U.S. was once among only a few developed countries with a fertility rate that ensured each generation had enough children to replace itself — about 2.1 kids per woman. But it’s been sliding, and in 2020 dropped to about 1.6, the lowest rate on record. It rose slightly in 2021, to nearly 1.7, and stayed there last year.

More complete and detailed 2022 numbers are expected later this year. That data should offer a better understanding of what happened in individual states and among different racial and ethnic groups, Hamilton said.

It also may show whether births were affected by the U.S. Supreme Court decision last June overturning *Roe v. Wade*, which allowed states to ban or restrict abortion. Experts estimate that nearly half of pregnancies are unintended, so limits to abortion access could affect the number of births.

If such restrictions are having an effect on births, it didn’t show up in the national data released Thursday.

It’s possible the abortion restrictions will lead to higher birth rates in 2023 — more likely among younger women than older moms, said Ushma Upadhyay, a reproductive health researcher at the University of California, San Francisco. But even if there is a rise, it may not bring the nation back to pre-pandemic birth levels, given other trends, she added.

“I don’t know if we’ll ever get back there,” she said.

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## **Pistons reach agreement to hire former Suns coach Monty Williams, AP sources say**

By LARRY LAGE AP Sports Writer

DETROIT (AP) — The Detroit Pistons made a bold move in their latest attempt to become relevant in the NBA again.

Detroit reached an agreement to hire former Phoenix Suns coach Monty Williams, according to two people familiar with the situation.

One of the people, speaking on condition of anonymity because the agreement had not been announced, told The Associated Press on Wednesday night that Williams agreed to a six-year contract.

Phoenix fired Williams two-plus weeks ago, two years after reaching the NBA Finals and a year after he won the league’s coach of the year honors.

The 51-year-old Williams won 63% of his games over four regular seasons with the Suns, but they were eliminated in the Western Conference semifinals two years in a row after losing to Milwaukee in the 2021

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NBA Finals.

The Pistons would be thrilled to approach that level of success anytime soon under Williams.

Detroit won an NBA-low 17 games last season, losing 30% or fewer games for the fourth straight season under Dwane Casey, who stepped down as coach with one year left on his contract to take a role in the front office.

The Pistons did not have good fortune in the draft lottery, landing the No. 5 pick overall for the second straight year and missing out on an opportunity to draft 7-foot-3 French pro Victor Wembanyama, a 19-year-old supertalent expected to be the first overall pick of the San Antonio Spurs.

Detroit, a three-time NBA championship franchise, has earned a spot in the playoffs just twice in 14 years. The Pistons have not won a postseason game since 2008, when they advanced to the Eastern Conference finals for the sixth straight time during a remarkable run that included winning the 2004 NBA title and falling a game short of repeating as champions.

Jaden Ivey and Jalen Duren, the No. 5 and No. 13 pick overall last summer, did provide hope for the future with their play last season. Cade Cunningham, the No. 1 pick overall in 2021, had his second season stunted by shin surgery after playing in just 12 games.

Bojan Bogdanovic, who averaged a career-high 21.6 points, Isaiah Stewart, James Wiseman and Marvin Bagley are expected to be back.

The young team, with some experienced players in the rotation, will have a proven leader on the bench.

Williams is 367-336 in nine seasons as an NBA head coach with a 29-27 postseason record. He had a five-year stint with the New Orleans Pelicans, who fired him in 2015 with a 173-221 record and two playoff appearances.

While Williams was an assistant coach with the Oklahoma City Thunder in 2016, his wife, Ingrid, died from injuries sustained from a car crash in which she was hit head-on by an SUV that crossed the center line after losing control.

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AP Basketball Writer Tim Reynolds in Denver contributed to this report.

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

## Here's how Jordan's royal wedding will reverberate across the region and beyond

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

The Middle Eastern country of Jordan is set to host its biggest royal wedding in years on Thursday as the country's young Crown Prince Hussein exchanges vows with Rajwa Alseif, daughter of one of Saudi Arabia's wealthiest and most influential families.

With a VIP list that includes First Lady Jill Biden, White House climate envoy John Kerry and members of several European and Asian royal families, the wedding is sure to provide plenty of fodder for tabloids and gossip columns.

But the ceremony will reverberate across the region in other ways as well. It is a test of sorts for Jordan's ruling family, which has gone through a rough patch in recent years due to economic troubles and some public infighting. It deepens the ties between two countries in a turbulent region. And perhaps most importantly, it will give the world its first glimpse of the man tapped to one day rule this desert kingdom.

Longtime AP journalist Josef Federman has been covering the Middle East for two decades, and in 2019 began overseeing all coverage of Jordan. He says it's a strong U.S. ally — and seen as a pro-Western bulwark and source of stability in a volatile region.

Here, Federman breaks down what this wedding means for the country, for the region — and, of course, for the new royal couple.

FOR JORDAN

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The royal wedding is a big deal for Jordan's royal family. It's a chance for the monarchy to show its best face to its own public and also to the outside world after a rough couple of years.

Jordan has lots of challenges, lots of problems. It is home to a huge population of refugees who fled war in neighboring Syria and neighboring Iraq, and of course a large Palestinian population as well. Relations with Israel have been strained for the past few years.

Its economy is in poor shape. It's a country with few natural resources. It's even been dealing with some palace intrigue. For the past two years, the former crown prince Hamzah has been under house arrest after the king accused him of insubordination. Hamzah was a popular figure with the Jordanian public — especially in poorer tribal areas. It is rare for the royal family to air its dirty laundry like that, and the king's crackdown on his half brother certainly raised some eyebrows.

So now, at least for a day, this is a time for the monarchy to celebrate and try to repair its tarnished image. But that may not be so easy.

We will see lots of pomp and circumstance. Hussein's parents, King Abdullah II and Queen Rania, have global star appeal. We will see visiting VIPs, European royalty, Asian royalty from Japan. John Kerry and Jill Biden will be representing the U.S.

The royal family wants to have a happy day. They want to celebrate. But an extravagant wedding could also alienate the masses of people who are unemployed or living in deep poverty. They will have to tread carefully.

## FOR THE REGION

This wedding is creating a union of people from the highest levels of important countries. That always packs a punch.

Jordan is seen as a strategic ally for the West. It may be poor, but its location gives it great importance. It's in the heart of the Middle East. It borders a number of problematic countries: Syria, with a civil war; Iraq, which is recovering from war; and Israel and the West Bank, which are in a constant state of friction. So Jordan is an important source of stability for the region.

Saudi Arabia is important for other reasons. It is an immensely wealthy country. It's a leading oil producer and a rising power globally. Traditionally it's been a key U.S. ally, though that has begun to change. You see it making up with Iran. You see it forging ties with China, resisting U.S. requests to pump more oil.

So these two countries now are coming together at the highest levels. Jordan depends heavily on international aid. But it has seen aid from wealthy Gulf oil states like Saudi Arabia decrease in recent years. This wedding is likely raising some hopes in Jordan of restoring that flow of aid.

Now, we don't know when the crown prince is going to assume the throne. But whenever that happens he will inherit a country with huge challenges, especially for the younger generation, people his own age who have few opportunities.

Hussein will need all the help he can get. He needs allies. He needs foreign investment. So the closer he can be with Saudi Arabia, the better that will be for Jordan's ruling monarchy in the short run and also down the road whenever he might take power.

## FOR THE COUPLE

With this wedding, we are going to see the emergence of a new Middle Eastern power couple. Obviously you have the crown prince on one hand. On the other hand, you have his wife who comes from a family with close ties to the royal family in Saudi Arabia, the daughter of a very wealthy businessman.

Both of them are Western-educated. They went to college at prestigious universities in the United States. They speak fluent English. They clearly feel comfortable hobnobbing with other royals, with business leaders, and politicians. They can look forward to a life of great privilege. But like other royal families elsewhere, they will also be living under a microscope.

Perhaps the bigger challenge is for the crown prince. In many ways, he has been groomed for this moment since he was a child. His father has taken him on world travels in recent years. He went with the king to the White House. He delivered a high profile speech to the United Nations a couple of years ago. But this is really his coming out party as a future leader of a Middle Eastern kingdom.

The wedding is a first small test. People are going to look at his appearance to see how he carries himself.

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The administration of DeSantis, who launched a campaign for the 2024 GOP presidential nomination last week, also moved to revoke the liquor licenses of a Miami hotel and a performing arts center owned by the Orlando Philharmonic Plaza Foundation after they hosted drag shows where investigators claim minors were present.

In response, some Florida cities, including St. Cloud near Orlando, have canceled Pride events altogether. "These laws have created a climate of fear and hostility for LGBTQIA+ people in Florida," organizers for St. Cloud's Pride events wrote to announce the cancellation. "We believe that holding an LGBTQIA+ event in this environment would put our community at risk."

Responding to Florida's new laws and policies, the Human Rights Campaign — the largest LGBTQ+ rights organization in the U.S. — recently issued a travel and relocation warning for the state, joining the NAACP, the League of United Latin American Citizens, the Florida Immigrant Coalition and Equality Florida.

While the LGBTQ+ advocacy group said it wasn't calling for a boycott of all travel to Florida, it said it wanted to highlight new laws passed by the Republican-controlled Florida Legislature that they said are hostile to the LGBTQ+ community and restrict abortion access, as well as make the state unsafe for many by allowing people to carry concealed weapons without a permit.

Even before these travel advisories were issued, some regular Florida visitors were reconsidering their plans. Sara Haynes, who lives in metro Atlanta with her husband, decided not to visit the state after lawmakers started planning legislation to restrict treatment options for trans people.

"It's less a crusade and more like, 'I'm not going to spend my money where bad things are going on,'" Haynes said.

But the organizers of Gay Days and their supporters say that Orlando is as gay-friendly a city as they come, earning a perfect score on the Human Rights Campaign index, which measures how inclusive cities are of LGBTQ+ residents and visitors. They say that tourists can support the LGBTQ+ community by visiting cities like Orlando, Fort Lauderdale and St. Petersburg, which also received perfect scores.

"We live in a bubble here in Orlando, where even with the chaos in Florida, we feel safe here," said Jeremy Williams, editor-in-chief of Watermark Publishing Group Inc., a Florida-based media company that is one of the sponsors of Gay Days.

Gay Days has survived past challenges, including in the early years when Disney posted signs at the Magic Kingdom's entrance warning visitors there was a large gathering of gays and lesbians and offering passes to other parks for guests who might be offended. Over the last three decades, though, the theme parks and resorts have thrown down the welcome mats as Gay Days has become a profitable bounce between the spring break and out-of-school summer crowds. SeaWorld's water park, Aquatica, is a sponsor this year.

Other groups have adopted hostile attitudes in the past. During Gay Days in the 1990s, hundreds of anti-abortion activists with Operation Rescue protested outside Walt Disney World, and the Southern Baptist Convention cited the gathering in calling for a boycott of all things Disney. Some Christian groups tried to buy air time during Gay Days in the late 1990s to pressure people to renounce their sexual orientation, but mainstream TV stations in Orlando rejected the ads.

If Clark, the CEO of the Gay Days business, had his wish, DeSantis would accept an open invitation to see one of the drag shows during this year's festivities.

"Come on out and see that not everything you hear out there is reality," said Clark, as if he were directly addressing DeSantis. "There's a part of me that hopes that if he were to see a show, maybe his mind would change, or maybe he would see the people his actions are affecting."

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Follow Mike Schneider on Twitter at @MikeSchneiderAP



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But the bigger test will be in the coming months, in the coming years, as he truly emerges as a public figure. He's going to be well-known now on the global stage.

Perhaps the biggest challenge will be how he is viewed at home. The nation is struggling in so many ways and people are going to be watching him very closely. It's going to be interesting to see how he carries himself in front of the people that he is set to one day rule.

Follow Josef Federman on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/joseffederman>

## House OKs debt ceiling bill to avoid default, sends Biden-McCarthy deal to Senate

By LISA MASCARO, KEVIN FREKING, STEPHEN GROVES and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Veering away from a default crisis, the House approved a debt ceiling and budget cuts package late Wednesday, as President Joe Biden and Speaker Kevin McCarthy assembled a bipartisan coalition of centrist Democrats and Republicans against fierce conservative blowback and progressive dissent.

The hard-fought deal pleased few, but lawmakers assessed it was better than the alternative — a devastating economic upheaval if Congress failed to act. Tensions ran high throughout the day as hard-right Republicans refused the deal, while Democrats said "extremist" GOP views were risking a debt default as soon as next week.

With an overwhelming House vote, 314-117, the bill now heads to the Senate with passage expected by week's end.

McCarthy insisted his party was working to "give America hope" as he launched into a late evening speech extolling the bill's budget cuts, which he said were needed to curb Washington's "runaway spending."

Amid deep discontent from Republicans who said the spending restrictions did not go far enough, McCarthy said it is only a "first step."

The package makes some inroads in curbing the nation's debt as Republicans demanded, without rolling back Trump-era tax breaks as Biden wanted. To pass it, Biden and McCarthy counted on support from the political center, a rarity in divided Washington.

In a statement released after the vote, Biden said: "I have been clear that the only path forward is a bipartisan compromise that can earn the support of both parties. This agreement meets that test."

He called the vote "good news for the American people and the American economy."

Biden had sent top White House officials to the Capitol and called lawmakers directly to shore up backing. McCarthy worked to sell skeptical fellow Republicans, even fending off challenges to his leadership, in the rush to avert a potentially disastrous U.S. default.

Swift passage later in the week by the Senate would ensure government checks will continue to go out to Social Security recipients, veterans and others and would prevent financial upheaval at home and abroad. Next Monday is when the Treasury has said the U.S. would run short of money to pay its debts.

Overall, the 99-page bill restricts spending for the next two years, suspends the debt ceiling into January 2025 and changes some policies, including imposing new work requirements for older Americans receiving food aid and greenlighting an Appalachian natural gas line that many Democrats oppose.

It bolsters funds for defense and veterans, and guts new money for Internal Revenue Service agents.

Raising the nation's debt limit, now \$31 trillion, ensures Treasury can borrow to pay already incurred U.S. debts.

Top GOP deal negotiator Rep. Garret Graves of Louisiana said Republicans were fighting for budget cuts after the past years of extra spending, first during the COVID-19 crisis and later with Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, with its historic investment to fight climate change paid for with revenues elsewhere.

But Republican Rep. Chip Roy, a member of the Freedom Caucus helping to lead the opposition, said, "My beef is that you cut a deal that shouldn't have been cut."

For weeks negotiators labored late into the night to strike the deal with the White House, and for days

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McCarthy has worked to build support among skeptics. At one point, aides wheeled in pizza at the Capitol the night before the vote as he walked Republicans through the details, fielded questions and encouraged them not to lose sight of the bill's budget savings.

The speaker has faced a tough crowd. Cheered on by conservative senators and outside groups, the hard-right House Freedom Caucus lambasted the compromise as falling well short of the needed spending cuts, and they vowed to try to halt passage.

A much larger conservative faction, the Republican Study Committee, declined to take a position. Even rank-and-file centrist conservatives were unsure, leaving McCarthy searching for votes from his slim Republican majority.

Ominously, the conservatives warned of possibly trying to oust McCarthy over the compromise.

One influential Republican, former President Donald Trump, held his fire: "It is what it is," he said of the deal in an interview with Iowa radio host Simon Conway.

House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries said it was up to McCarthy to turn out Republican votes in the 435-member House, where 218 votes are needed for approval.

As the tally faltered on an afternoon procedural vote, Jeffries stood silently and raised his green voting card, signaling that the Democrats would fill in the gap to ensure passage. They did, advancing the bill that hard-right Republicans, many from the Freedom Caucus, refused to back.

"Once again, House Democrats to the rescue to avoid a dangerous default," said Jeffries, D-N.Y.

"What does that say about this extreme MAGA Republican majority?" he said about the party aligned with Trump's "Make America Great Again" political movement.

Then, on the final vote hours later, Democrats again ensured passage, leading the tally as 71 Republicans bucked their majority and voted against it.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said the spending restrictions in the package would reduce deficits by \$1.5 trillion over the decade, a top goal for the Republicans trying to curb the debt load.

In a surprise that complicated Republicans' support, however, the CBO said their drive to impose work requirements on older Americans receiving food stamps would end up boosting spending by \$2.1 billion over the time period. That's because the final deal exempts veterans and homeless people, expanding the food stamp rolls by 78,000 people monthly, the CBO said.

Liberal discontent, though, ran strong as nearly four dozen Democrats also broke away, decrying the new work requirements for older Americans, those 50-54, in the food aid program.

Some Democrats were also incensed that the White House negotiated into the deal changes to the landmark National Environmental Policy Act and approval of the controversial Mountain Valley Pipeline natural gas project. The energy development is important to Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., but many others oppose it as unhelpful in fighting climate change.

On Wall Street, stock prices were down.

In the Senate, Democratic Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell are working for passage by week's end.

Schumer warned there is "no room for error."

Senators, who have remained largely on the sidelines during much of the negotiations, are insisting on amendments to reshape the package. But making any changes at this stage seemed unlikely with so little time to spare before Monday's deadline.

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AP White House Correspondent Zeke Miller and AP writers Mary Clare Jalonick, Seung Min Kim and Jill Colvin and video journalist Nathan Ellgren contributed to this report.

## Aide fired by George Santos says he got his job after sending money to Republican's deputy

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A man who briefly worked as an aide to U.S. Rep. George Santos says he got his job after sending a series of payments to one of the Republican's top deputies.

Derek Myers, 31, told staff of the House's ethics subcommittee during an interview Wednesday that while he was trying to get a job in Santos' congressional office in late January, he sent at least seven \$150 payments to Santos' director of operations, Vish Burra.

Myers shared details about the payments, including receipts and text messages, with The Associated Press. His account of how Burra helped him get hired hasn't previously been reported and raises questions about potential ethical improprieties around Santos.

Myers said he began sending the money unsolicited because he believed Burra, a right-wing political operative, wasn't getting paid by the House at the time and couldn't afford food. But he said he also hoped the payments might help him secure a job.

"Burra was a powerful person," Myers told the AP. "I wanted him to advocate on my behalf."

Burra, a reliable presence beside Santos who helped escort his boss away from journalists after his arraignment in federal court last month, declined to comment.

House investigators questioned Myers about the payments, documented in receipts and text messages, as part of a probe into workplace sexual harassment allegations Myers made after being dismissed from Santos' staff in February.

Myers, a former journalist, received a job offer to be a legislative assistant in late January, but lasted less than a week in the position. At the time, Santos told Myers he was concerned by the findings of a background check, which showed Myers had been charged with wiretapping in Ohio after publishing a recording of a trial.

In a February letter sent to the House Committee on Ethics, Myers said he was ousted after he spurned Santos' sexual advances, accusing the congressman of running his hand along his inner leg and touching his groin while they were alone in the office.

Santos has denied the allegation, describing it as "comical."

The House Ethics Committee is investigating several allegations of improper behavior by Santos, who has admitted to fabricating much of his biography and is currently facing federal charges that include fraud and money laundering.

Last month, Republicans in the House sidestepped a vote to expel Santos, referring the matter to the ethics panel. The committee has not divulged whom it is interviewing or when a decision might be reached.

On Wednesday, members of the committee spent two hours questioning Myers about his sexual harassment allegations, his relationship with Burra, and whether he'd witnessed any illegal behavior during his short stint in the office.

He described finding Burra online, then pushing for a job at Santos's office out of an earnest desire to help the scandal-scarred representative.

Myers also provided documentation, including emails and text messages with staffers and receipts showing his Venmo payments to Burra.

In his interview, Myers said Burra didn't ask him for money, but once requested that he "send more pizza," which he took to be a reference to the pizza emoji they'd used previously in Venmo subject lines.

The House investigators asked Myers about a text exchange he had with Burra on Jan. 29, days after he'd been offered the job. In that exchange, Myers had asked Burra, "Did you get payroll yet?"

"No. You didn't have to do that man," Burra replied, adding later, "I'm gonna pay you back for sure."

Myers acknowledged during his interview with the House investigators that he had secretly recorded at least one conversation with Santos and later shared it with a journalist. He also said he had gone to the FBI while still working for Santos, with the intention of possibly working as a confidential informant

for law enforcement.

He said he decided to speak out about the harassment incident after he was forced to leave the job.

## **In Canada, each cigarette will get a warning label: 'poison in every puff'**

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Canada will soon become the first country in the world where warning labels must appear on individual cigarettes.

The move was first announced last year by Health Canada and is aimed at helping people quit the habit. The regulations take effect Aug. 1 and will be phased in. King-size cigarettes will be the first to feature the warnings and will be sold in stores by the end of July 2024, followed by regular-size cigarettes, and little cigars with tipping paper and tubes by the end of April 2025.

"This bold step will make health warning messages virtually unavoidable," Mental Health and Addictions Minister Carolyn Bennett said Wednesday.

The warnings — in English and French — include "poison in every puff," "tobacco smoke harms children" and "cigarettes cause impotence."

Health Canada said the strategy aims to reduce tobacco use below 5% by 2035. New regulations also strengthen health-related graphic images displayed on packages of tobacco.

Bennett's statement said tobacco use kills 48,000 Canadians every year.

Doug Roth, chief executive of the Heart & Stroke charity, said the bold measure will ensure that dangers to lung health cannot be missed.

The Canadian Cancer Society said the measure will reduce smoking and the appeal of cigarettes, thus preventing cancer and other diseases.

Rob Cunningham, senior policy analyst at the Canadian Cancer Society, said health messaging will be conveyed in every puff and during every smoke break. Canada, he added, will have the best tobacco health warning system in the world.

Tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship are banned in Canada and warnings on cigarette packs have existed since 1972.

In 2001, Canada became the first country to require tobacco companies to include picture warnings on the outside of cigarette packages and include inserts with health messages.

## **Reports: Prosecutors have tape of Trump discussing holding onto classified doc after leaving office**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Justice Department prosecutors have obtained an audio recording of former President Donald Trump from after he left office in which he talks about holding onto a classified Pentagon document related to a potential attack on Iran, according to media reports.

CNN, which first reported on the tape, said Trump suggested on the recording that he wanted to share information from the document with others but that he knew there were limitations about his ability to declassify records after he left office.

The comments on the recording, made in July 2021 at his golf club in Bedminster, New Jersey, would seem to undercut the former president's repeated claims that he declassified the documents he took with him from the White House to Mar-a-Lago, his Florida estate, after leaving office. The recording could also be a key aid for prosecutors looking to prove Trump knew his ability to possess classified documents was limited.

The recording has been provided to special counsel Jack Smith, whose team of prosecutors have spent months investigating the potential mishandling of classified documents at Mar-a-Lago and whether Trump or anyone else sought to criminally obstruct the probe. The investigation shows signs of being in its final stages, with prosecutors having interviewed a broad cross-section of witnesses before the grand jury.

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No one has been criminally charged.

The criminal investigation began last year after the National Archives and Records Administration alerted the FBI to the presence of classified documents in 15 boxes of records sent back, belatedly, from Mar-a-Lago by Trump and his representatives. Investigators initially issued a subpoena for remaining classified records, but after they received only about three dozen during a June 2022 visit to Mar-a-Lago, returned with a search warrant two months later and recovered about 100 more documents marked as classified.

Smith, the special counsel, is also investigating efforts by Trump and his allies to undo the results of the 2020 presidential election — the subject of a similar, ongoing inquiry by prosecutors in Atlanta. New York prosecutors charged Trump earlier this year with falsifying business records.

According to the CNN report, the recording was made during a gathering at Bedminster with aides to Trump and two people who were working on the autobiography of Trump's former chief of staff, Mark Meadows.

It said Meadows' autobiography includes a description of what appears to be the same meeting. A lawyer for Meadows declined to comment Wednesday when reached by The Associated Press.

CNN said witnesses including Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, have been questioned about the episode. A spokesman for Milley declined to comment on reports that he had been interviewed.

A spokesman for the special counsel declined to comment.

A Trump spokesman said in a statement that the investigation was "meritless" and amounted to "continued interference in the presidential election."

## 'Ted Lasso' finale proved its whole point — that those who are stuck can overcome (SPOILERS)

By TED ANTHONY AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Roy Kent cries. Nate Shelley apologizes. Rebecca Welton lets her anger go. Trent Crimm finishes his book. Keeley Jones embraces her strength. And the kind-to-a-fault but often lost Ted Lasso finally — after three seasons, but arguably after nearly a lifetime — figures out exactly where he needs to be.

Criticized by some for losing its way in its third season, "Ted Lasso" ended up exactly on brand — by taking a sharply drawn crew of characters who had lost their ways and gotten stuck, and freeing them from shackles that were often of their own making. "Can people change?" Roy Kent (Brett Goldstein) wonders. The answer, after Wednesday, is a resounding "probably."

"Perfect is boring," Coach Beard (Brendan Hunt) says at one point in the season (and likely series) finale. And if there had been a travel guide to the three seasons of the Apple TV+ show, that quote might well have sat opposite the title page.

"Ted Lasso" has been a Whitman's Sampler of pandemic-era stuckness with a message that, whether it was delivered with a subtle glance or a giant narrative mallet, couldn't help but resonate in a post-pandemic landscape: The moments that have trapped you don't have to last forever.

It was difficult to find a show with more of a collection of people who were stuck — trapped in the amber of their own circumstances or choices. Keeley (Juno Temple) was stuck. Roy was stuck. Jamie (Phil Dunster) was stuck. Rebecca (Hannah Waddingham) was stuck. Trent, Colin and Sam (James Lance, Billy Harris and Toheeb Jimoh) were stuck. Nate (Nick Mohammed) was stuck. Even Sharon the sports psychologist (Sarah Niles) was, to some extent, stuck.

And of course Ted himself (Jason Sudeikis), a lost boy with a mustache and a plenitude of platitudes who had been stuck in the quicksand of grief for most of his life and, it turned out, needed a mission to get others unstuck to help him find his own way forward.

'STUCK' IS A THEME TV LOVES

The character who's stuck in the mire is nothing new. It has been a useful and oft-used narrative engine from "It's a Wonderful Life" (1946) through "Groundhog Day" (1993) and beyond. But something more

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intense is happening lately. Take a tour across genres in the American streaming landscape over the past, say, four years, and you'll find a surfeit of stuckness in pretty much every direction you look.

The Scarlet Witch in Marvel's "WandaVision"? Stuck. Nadia in "Russian Doll"? Stuck in strikingly different ways in seasons one and two. Alma in "Undone," Carmy in "The Bear" and "Mare of Easttown"? Stuck, stuck and stuck. Even some of streaming's most recent stars — "Severance," "Shrinking" and the recently concluded "Star Trek: Picard" — focus on central characters who are stuck by bad choices, trauma or a lost sense of purpose.

Then there are the shows about the very embodiment of stuckness: "Ghosts" and "School Spirits," both of which address the problem from the vantage point of people who have shuffled off the mortal coil but — even then — can't seem to figure out how to get where they're going.

"Ted Lasso" distilled this theme to the Nth degree without resorting to supernatural activity. This batch of humans was, viewed from a bit of a distance, an entire citadel of stuckness — albeit in varied ways.

Keeley was paralyzed by uncertainty, Roy by anger, Jamie by trauma and ego, Trent by expectations. Nate was being derailed by feelings of inadequacy and Colin by a fear of judgment. Sam was stuck by expectations familial and national. Rebecca was drowning in the scars of a partner's psychological abuse. Arguably the only main character not stuck was Leslie Higgins (Jeremy Swift), jazz virtuoso and dedicated family man — and the only character to understand all along that right here, right now was the place he wanted to be.

He had a leg up on many of us. The COVID-19 pandemic was, for a time, stuckness incarnate. "Ted Lasso" debuted right in the middle of it, on Aug. 14, 2020. Now, almost three years later, aren't we navigating through an entire generation coming of age amid an isolating pandemic and deep political fissures? Aren't there millions of folks across the republic locked in tiny, individual struggles to avoid getting stuck or — possibly even more daunting — trying to avoid staying that way?

## AMERICANS LEARN FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE POND

The other elephant in the "Ted Lasso" room — one directly related to stuckness — is also something that invoked the British-American divide so often played for laughs on the show.

A few weeks back, the "Lasso" cast visited the White House to talk about mental health. At the time, Sudeikis said this: "We shouldn't be afraid to ask for help ourselves."

That suggests — no, proposes overtly — that going it alone, "American-style," isn't always plausible and that, as the poet John Donne put it so many centuries ago, "No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main." The bringing together of so many different people from so many places — an international soccer team — provided the ideal canvas for the show's thesis. Turns out that varied points of view can produce better results. Go figure.

Those who say "Ted Lasso" was treacly and wandered a bit during the third season make legitimate points. Plot lines were dropped or overly compressed. Nuanced antiheroes were not this show's jam, and never did dark doings define the day. The only true villain — Rupert Mannion (Anthony Head) — was a mustache-twirler with a goatee (the mustache was, of course, already taken) and mostly a foil, a scheming island alone in a sea of sentimentality.

That was OK. Because if the show had a message for the stuck among us, it was this: Maybe, just maybe, rank sentimentality can get you unstuck. And more to the point, maybe you get unstuck by bringing a piece of yourself to everyone else. "The best we can do," Higgins says, "is to keep asking for help and accepting it when you can."

In the United States in 2023, that's still a harder message to sell than it should be. But it's more relevant than ever. Feelings get you stuck, but feelings also set you free. Effort can make you vulnerable, but effort matters.

"I just had to try," Rebecca tells Ted at one point in the finale. That's ultimately the answer to getting unstuck. And it points right back to the song we heard every week in the opening credits — the key, in the end, to unlocking the whole show.

"It might be all that you get.

I guess this might well be it.  
But heaven knows I tried ..."

— Ted Anthony, director of new storytelling and newsroom innovation at the Associated Press, has been writing about American culture since 1990. Follow him on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/anthonyted>

## **DeSantis plays up his personal side — and swipes at Trump — during campaign blitz across Iowa**

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

SALIX, Iowa (AP) — Ron DeSantis blitzed through Iowa during his first full day of presidential campaigning on Wednesday, aiming for the kind of personal connections with voters that critics say have long eluded him while stepping up his verbal swipes at former President Donald Trump.

The Florida governor packed in four appearances that took him to cities, rural locales and the conservative heartland following his glitch-filled online campaign kickoff last week. The first was to the floor of Port Neal Welding in Salix, a rural town near Sioux City, where the nearby highway was lined with metal structures including a towering Jesus, a version of the Statue of Liberty and the Minions.

DeSantis also hit Council Bluffs and Pella before concluding his day in Cedar Rapids. All that came after a Tuesday night appearance in the state capital, Des Moines. He didn't take audience questions — usually a staple at Iowa presidential campaign events — during the five stops in front of more than 2,000 people combined across both days.

Instead, DeSantis gave similar speeches at each appearance, repeatedly talking up his efforts to push Florida farther to the right. While he sometimes seemed energized by the crowds, he barreled through his remarks at other times — talking so fast that there were few pauses for the audiences to applaud. By the final event, though, he was better about allowing time for cheers, especially from an enthusiastic crowd of around 600 in Cedar Rapids.

"The tired dogmas of the past are inadequate for a vibrant future. We have to look forward," DeSantis said in Salix, speaking in front of a green tractor and a crowd of about 100, many wearing caps bearing seed company logos. "We can't look backwards. We must have the courage to lead and we must have the strength to win."

DeSantis is trailing Trump in the polls and has been dogged by criticism that, while he's comfortable on stage, he can seem halting and awkward when interacting with regular voters.

Displaying a personal touch that resonates with voters is vital in states like Iowa. That's a departure from Florida and its large, expensive media markets, where television advertising is often more important than on-the-ground campaigning.

Trying to position himself as the most formidable alternative to Trump in the crowded-but-still-forming Republican White House primary field, DeSantis didn't mention the former president by name during his speeches. But he did question the direction of a GOP that continues to be dominated by Trump.

"We have to dispense with the culture of losing that we've seen throughout the Republican Party," he told a crowd of hundreds of cheering supporters in Council Bluffs, adding that the party "should have 55 Republican senators right now, if we had played our cards right over the last few years."

And he frequently mentioned that he felt like it would likely take two terms to really roll back the actions of the Biden administration — a veiled reference to Trump, who can only serve one more term. But speaking to reporters after his Tuesday night speech at a suburban Des Moines church, DeSantis went even further.

The governor accused Trump of abandoning "America First" principles on immigration, supporting coronavirus pandemic-related lockdowns and generally having "moved left." DeSantis also laughed off frequent criticism from the former president over his leadership in Florida, particularly on the state's response to COVID-19.

"Hell, his whole family moved to Florida under my governorship," DeSantis said.

Attempting to display a softer side was DeSantis' wife, Casey, who was a fixture throughout Wednesday's

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multiple events and sometimes drew more applause than he did. She spoke most often about the couple's young children, and the importance of family and community.

After his speech is Salix, both the governor and his wife sat for a "fireside chat" among hydraulic lifts and long welding tables arrayed with metal engine parts to offer stories of their favorite drive-thru chicken restaurant and their kids — including a messy incident involving permanent marker drawings on the bathroom walls of the governor's mansion.

"They just seem very down to earth," said Bev Lessman, a 70-year-old retired teacher from Sioux City. After speaking, DeSantis walked through the audience and Lessman wrapped her arms around DeSantis' neck and told the governor she could feel what seemed to her to be the governor's Christian devotion.

"I told him we can't make others live it, but I appreciated how he expressed his faith," she said later. He replied, "But we can model it," she said.

Others, though, felt like DeSantis was trying too hard to connect with voters.

Geno Foral, 29, of Council Bluffs said he felt like most of DeSantis' speech there was prepared in advance to appeal to Iowa voters. But he also said the governor had delivered for Florida.

"It can't all be scripted because there's results in his leadership," Foral said.

After Iowa, which leads off Republican primary voting, DeSantis was heading to New Hampshire on Thursday and South Carolina on Friday — two other locales that vote early on the party's primary calendar, and where face-to-face interactions with voters are especially important.

Already scheduled to be in Iowa on Thursday, meanwhile, Trump added Wednesday stops in the state to overlap with DeSantis. While taping a radio appearance in Des Moines, the former president called DeSantis a "very disloyal person" but also said the two were locked in a "certain kind" of war.

"The person that's in second place, you go after that person as opposed to a person that's in eighth or ninth place," Trump told radio host Simon Conway, who asked why Trump is attacking fellow Republicans.

Trump added of DeSantis: "I'm running against him and I think, you know, maybe one of the things that people like about me is that I do fight. You know, how would you like it if I came out and I just wimped around and told you, 'Oh gee, he's a wonderful person?'"

DeSantis will be back in Iowa again Saturday for an event for 2024 GOP hopefuls hosted by Sen. Joni Ernst. They will be joined by declared candidates including Sen. Tim Scott, R-S.C., and former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley, along with former Vice President Mike Pence.

Pence is among the candidates expected to officially join the GOP primary field next week, along with former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum.

So much travel across multiple states will give DeSantis a lot of unscripted moments with voters — and he got a taste of that as he moved through the audience at the end of the Salix appearance. Some people approached the governor with specific points, as did Mark Choquette, who questioned DeSantis about his assertions that two terms were needed to succeed.

"If he don't bust ass and tear up D.C. in the first term, he may not get a second term, and then where he be?" asked Choquette, a 76-year-old retired U.S. Marine and Vietnam War veteran. "That's one reason I like Trump. He doesn't have to worry about getting reelected."

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Weissert reported from Washington. Associated Press writers Josh Funk in Council Bluffs, Iowa, Jill Colvin in New York and Steve Peoples in Clive, Iowa, contributed to this report.

## Judge dismisses criminal charges against California energy company in 2020 fatal wildfire

REDDING, Calif. (AP) — A California judge on Wednesday dismissed all charges against Pacific Gas & Electric in connection to a 2020 fatal wildfire sparked by its equipment that destroyed hundreds of homes and killed four people, including an 8-year-old.

The utility also reached a \$50 million settlement agreement with the Shasta County District Attorney's Office, officials from both announced in separate statements.



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The wind-whipped blaze began on Sept. 27, 2020, and raged through rugged terrain and small communities west of Redding, killing four people, burning about 200 homes and blackening about 87 square miles (225 square kilometers) of land in Shasta and Tehama counties.

In 2021, state fire investigators concluded the fire was sparked by a gray pine tree that fell onto a PG&E distribution line. Shasta and Tehama counties sued the utility, alleging negligence. They said PG&E failed to remove the tree even though it had been marked for removal two years earlier. The utility says the tree was subsequently cleared to stay.

Shasta County District Attorney Stephanie Bridgett determined that the company was criminally liable for the fire and charged the utility later that year.

Shasta Superior Court Judge Daniel E. Flynn disagreed, and in a tentative ruling ahead of a hearing Wednesday said prosecutors did not present enough evidence to show PG&E engaged in criminal conduct, according to the Sacramento Bee, which obtained a copy of the ruling.

The "tree was not a known risk prior to the Zogg fire, and there is no evidence to support the People's claim in their opposition that it was," the judge wrote.

The utility said in a statement that under the agreement with Shasta County, which is subject to court approval, it will fund \$45 million in contributions to organizations dedicated to rebuilding and assisting local communities. The company will also pay a \$5 million civil penalty to the county.

"We stand behind our thousands of trained and experienced coworkers and contractors working every day to keep Californians safe. We feel strongly that those good-faith judgments are not criminal," said Patti Poppe, Chief Executive Officer of PG&E Corporation.

Bridgett said her goal was always to take PG&E to trial and hold them criminally responsible but that Flynn's tentative ruling changed her position and she agreed to a settlement that includes dropping all charges.

"I am unwilling to gamble with the safety of Shasta County," she said. "I have a responsibility to the community and needed to secure what I can for all the citizens to prevent future wildfires, prevent future deaths and devastation, and to be as prepared as our county can be if another one occurs."

Last week, the California Public Utilities Commission approved a \$150 million settlement between Pacific Gas and Electric Co. and the CPUC's Safety and Enforcement Division over PG&E's role in the Zogg Fire. As part of the agreement, the utility will pay \$10 million as a penalty to California's General Fund, and invest \$140 million in shareholder funds in new wildfire mitigation efforts, officials said.

## **Born in a typhoon: Many, including newborns, remain without electricity as Guam recovers from storm**

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — About a week after Typhoon Mawar tore through Guam as the strongest typhoon to hit the U.S. Pacific territory in over two decades, most of the island remained without electricity and the governor appealed for patience during a recovery process expected to take at least a month.

Even though Mawar caused no deaths or catastrophic destruction, officials said that as of Wednesday only 28% of power had been restored on the oppressively hot and humid island. About 44% of cell towers were functional Wednesday, and about half the water system was operational, Bob Fenton, regional administrator for the Federal Emergency Management Agency told The Associated Press via phone from Guam.

Mawar briefly made landfall as a Category 4 storm late on May 24 on the northern tip of the island of roughly 150,000 people, flipping cars, tearing off roofs and leaving trees bare.

There have been long lines for gas and officials estimate it will be four to six weeks before power is fully restored. FEMA did not yet know exactly how many homes were destroyed. High school graduations were indefinitely postponed across Guam.

Nearly 3,400 people registered for individual assistance, a number Fenton expects to rise dramatically

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as communication networks improve.

Fenton has seen storm-prone Guam through numerous typhoons in his 26 years working with FEMA in the Pacific islands.

"Guam has done a good job at hardening parts of their system," since Super Typhoon Pongsona struck the island in 2002, he said.

Since then, wooden power poles have been replaced with ones made of concrete or composite material, he said. Homes are also mostly made of concrete, even though there are still less sturdy structures with tin roofs.

"Each and every day the system will improve," Fenton said, adding that he understands how grueling even a few hours without electricity can be. "We're here for the long haul."

Gyuri Kim was in labor with her first baby as the typhoon lashed Guam, flooding the hospital and leaving walls shuddering.

"The building was shaking," Kim said. "I was worried that the ceiling or the wall was gonna fall."

After delivering her baby girl, she had to wait outside in a hallway on a recliner chair because there wasn't a room available because of the flood damage, she told AP in text messages Saturday.

Kim's husband came to the hospital after Grace was born, but couldn't stay long because he had to repair their storm-damaged roof.

Conditions were also challenging for the new mom at home, where there was no electricity to cool down the muggy heat.

"We're patiently waiting for power and water to come back," she wrote. "Grace is doing fine! I just feel bad whenever she sweats a lot."

Kim's obstetrician delivered six babies, including twins, throughout the storm.

"And it was just an incredible, incredible ordeal that these women had to go through," Dr. Thomas Shieh told AP. "Some of them were in a lot of pain and there was no (air-conditioning). It was horrible."

While one of the twin girls was still being monitored in neonatal intensive care for breathing issues, new parents Blessy and Ramil Argana went to a hotel with the other one after leaving the hospital Sunday.

"Our house is messy. There's debris ... on our streets," Blessy Argana said Thursday from their room. "And there's no power and water and internet. It's like a ghost town."

Guam Memorial Hospital, the only hospital on the island where civilians can give birth, sustained significant flood damage but remained operational.

Guam is a crucial hub for U.S. forces in the Pacific, with about 6,800 service members assigned to the island, according to the Pentagon. Ahead of the storm, military officials evacuated personnel, dependents and employees, sent ships out to sea and moved aircraft off the island or secured them in protective hangars.

A.B. Won Pat International Airport, which also flooded, resumed regular flight operations on Monday.

Jesse Alig, mayor of the village of Piti and president of the Mayors' Council of Guam, has been vocal about being unsatisfied with Guam officials' planning and response.

"Yes, we're recovering. The island is cleaning up fairly well," he said, but more needs to be done to get resources and information to people. "I just think we didn't plan well enough."

In a Facebook video Wednesday, Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero said she understands his frustration. "I heard Mayor Alig," she said, announcing that \$100,000 would go to each mayor to help meet immediate needs.

"Progress has been made," she said of seeing more lights go on and more people getting water restored.

## 3 activists arrested after their fund bailed out protestors of Atlanta's 'Cop City'

By JEFF AMY and KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Police on Wednesday arrested three Atlanta organizers who have been aiding protestors against the city's proposed police and fire training center, striking at the structure that supports the fight against what opponents derisively call "Cop City."

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The Georgia Bureau of Investigation announced its agents and Atlanta police had arrested three leaders of the Atlanta Solidarity Fund, which has bailed out protesters and helped them find lawyers.

Charged with money laundering and charity fraud are Marlon Scott Kautz, 39, of Atlanta; Savannah D. Patterson, 30, of Savannah; and Adele MacLean, 42, of Atlanta.

State investigators said they found evidence linking all three to financial crimes. Police executed warrants Wednesday morning at a house owned by Kautz and MacLean that is emblazoned with anti-police graffiti in an otherwise gentrified neighborhood east of downtown Atlanta.

Attorney Don Samuel, who is representing the three activists, said Wednesday afternoon that he had not yet seen the arrest warrants and was trying to determine the basis for the charges.

"I know what the crimes are that are alleged, but I don't know exactly what the state's alleging that these three people did or how they supposedly engaged in charity fraud," he said.

Prosecutors said the three would likely make their initial appearances before a judge on Thursday.

MacLean, Kautz and Patterson are respectively the CEO, chief financial officer and secretary of the Network for Strong Communities, which was incorporated in 2020 and runs the Atlanta Solidarity Fund.

Lauren Regan, executive director of the Civil Liberties Defense Center, called the arrests an "extreme provocation" in a statement.

"Bailing out protestors who exercise their constitutionally protected rights is simply not a crime," Regan said. "In fact, it is a historically grounded tradition in the very same social and political movements that the city of Atlanta prides itself on. Someone had to bail out civil rights activists in the 60's — I think we can all agree that community support isn't a crime,"

More than 40 people have been charged with domestic terrorism in connection with protests over the Atlanta Public Safety Training Center, a cause that has garnered international attention since authorities clearing the protesters' camp in South River Forest fatally shot an environmental activist in January. Officials say the officers fired in self-defense after the protester shot a trooper. The Georgia Bureau of Investigation is investigating.

Kautz himself predicted in a February statement that investigators were trying to build a criminal case against protesters using Georgia's Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations law.

That law allows prosecutors to bring charges against multiple people accused of committing separate crimes while working toward a common goal. RICO is a felony charge that carries stiff penalties: A prison term of five to 20 years; a fine of \$25,000 or three times the amount of money gained from the criminal activity, whichever is greater; or both.

"This is targeting of organizers and movements by the police and the state," Kamau Franklin of Community Movement Builders said in a statement "Bail funds have been a part of organizing the Civil Rights movement and labor movement. We will continue to fight back against cop city and the political arrest of our friends and comrades."

In a statement issued after the arrests, Gov. Brian Kemp said the state would "track down every member of a criminal organization, from violent foot soldiers to their uncaring leaders."

"These criminals facilitated and encouraged domestic terrorism with no regard for others, watching as communities faced the destructive consequences of their actions," the Republican said. "Here in Georgia, we do not allow that to happen."

Georgia Attorney General Chris Carr, also a Republican, pledged to "not rest until we have held accountable every person who has funded, organized, or participated in this violence and intimidation."

Activists nationwide have joined the protest movement, arguing that the 85-acre (34-hectare) center would train officers to become more militarized and quell dissent, all while hundreds of trees are cut down, worsening flooding and climate change.

The Atlanta City Council approved the training center in 2021, saying a state-of-the-art campus would replace substandard offerings and boost police morale, which is beset by hiring and retention struggles in the wake of violent nationwide protests against police brutality and racial injustice in the summer of 2020.

The city is tasking the private Atlanta Police Foundation with building the complex, promising to pay \$67

million over time. The remainder of the \$90 million complex would come from private funds. Foundation work is ongoing, with the complex projected to be completed in 2024. \_\_\_\_

An earlier version of this story was corrected to show the spelling of one arrestee's last name is Adele MacLean, not Maclean.

## Corporate Amazon workers protest company's climate impact and return-to-office mandate in walkout

By ED KOMENDA Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Telling executives to "strive harder," hundreds of corporate Amazon workers protested what they decried as the company's lack of progress on climate goals and an inequitable return-to-office mandate during a lunchtime demonstration at its Seattle headquarters Wednesday.

The protest came a week after Amazon's annual shareholder meeting and a month after a policy took effect returning workers to the office three days per week. Previously, team leaders were allowed to determine how their charges worked.

The employees chanted their disappointment with the pace of the company's efforts to reduce its carbon footprint — "Emissions climbing, time to act" — and urged Amazon to return authority to team leaders when it comes to work location.

Wearing a black pirate hat and red coat, Church Hindley, a quality assurance engineer, said working from home allowed him to live a better, healthier life.

"I'm out here because I refuse to just sit idly by while mandates are dictated from above down that don't make sense and hurt the planet, hurt families and individual lives," Hindley said. "And just to get us into a seat at the office for their tax incentives."

In a statement, Amazon said it supported workers expressing opinions.

As of Wednesday morning, organizers estimated more than 1,900 employees pledged to walk out around the world, with about 900 in Seattle. Many participated remotely, but hundreds gathered at the Amazon Spheres — a four-story structure in downtown Seattle that from the outside looks like three connected glass orbs.

"Today looks like it might be the start of a new chapter in Amazon's history, when tech workers coming out of the pandemic stood up and said, 'We still want a say in this company and the direction of this company,'" said Eliza Pan, a former Amazon corporate employee and a co-founder of Amazon Employees for Climate Justice, a climate change advocacy group founded by Amazon workers.

Amazon, which relies on fossil fuels to power the planes, trucks and vans that ship packages all over the world, has an enormous carbon footprint. Amazon workers have been vocal in criticizing some of the company's practices.

In an annual statement to investors, Amazon said it aims to deploy 100,000 electric delivery vehicles by 2030 and reach net-zero carbon by 2040. But activists say the company must do more and commit to zero emissions by 2030.

"While we all would like to get there tomorrow, for companies like ours who consume a lot of power, and have very substantial transportation, packaging, and physical building assets, it'll take time to accomplish," Brad Glasser, an Amazon spokesperson, said in a statement.

Since more employees returned to the office, Glasser said, there has also been a good energy on the company's South Lake Union campus and at its other urban centers. More than 20,000 workers, however, signed a petition urging Amazon to reconsider the return-to-office mandate.

In a February memo, Amazon CEO Andy Jassy said the company made its decision to return corporate employees to the office at least three days a week after observing what worked during the pandemic. Among other things, he said senior leadership watched how staff performed and talked to leaders at other companies. He said they concluded employees tended to be more engaged in person and collaborate more easily.

In a note asking Amazon employees to pledge their participation in the walkout, organizers said the

company "must return autonomy to its teams, who know their employees and customers best, to make the best decision on remote, in-person, or hybrid work, and to its employees to choose a team which enables them to work the way they work best."

Pamela Hayter, a project manager at Amazon, started an internal Slack channel called "Remote Advocacy" after the company announced its return-to-office policy. Its 33,000 members share stories about how the return-to-office policy impacted their lives.

"I cannot believe that a company in this day and age, a company that claims to be an innovative leader in its space, would do that to one of its most precious resources — its employees," Hayter said during the protest in Seattle, drawing applause from the crowd.

The walkout follows widespread cost-cutting at Amazon, where layoffs have affected workers in advertising, human resources, gaming, stores, devices and Amazon Web Services, the company's cloud computing division.

Like other tech companies, including Facebook parent Meta and Google parent Alphabet, Amazon ramped up hiring during the pandemic to meet the demand from homebound Americans who were increasingly shopping online to keep themselves safe from the virus.

Amazon's workforce, in warehouses and offices, doubled to more than 1.6 million in about two years. But demand slowed as the worst of the pandemic eased. The company last year began pausing or canceling warehouse expansion plans and has cut 27,000 jobs since November.

## **Nikki Haley's husband to deploy with National Guard to Africa as she seeks 2024 GOP nomination**

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Nikki Haley's husband will soon begin a yearlong deployment with the South Carolina Army National Guard to Africa, a mission that will encompass most of the remainder of his wife's campaign for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination.

A formal deployment ceremony will likely happen in the next few weeks, Maj. Karla N. Evans with the National Guard told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

Michael Haley will be deployed as a staff officer with his unit, which will be at "the core of" a task force that supports the U.S. Africa Command, Evans said, "replacing a unit from a different state as part of a regular rotation of forces."

It will be Michael Haley's second active-duty deployment since he joined the Guard as an officer in 2006.

Nikki Haley, a former U.N. ambassador and South Carolina governor, has been highly critical of President Joe Biden's competency as commander in chief as she campaigns for the GOP nomination. She has spoken out against his administration's efforts to expand diversity in the military, complaining they were weakening the force and hampering recruitment, though the Army has said that the real problem is that many young people do not see enlistment as safe or a good career path.

She has also pledged to make cuts in \$46 billion in foreign aid to countries she says "hate America."

While not directly confirming the deployment, Haley said in a statement to the AP that her family "is ready to make personal sacrifices when our loved one answers the call."

"We could not be prouder of Michael and his military brothers and sisters," she added.

Michael Haley, the candidate's husband of 26 years, has been a constant at his wife's campaign events since she became a White House candidate.

She frequently mentions her status as a military wife. He made his first overseas deployment in January 2013, when his wife was midway through her first term as governor, and their children were age 10 and 14.

"He left me as a single mom governor, but we're still married," Haley said of her husband during a recent campaign appearance in Greer, South Carolina. She went on to critique the Biden administration's chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021.

Returning from his 2013 deployment just before Christmas of that year, Michael Haley told the AP that his unit worked as part of an agricultural support team, helping Afghan farmers turn from growing opium

to growing other crops profitable enough to sustain their communities.

At the time, his commander, Lt. Col. Todd Shealy, acknowledged there is always some danger when an individual in the public eye serves as a soldier in a combat region.

"It does make him more of a target," Shealy said of Haley. "But there are some particular things to do to minimize that threat," he added, pointedly not defining what they might be.

Asked Wednesday about any additional security measures taken while Michael Haley is in Africa, Evans said he would "be afforded the same security as every other Soldier."

Meg Kinnard can be reached at <http://twitter.com/MegKinnardAP>

## NASA talks UFOs with public ahead of final report on unidentified flying objects

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — NASA held its first public meeting on UFOs on Wednesday a year after launching a study into unexplained sightings and insisted it's not hiding anything.

The space agency televised the four-hour hearing featuring an independent panel of experts who vowed to be transparent. The team includes 16 scientists and other experts selected by NASA including retired astronaut Scott Kelly, the first American to spend nearly a year in space.

"I want to emphasize this loud and proud: There is absolutely no convincing evidence for extraterrestrial life associated with" unidentified objects, NASA's Dan Evans said after the meeting.

Still, hundreds of questions from the public that poured in ahead of time were skeptical and veered into conspiracy theories.

NASA launched the study to probe what it calls UAPs — short for unexplained anomalous phenomena — in the sky, in space or under the sea.

Optical illusions can explain some of this, said Kelly, a former Navy fighter pilot. He recalled a Tomcat flight off Virginia Beach years ago during which his radar intercept officer in the back seat was convinced they'd flown past a UFO.

"It turns out it was Bart Simpson, a balloon," Kelly said. "And in my experience, the sensors kind of have the same issues as the people's eyeballs."

Evans pointed out that the livestream of the meeting led to considerable trolling. That comes on top of "online abuse" directed toward several committee members.

Harassment detracts from the scientific process and reinforces the stigma surrounding the topic, said Evans, adding that NASA security is dealing with it.

"It's precisely this rigorous, evidence-based approach that allows one to separate the fact from fiction," he said.

The group is looking at what unclassified information is available on the subject and how much more is needed to understand what's going on in the sky, according to astrophysicist David Spergel, the committee's chair who runs the Simons Foundation.

No secret military data are included, such as anything surrounding the suspected spy balloons from China spotted flying over the U.S. earlier this year.

The meeting was held at at NASA headquarters in Washington with the public taking part remotely.

A final report is expected by the end of July.

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## Sean 'Diddy' Combs says in lawsuit that spirits giant Diageo neglected his vodka and tequila brands

By DEE-ANN DURBIN AP Business Writer

Rapper, producer and entrepreneur Sean "Diddy" Combs sued Diageo Wednesday, saying the spirits company didn't make promised investments in his vodka and tequila brands and treated them as inferior "urban" products.

The lawsuit, filed with the New York Supreme Court in Manhattan, says Diageo North America starved Combs' Ciroc vodka and DeLeon tequila brands of resources even as it showered attention on other celebrity brands. Diageo bought actor George Clooney's Casamigos tequila brand for \$1 billion in 2017, for example.

Combs, who is Black, said Diageo leadership told him his race was one of the reasons it limited distribution to urban neighborhoods. He was also told that some Diageo leaders resented him for making too much money, according to the lawsuit.

"Cloaking itself in the language of diversity and equality is good for Diageo's business, but it is a lie," the lawsuit said. "While Diageo may conspicuously include images of its Black partners in advertising materials and press releases, its words only provide the illusion of inclusion."

Combs' relationship with Diageo dates to 2007, when the London-based company — which owns more than 200 brands, including Guinness beer and Tanqueray gin — approached Combs about Ciroc.

In a statement, Diageo denied allegations of racism.

"This is a business dispute, and we are saddened that Mr. Combs has chosen to recast this matter as anything other than that," the company said in a statement. "While we respect Mr. Combs as an artist and entrepreneur, his allegations lack merit, and we are confident the facts will show that he has been treated fairly."

In the lawsuit, Combs said he intends to seek billions of dollars in damages in other legal proceedings against Diageo.

## Trial opens for 3 charged with aiding Chinese campaign to pressure expats into returning home

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — An American sleuth and two Chinese men faced jurors Wednesday in the first trial to come out of U.S. claims that China's government has tried to harass, intimidate and arm-twist dissidents and others abroad into returning home.

Michael McMahan, Zheng Congying and Zhu Yong are charged with being part of a conspiracy to hound a former Chinese city official, his wife and their adult daughter to get him to go back to his homeland, where the government alleges he took bribes.

"If you are willing to go back to the mainland and spend 10 years in prison, your wife and children will be all right," read a translated note that Zheng helped tape to their New Jersey door in 2018, though his lawyer said Zheng quickly had second thoughts and took the note down.

Prosecutors say it was one in a series of pressure tactics that included flying in the man's then-octogenarian father to warn him that relatives would suffer if he didn't come home.

"The victim and his family endured years of harassment," Assistant U.S. Attorney Irista Chen said in an opening statement. "It's part of a public Chinese government initiative to force people living abroad to return to China against their will."

The defendants, charged with acting as illegal agents for China, all say they weren't aware they were doing Beijing's bidding in what's known as "Operation Fox Hunt." Their lawyers said the men believed they were helping to collect a private debt.

The trial comes as grievances mount between Beijing and Washington. This year, a Chinese spy balloon flew over the U.S., U.S. law enforcement authorities accused China of setting up a secret police station in New York, and -- just this Tuesday -- the U.S. military complained that a Chinese fighter jet made an

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“unnecessarily aggressive maneuver” near an American reconnaissance aircraft over the South China Sea. China told the U.S. to stop such surveillance flights, maintains that the spy balloon was a civilian aircraft that went off-course and says the supposed secret police outposts just provide such services as driver’s license renewals.

The U.S., meanwhile, has in recent years brought a number of cases like the one now on trial in a Brooklyn federal courthouse, saying they are examples “transnational repression.”

China in July 2014 announced “Operation Fox Hunt,” a plan to pursue and repatriate nationals it considers fugitives. Those on the wanted list include people from Muslim minority groups who simply traveled abroad for study and people whose political and cultural views clashed on some level with China’s ruling Communist Party, which tolerates no dissent.

Beijing has denied all accusations of issuing threats to force repatriations and says the U.S. is discrediting legitimate Chinese crime-fighting.

The geopolitical backdrop was hardly invisible from the Brooklyn federal courtroom Wednesday.

Noting the recent rise in U.S.-China tensions, defense lawyer Paul Goldberger asked jurors “to take a long, hard look at what the (U.S.) government has done” in the case against his client, Zheng.

In response, U.S. District Judge Pamela Chen warned that “the U.S. government is not on trial.” (She isn’t related to the prosecutor.)

Zhu’s lawyer, Kevin Tung, said he was “not here to defend the People’s Republic of China,” but to defend “a person who I believe is innocent.”

The ex-official who was allegedly targeted, Xu Jin, came to the U.S. about a decade ago after falling out of favor with the Communist Party, prosecutors said. They said China initially went after him by issuing an international alert that he was wanted and by publicizing the bribery allegations. His family says they are false.

China has no extradition treaty with the U.S., so Beijing can’t legally compel suspects to return. Instead, according to U.S. prosecutors, the Chinese government worked through intermediaries to try to squeeze Xu into deciding to return.

While only Zhu, Zheng and McMahon are on trial at the moment, their indictment includes a roster of alleged co-conspirators.

Zhu, a retiree, lives in New York City. In 2016, he helped hire McMahon – a retired New York Police Department sergeant turned private eye – and helped provide him personal information to track down Xu and his family, according to prosecutors. Later, Zhu picked up some Chinese people at Newark Liberty Airport and drove them to a meeting with McMahon.

His lawyer said Zhu thought he was helping a Chinese acquaintance who needed a U.S. resident’s help to find a man who owed him \$400,000.

“If these people were Chinese government, he was used,” Tung said.

McMahon, meanwhile, was told that he was helping a Chinese construction company that had been defrauded of millions of dollars, said his lawyer, Lawrence Lustberg. He said McMahon made no effort to hide what he was doing, even telling local police he was conducting surveillance.

“Is that what people who are committing crimes do?” Lustberg asked jurors.

When Xu’s family proved difficult to find, prosecutors said, Chinese agents tried to get at him through his sister-in-law, Liu Yan.

Strangers showed up at her New Jersey home twice in 2016, asking to speak or get messages to Xu, she testified Wednesday. Through an interpreter, she said one visitor had this message for him: “If you don’t go back to China, you and your family are in trouble. ... Either you go back to China on your own and admit to the crime, or you disappear.”

Then, in April 2017, Xu’s father – whom she had met only three or four times – unexpectedly showed up on her doorstep, saying he had been brought there to persuade his son to return home.

Suspecting his visit was a ploy to reveal Xu’s address, Liu said, she wrapped the elderly visitor’s phone in metal foil, stashed it in her car trunk and arranged to reunite him with his son at a local mall.



"I cannot believe that the law enforcement of Chinese government were using an old man to meet their goal," she told jurors.

Despite her precautions, the note appeared at Xu's home the next year.

Associated Press writers Eric Tucker in Washington and Christopher Bodeen in Beijing contributed to this report.

## **Iowa judge orders continued probation for teen sex trafficking victim who killed her alleged abuser**

By HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — A teenage sex trafficking victim who fatally stabbed the man she accused of abusing her was resentenced Wednesday to probation, telling an Iowa judge that she now has a support system to help keep her on track.

Prosecutors agreed that Pieper Lewis should continue her probation rather than be incarcerated. Polk County Attorney Kimberly Graham told the judge that her office "sees her as a human being," that she is vulnerable to revictimization and that there is low risk she will commit more violence.

Lewis, now 18, had faced a 20-year prison sentence for the June 2020 fatal stabbing of 37-year-old Zachary Brooks, who Lewis said she was trafficked to against her will and forced to have sex with multiple times at age 15. She pleaded guilty in September to involuntary manslaughter and willful injury and was sentenced to probation.

Polk County Judge David Porter ruled then that Lewis' charges would have been expunged from her record had she kept to the terms of her probation. That decision was revoked Wednesday.

"I indicated to you last year you've asked for a second chance, you don't get a third. I stand by that," Porter said to Lewis. "There are consequences for your actions. You have now been convicted of two felony offenses."

Lewis acknowledged in court that she violated the terms of her agreement when she cut her GPS monitor and walked out of the Fresh Start Women's Center without permission in November. She was arrested days later and has been held at the Polk County jail since then.

Lewis wrote a letter to Porter, dated April 5, that described a "success plan" for probation, according to court documents.

"The team I have now is my biggest support, and I need to stop fighting them," Lewis said in a statement to the judge Wednesday. "I refuse to fail and I refuse to let the system fail me. I've developed a plan and an option so I will succeed this time."

At Wednesday's hearing, defense witnesses described the importance of trauma-informed care for child sex trafficking victims and the research showing a high propensity to run away among this population.

The type of court-ordered placement can determine "the entire future of this young person," said Yasmin Vafa, executive director of Rights4Girls, who testified virtually. "Being in a placement that is a prison-like atmosphere, it can greatly exacerbate that trauma."

Her attorneys were visibly emotional, calling themselves her family, as Porter questioned the teenager's ability to commit to the rehabilitation plan and address criminal tendencies.

Matthew Sheeley, one of Lewis' attorneys, said they were disappointed that she was formally convicted on Wednesday but ultimately relieved by the continuation of her probation.

Lewis will remain in jail until the Department of Corrections determines an appropriate facility.

The Associated Press does not typically name victims of sexual assault, but Lewis agreed to have her name used previously in stories about her case.

A similar case in Wisconsin made it's way to that state's Supreme Court, which ruled that a woman accused of killing a man who was sexually assaulting her could use the fact that she was sex trafficked as a defense in her criminal case. That case is ongoing.

## Alex Murdaugh pleads not guilty — for now — to federal wire fraud and money laundering charges

CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) — Alex Murdaugh was arraigned Wednesday on federal money laundering and wire fraud charges for indictments saying he stole money from his clients, and although he pleaded not guilty for now, his lawyer said that might change soon.

Murdaugh is already serving a life sentence in a South Carolina state prison for killing his wife and son, and the details of the 22 financial charges aren't new. State prosecutors have indicted Murdaugh on similar charges, saying he diverted money meant for clients and a wrongful death settlement for his family's longtime housekeeper who fell at Murdaugh's home to his own bank accounts.

Murdaugh's lawyers said in a statement last week the former attorney has been cooperating with federal investigators, and they anticipated the latest charges would be "quickly resolved without a trial."

A federal guilty plea to the charges that can mean decades in prison would guarantee a long time behind bars for Murdaugh even if his pending appeal of his double murder conviction was successful.

Murdaugh took the stand at his murder trial earlier this year to repeatedly deny shooting 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.

Murdaugh, who turned 55 in a state prison cell in protective custody Saturday, also faces around 100 other state charges, including stealing from clients and his family's law firm, insurance fraud and tax evasion.

Prosecutors, Murdaugh's attorneys and state Judge Clifton Newman, who presided over the murder trial, are trying to find court time to try at least some of those charges before Newman has to retire because of his age at the end of 2023.

In federal court, Murdaugh faces 14 counts of money laundering, five counts of wire fraud, one count of bank fraud, one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud and bank fraud, and one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud.

His longtime friend Cory Fleming — an old college roommate and godfather to one of his sons — pleaded guilty last week to conspiracy to commit wire fraud for his part in helping Murdaugh steal more than \$4 million in wrongful-death settlements with insurers meant for the family of his longtime housekeeper Gloria Satterfield.

The other allegations prosecutors detail in Murdaugh's federal indictments already have been revealed in state legal papers.

It said Murdaugh and a banker friend, Russell Laffitte, worked together to take settlement money out of client's accounts, prosecutors said. Laffitte was convicted in November of six wire and bank fraud charges.

Other federal indictments give detailed allegations of how Murdaugh created a bank account that had a similar name to a legitimate company that handled settlements to steal money from clients.

## Earth is 'really quite sick now' and in danger zone in nearly all ecological ways, study says

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Earth has pushed past seven out of eight scientifically established safety limits and into "the danger zone," not just for an overheating planet that's losing its natural areas, but for the well-being of people living on it, according to a new study.

The study looks not just at guardrails for the planetary ecosystem but for the first time it includes measures of "justice," which is mostly about preventing harm for countries, ethnicities and genders.

The study by the international scientist group Earth Commission published in Wednesday's journal Nature looks at climate, air pollution, phosphorus and nitrogen contamination of water from fertilizer overuse, groundwater supplies, fresh surface water, the unbuilt natural environment and the overall natural and human-built environment. Only air pollution wasn't quite at the danger point globally.

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Air pollution is dangerous at local and regional levels, while climate was beyond the harmful levels for humans in groups but not quite past the safety guideline for the planet as a system, the study from the Swedish group said.

The study found "hotspots" of problem areas throughout Eastern Europe, South Asia, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, parts of Africa and much of Brazil, Mexico, China and some of the U.S. West — much of it from climate change. About two-thirds of Earth don't meet the criteria for freshwater safety, scientists said as an example.

"We are in a danger zone for most of the Earth system boundaries," said study co-author Kristie Ebi, a professor of climate and public health at the University of Washington.

If planet Earth just got an annual checkup, similar to a person's physical, "our doctor would say that the Earth is really quite sick right now and it is sick in terms of many different areas or systems and this sickness is also affecting the people living on Earth," Earth Commission co-chair Joyeeta Gupta, a professor of environment at the University of Amsterdam, said at a press conference.

It's not a terminal diagnosis. The planet can recover if it changes, including its use of coal, oil and natural gas and the way it treats the land and water, the scientists said.

But "we are moving in the wrong direction on basically all of these," said study lead author Johan Rockstrom, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany.

"This is a compelling and provocative paper – scientifically sound in methodology and important for identifying the dimensions in which the planet is nearing the edge of boundaries that would launch us into irreversible states," Indy Burke, dean of the Yale School of the Environment said in an email. She wasn't part of the study.

The team of about 40 scientists created quantifiable boundaries for each environmental category, both for what's safe for the planet and for the point at which it becomes harmful for groups of people, which the researchers termed a justice issue.

Rockstrom said he thinks of those points as setting up "a safety fence" outside of which the risks become higher, but not necessarily fatal.

Rockstrom and other scientists have attempted in the past this type of holistic measuring of Earth's various interlocking ecosystems. The big difference in this attempt is that scientists also looked at local and regional levels and they added the element of justice.

The justice part includes fairness between young and old generations, different nations and even different species. Frequently, it applies to conditions that harm people more than the planet.

An example of that is climate change.

The report uses the same boundary of 1.5 degree Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming since pre-industrial times that international leaders agreed upon in the 2015 Paris climate agreement. The world has so far warmed about 1.1 degrees Celsius (2 degrees Fahrenheit), so it hasn't crossed that safety fence, Rockstrom and Gupta said, but that doesn't mean people aren't being hurt.

"What we are trying to show through our paper is that even at 1 degree Centigrade (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) there is a huge amount of damage taking place," Gupta said, pointing to tens of millions of people exposed to extreme hot temperatures.

The planetary safety guardrail of 1.5 degrees hasn't been breached, but the "just" boundary where people are hurt of 1 degree has been.

"Sustainability and justice are inseparable," said Stanford environmental studies chief Chris Field, who wasn't part of the research. He said he would want even more stringent boundaries. "Unsafe conditions do not need to cover a large fraction of Earth's area to be unacceptable, especially if the unsafe conditions are concentrated in and near poor and vulnerable communities."

Another outside expert, Dr. Lynn Goldman, an environment health professor and dean of George Washington University's public health school, said the study was "kind of bold," but she wasn't optimistic that it would result in much action.

Follow Seth Borenstein on Twitter at @borenbears

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

## Beloved New York swan babies rescued after mother was eaten by family, police say

By KAREN MATTHEWS Associated Press

The village of Manlius in upstate New York is mourning the loss of Faye, a swan who was stolen from the town's pond over the weekend along with her four cygnets. The cygnets, or baby swans, were recovered, but officials say the mama swan was eaten.

"The mother swan was consumed," Manlius Mayor Paul Whorrall said Wednesday. "Sad to say, but that's what they did."

Three teenagers were arrested Tuesday on charges including grand larceny and criminal mischief in connection with the swan-napping, Manlius police Sgt. Ken Hatter said.

Mute swans like Faye and her mate, Manny, are not native to North America. They were introduced as an ornamental species and are loved for their beauty but are considered invasive by wildlife officials.

Hunting swans is legal in a few U.S. states but not in New York.

Southeast of Syracuse, the village of Manlius has a swan insignia on its website, as well as on merchandise like hats and T-shirts.

"The swans have been a part of this village for well over 100 years," Whorrall said. "We're known for our swans."

For over a decade, Faye and Manny swanned about in the village pond, and each spring hatched and raised cygnets. In 2010, they were donated by biologist and self-described "swan guru" Michael Bean.

Police said Faye and this year's cygnets went missing on Saturday, but that officials weren't notified until Monday.

After notice went out of the missing Manlius birds, a concerned citizen spotted two of baby swans in a store in nearby Salina and called authorities, Hatter said.

One of the suspects who worked at the store confessed to taking part in the crime, along with the two other teenagers, police said. The remaining two swans were found at the first suspect's Syracuse home, they said.

The young swans will be cared for and returned to the pond in a few weeks when they are old enough to survive on their own, Hatter said, but Faye won't return to the pond. She was given to a relative to cook.

"They brought it back to an aunt's house and the aunt prepared it," he said.

Two of the suspects, aged 16 and 17, were released to their parents because they are juveniles, police said. The third, who is 18, is awaiting arraignment. Information on their attorneys wasn't available.

## Chris Stewart, 6-term Utah Republican, resigning from Congress

By SAM METZ Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — U.S. Rep. Chris Stewart on Wednesday announced plans to resign his Utah seat due to his wife's illness, triggering a special election to replace him in a reliably Republican district.

"I can say with pride that I have been an effective leader for my beloved home state, and I'm honored to have played an important role in guiding our nation through some troubled times," Stewart said in a statement.

The six-term Utah Republican did not offer details about his wife's illness or indicate when he planned to vacate his seat but said in the statement that he planned to retire "after an orderly transition can be ensured."

Under Utah law, Gov. Spencer Cox has seven days to lay out a schedule to replace Stewart with a special

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election.

Though Stewart's departure will mean one less Republican in the U.S. House of Representatives, it is not expected to affect House Speaker Kevin McCarthy's ability to steer a tight Republican majority. The district is reliably Republican and Stewart defeated a Democratic challenger by more than 30 percentage points in 2022.

Stewart, a U.S. Air Force veteran and author, was first elected in 2012 and collaborated with Utah's Elizabeth Smart on a memoir about her kidnapping. The 62-year-old Stewart was raised as a potential nominee for U.S. director of national intelligence during former President Donald Trump's administration.

As recently as last year, Utah Republicans speculated about Stewart's plans to run for another office. Last year, in an interview with radio host Hugh Hewitt, Stewart demurred when asked about his political plans, specifically whether he would challenge U.S. Sen. Mitt Romney or Cox, both moderates.

Though some Republicans have already come forward and announced plans to challenge Romney, Stewart's resignation creates a rare federal opening for Utah Republicans, upending the calculus facing those mulling challenges to Romney or Cox.

Stewart's resignation marks the second time a Utah congressman has left office early in the past six years. Former U.S. Rep. Jason Chaffetz resigned from office in 2017, stepping away from his role as chairman of the House Oversight Committee and prompting a special election.

The amount of time that Stewart's seat could be empty depends largely on Utah's laws governing special elections. Gov. Spencer Cox has seven days to lay out an election schedule to replace Stewart. Candidates need to have at least 90 days to campaign under state law.

Both special primary and general contests are expected to coincide with Utah's municipal elections in November and presidential primary next March, unless the Legislature acts.

Utah GOP Party Chair Rob Axson said he had already heard of "quite a few" potential Republican candidates who may aim to succeed Stewart, who he said regularly travelled the district from St. George in southern Utah to Salt Lake City.

"Utah Republicans are going to have a number of people to look at," he said. "I'm confident that Utahns will continue to pick a Republican to represent them."

## Yeezy shoes are back on sale — months after Adidas cut ties with Kanye West

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Some of Adidas' remaining Yeezy shoes are back on sale — months after the German sportswear company cut ties with Ye, the rapper formerly known as Kanye West.

Adidas ended its yearslong partnership with Ye in late October, in light of his antisemitic remarks and other harmful behavior. In the months that followed, the fate of 1.2 billion euros (\$1.3 billion) worth of unsold Yeezys remained unknown — until earlier this month, when Adidas CEO Bjørn Gulden announced the company would be selling a portion of the remaining inventory and donating some of the proceeds to social justice organizations.

The first batch of Adidas' remaining Yeezys went on sale Wednesday. At this time, the sneakers appear to be available through Adidas' app "Confirmed," according to the retailer's website. Part of the profits will be donated to organizations including the Anti-Defamation League and the Philonise & Keeta Floyd Institute for Social Change, Adidas says.

Wednesday's release marks the first time that Adidas has sold Yeezys since the partnership termination in October. The Yeezy products up for sale will include already-existing designs as well as those that were initiated in 2022 and set to be released in 2023, Adidas previously noted.

"We believe (selling and donating these Yeezys) is the best solution as it respects the created designs and produced shoes, it works for our people, resolves an inventory problem, and will have a positive impact in our communities," Gulden said in an May 19 statement.

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At a May 11 annual shareholder meeting, Gulden explained the company made the decision to sell and donate Yeezys after speaking with nongovernmental organizations and groups that were harmed by Ye's comments and actions.

Some details of Adidas' plans are still unclear — including how many Yeezys will eventually go on sale and what portion of sales will be donated. The Associated Press reached out to Adidas for further information on Wednesday.

Cutting ties with Ye cost Adidas hundreds of millions of dollars — contributing to a loss of 600 million euros (\$655 million) in sales for the last three months of 2022, which helped drive the company to a quarterly net loss of 513 million euros.

Adidas reported 400 million euros (\$441 million) in lost sales at the start of 2023, the company announced earlier this month.

Net sales declined 1% in the first quarter, to 5.27 billion euros, the company said. It reported a net loss of 24 million euros, a plunge from a profit of 310 million euros in the same period a year ago.

Operating profit, which excludes some items like taxes, was down to 60 million euros from 437 million euros a year earlier.

Meanwhile, investors also filed a class-action lawsuit against Adidas in late April, alleging the company knew about offensive remarks and harmful behavior from Ye years before terminating its pact with him. Adidas has pushed back on the allegations.

AP Business Writer David McHugh in Frankfurt, Germany, and AP Retail Writer Anne D'Innocenzio in New York contributed to this report.

## **Trapped by Sudan fighting, dozens of infants, toddlers and children died in Khartoum orphanage**

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — At least 60 infants, toddlers and older children perished over the past six weeks while trapped in harrowing conditions in an orphanage in Sudan's capital as fighting raged outside.

Most died from lack of food and from fever. Twenty-six died in two days over the weekend.

The extent of the children's suffering emerged from interviews with more than a dozen doctors, volunteers, health officials and workers at the Al-Mayqoma orphanage. The Associated Press also reviewed dozens of documents, images, and videos showing the deteriorating conditions at the facility.

Video taken by orphanage workers shows bodies of children tightly bundled in white sheets awaiting burial. In other footage, two dozen toddlers wearing only diapers sit on the floor of a room, many of them wailing, as a woman carries two metal jugs of water. Another woman sits on the floor with her back to the camera, rocking back and forth and apparently cradling a child.

An orphanage worker later explained that the toddlers were moved to the large room after nearby shelling blanketed another part of the facility with heavy dust last week.

"It is a catastrophic situation," Afkar Omar Moustafa, a volunteer at the orphanage, said in a phone interview. "This was something we expected from day one (of the fighting)."

Among the dead were babies as young as three months, according to death certificates as well as four orphanage officials and workers for charities now helping the facility.

The weekend was particularly deadly, with 14 children perishing Friday and 12 on Saturday.

This raised alarm and outrage across social media, and a local charity was able to deliver food, medicine and baby formula to the orphanage on Sunday, with the help of the U.N. children's agency, UNICEF, and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Orphanage workers warned that more children could die, and called for their speedy evacuation out of war-torn Khartoum.

The battle for control of Sudan erupted April 15, pitting the Sudanese military, led by Gen. Abdel-Fattah

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Burhan, against the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces commanded by Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo. The fighting has turned Khartoum and other urban areas into battlefields. Many houses and civilian infrastructure have been looted or were damaged by stray shells and bullets.

The fighting has inflicted a heavy toll on civilians, particularly children. More than 860 civilians, including at least 190 children, were killed and thousands of others were wounded since April 15, according to Sudan's Doctors' Syndicate which tracks civilian casualties. The tally is likely to be much higher.

More than 1.65 million people have fled to safer areas inside Sudan or crossed into neighboring countries. Others remain trapped inside their homes, unable to escape as food and water supplies dwindle. The clashes have also disrupted the work of humanitarian groups.

More than 13.6 million children are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance in Sudan, up from nearly nine million prior to the war, according to UNICEF.

As of Monday, there were at least 341 children at the orphanage, including 165 infants between the ages of one and six months and 48 ranging from seven to 12 months, according to data obtained by the AP. The remaining 128 children were between the ages of one and 13 years.

Among those at the orphanage were two dozen children who had been sent back from Khartoum hospitals after the outbreak of fighting. The hospitals, where the children received advanced treatment, had to shut down because of lack of power or nearby shelling, said Heba Abdalla, who joined the orphanage as a child and is now a nurse there.

Spokespeople for the military, the RSF, the health ministry and the social development ministry, which oversees the orphanage, didn't answer requests for comment about the orphanage.

The situation was particularly harrowing in the first three weeks of the conflict when fighting was heaviest. At one point during this time, the children were moved to the first floor away from windows, to avoid being hit by random fire or shrapnel, said another nurse, known as Sister Teresa.

"It looked like a prison ... all of us were like prisoners unable to even look from the window. We were all trapped," she said.

During this period, food, medicine, baby formula and other supplies dwindled because caretakers were unable to get out and seek help, Abdalla said.

"On many days, we couldn't find anything for feed them," Abdalla said. "They (the children) were crying all the time because they were hungry."

As the facility became inaccessible, the number of nurses, nannies and other caretakers dropped. Many of the caretakers were refugees from Ethiopia, Eritrea or South Sudan who fled the fighting like hundreds of thousands of others, said Abdalla.

"We ended up have one nanny or two serving 20 children or more, including disabled children," said Moustafa, the volunteer.

Children started to die. At first, there were between three to six deaths per week, then the toll increased rapidly, nurses said, The peak came Friday, with 14 deaths, followed by 12 on Saturday.

The AP obtained 11 death certificates for children at the orphanage, including eight dated Sunday and three dated Saturday. All certificates listed circulatory collapse as a cause of death, but also mentioned other contributing factors such as fever, dehydration, malnutrition, and failure to thrive.

Even before the outbreak of fighting, the orphanage lacked proper infrastructure and equipment, said Moustafa. Twenty to 25 children were crammed into each room, many sleeping on the ground. Babies doubled up in pink metal cribs.

The orphanage was established in 1961. Though it gets funds from the government, it depends heavily on donations and assistance from local and international charities.

The orphanage made headlines in the past, most recently in February 2022 when at least 54 children were reported dead in less than three months. At the time, activists launched an online appeal for help, and the military sent food aid and other assistance.

The government-run facility is in a three-story building with a playground in the Daym area in central Khartoum. The area has experienced some of the fiercest fighting, with stray shells and bullets hitting nearby homes and other civilian infrastructure, according to workers and a freelance photographer work-

ing with the AP who lives close to the orphanage.

The news of the deaths caused public outcry, with activists appealing for help for the children.

Nazim Sirag, an activist who heads the local charity Hadhreen, has led efforts to provide volunteers and supplies to the orphanage.

Starting Sunday, food, medicine and baby formula reached the facility, he said. The charity also repaired the equipment, electricity lines and a backup generator.

Sirag said the situation remains difficult, and orphanage workers called for the children to be moved out of Khartoum. Otherwise, said, Abdalla, "you don't know what will happen tomorrow."

## Here's how to prepare to start paying back your student loans when the pandemic payment freeze ends

By CORA LEWIS and ADRIANA MORGA Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A three-year pause on student loan payments will end this summer regardless of how the Supreme Court rules on the White House plan to forgive billions of dollars in student loan debt.

If Congress approves a debt ceiling deal negotiated by House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and President Joe Biden, payments will resume in late August, ending any lingering hope of a further extension of the pause that started during the COVID pandemic. Even if the deal falls through, payments will resume 60 days after the Supreme Court decision.

That ruling is expected sometime before the end of June. No matter what the justices decide, more than 40 million borrowers will have to start paying back their loans by the end of the summer at the latest.

Here's what to know to get ready to start paying back loans:

### HOW SHOULD I PREPARE FOR STUDENT LOANS PAYMENTS TO RESTART?

Betsy Mayotte, President of the Institute of Student Loan Advisors, encourages people not to make any payments until the pause has ended. Instead, she says, put what you would have paid into a savings account.

"Then you've maintained the habit of making the payment, but (you're) earning a little bit of interest as well," she said. "There's no reason to send that money to the student loans until the last minute of the 0% interest rate."

Mayotte recommends borrowers use the loan-simulator tool at StudentAid.gov or the one on TISLA's website to find a payment plan that best fits their needs. The calculators tell you what your monthly payment would be under each available plan, as well as your long-term costs.

"I really want to emphasize the long-term," Mayotte said.

Sometimes, when borrowers are in a financial bind, they'll choose the option with the lowest monthly payment, which can cost more over the life of the loan, Mayotte said. Rather than "setting it and forgetting it," she encourages borrowers to reevaluate when their financial situation improves.

### WHAT'S AN INCOME-DRIVEN REPAYMENT PLAN?

An income-driven repayment plan sets your monthly student loan payment at an amount that is intended to be affordable based on your income and family size. It takes into account different expenses in your budget, and most federal student loans are eligible for at least one of these types of plans.

Generally, your payment amount under an income-driven repayment plan is a percentage of your discretionary income. If your income is low enough, your payment could be as low as \$0 per month.

If you'd like to repay your federal student loans under an income-driven plan, the first step is to fill out an application through the Federal Student Aid website.

### TALK TO AN ADVISER

Fran Gonzales, 27, who is based in Texas, works as a supervisor for a financial institution. She holds \$32,000 in public student loans and \$40,000 in private student loans. During the payment pause on her public loans, Gonzales said she was able to pay off her credit card debt, buy a new car, and pay down two years' worth of private loans while saving money. Her private student loan payment has been \$500 a



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month, and her public student loan payment will be \$350 per month when it restarts.

Gonzales recommends that anyone with student loans speak with a mentor or financial advisor to educate themselves about their options, as well as making sure they're in an income-driven repayment plan.

The Federal Student Aid website can help direct you to counselors, as well as organizations like the Student Borrower Protection Center and the Institute of Student Loan Advisors.

"I was the first in my family to go to college, and I could have saved money with grants and scholarships had I known someone who knew about college," she said. "I could have gone to community college or lived in cheaper housing ... It's a huge financial decision."

Gonzales received her degree in business marketing and says she was "horrible with finances" until she began working as a loan officer herself.

Gonzales's mother works in retail and her father for the airport, she said, and both encouraged her to pursue higher education. For her part, Gonzales now tries to inform others with student loans about what they're taking on and what their choices are.

"Anyone young I cross paths with, I try to educate them."

**CAN I SET UP A PAYMENT PLAN FOR MY STUDENT LOANS?**

Yes — payment plans are always available. Even so, some advocates encourage borrowers to wait for now, since there's no financial penalty for nonpayment during the pause on payments and interest accrual.

Katherine Welbeck of the Student Borrower Protection Center recommends logging on to your account and making sure you know the name of your servicer, your due date and whether you're enrolled in the best income-driven repayment plan.

**WHAT IF I CAN'T PAY?**

If your budget doesn't allow you to resume payments, it's important to know how to navigate the possibility of default and delinquency on a student loan. Both can hurt your credit rating, which would make you ineligible for additional aid.

If you're in a short-term financial bind, according to Mayotte, you may qualify for deferment or forbearance — allowing you to temporarily suspend payment.

To determine whether deferment or forbearance are good options for you, you can contact your loan servicer. One thing to note: interest still accrues during deferment or forbearance. Both can also impact potential loan forgiveness options. Depending on the conditions of your deferment or forbearance, it may make sense to continue paying the interest during the payment suspension.

**HOW CAN I REDUCE COSTS WHEN PAYING OFF MY STUDENT LOANS?**

— If you sign up for automatic payments, the servicer takes a quarter of a percent off your interest rate, according to Mayotte.

— Income-driven repayment plans aren't right for everyone. That said, if you know you will eventually qualify for forgiveness under the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, it makes sense to make the lowest monthly payments possible, as the remainder of your debt will be cancelled once that decade of payments is complete.

— Reevaluate your monthly student loan repayment during tax season, when you already have all your financial information in front of you. "Can you afford to increase it? Or do you need to decrease it?" Mayotte said.

— Break up payments into whatever ways work best for you. You could consider two installments per month, instead of one large monthly sum.

**ARE STUDENT LOANS FORGIVEN AFTER 10 YEARS?**

If you've worked for a government agency or a nonprofit, the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program offers cancellation after 10 years of regular payments, and some income-driven repayment plans cancel the remainder of a borrower's debt after 20 to 25 years.

Borrowers should make sure they're signed up for the best possible income-driven repayment plan to qualify for these programs.

Borrowers who have been defrauded by for-profit colleges may also apply for borrower defense and receive relief.

These programs won't be affected by the Supreme Court ruling.

The Associated Press receives support from Charles Schwab Foundation for educational and explanatory reporting to improve financial literacy. The independent foundation is separate from Charles Schwab and Co. Inc. The AP is solely responsible for its journalism.

## **Triple-whammy of cyclones, a 1-in-200-year event, drove Italy's deadly flooding, scientists say**

By FRANCES D'EMILIO and SETH BORENSTEIN Associated Press Writers

ROME (AP) — A rare, triple-whammy of cyclones drove the deadly flooding that devastated much of northern Italy this month, but scientists said Wednesday that climate change doesn't seem to be to blame for the intense rainfall.

Using computer simulations and past observations, a team of researchers looked for but found no evidence of human-caused warming behind the drenching. World Weather Attribution compared what happened to a computer simulated world of no human-caused warming and didn't see the fingerprints of fossil-fuel-induced climate change, unlike in many past studies.

Still, precisely because having three exceptionally heavy downpours in such a short timeframe is so rare — the study estimated there was a 1-in-200 probability that three cyclones would strike within a three-week period — the climate experts cautioned that more time for study is needed.

"This is not the end of the story," said study co-author Davide Faranda, a researcher in climate physics at the Pierre-Simon Laplace Institute in France. "This event is too rare," he said during a panel to present the findings.

"Remember there was a drought before" the first storm pummeled the Emilia-Romagna region on May 2, and "this (drought) was due to climate change," Faranda said. He was referring to two years of scant or no rainfall that left land so parched it couldn't absorb the first rainfall. Drought derived in large part to lack of Alpine snowfall, which usually replenishes the Po River and other, smaller waterways in Italy's north.

This study was undertaken "to answer the question of whether and to what extent climate change" was an influence in the flooding in Emilia-Romagna, said Friederike Otto, of Imperial College London, and a founder of the scientific group.

With hundreds of streets, homes, farms and other businesses still deep in floodwater, the study was done only a week ago and hasn't been peer-reviewed.

While the flood-prone region has a history of severe flooding, "the heavy rainfall over the first 21 days of May 2023 is the wettest event of this type in the record," the study concluded.

But "of the 19 models used, none of them show a significant likelihood or intensity of such an event to occur," the study said. "This suggests, that in contrast to most parts of the world, there is indeed no detectable increase in heavy rainfall in the Emilia-Romagna region in spring."

Looking at the May flooding, that phenomenon is "one where we clearly see no trend," said Otto.

The last of the three May floods was the most devastating and claimed 15 lives. The extremely heavy and concentrated rainfall triggered some 300 landslides and caused nearly two dozen rivers to overflow. The floodwaters were so high, firefighter and coastguard helicopters were needed to rescue some residents who climbed onto rooftops of three-story buildings to avoid drowning.

The study's findings corroborated earlier research that found that "with human-induced climate change, the number of low-pressure systems in the Mediterranean has decreased. This leads to a reduction in heavy rainfall, offsetting the expected increase in heavy rain from global warming."

Emilia-Romagna is one of Italy's most productive regions for both agriculture and manufacturing. Like elsewhere in the north, during the nation's post-war economic boom, much of region was rapidly urbanized, depriving the area of terrain needed for drainage and increasing the risk of flooding.

All that "has exacerbated the impacts of the heavy rainfall. However, this was an extremely rare event, and most infrastructure cannot reasonably be built to withstand such low-frequency events," the scientists

said in their findings.

“Disasters just don’t happen from rain falling from the sky,” said study co-author Roop Singh, of the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, based in the Netherlands.

Borenstein contributed from Washington.

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

Follow Frances D’Emilio and Seth Borenstein on Twitter at @fdemilio and @borenbears

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

## At 83, Al Pacino is expecting a baby with 29-year-old Noor Alfallah

NEW YORK (AP) — Al Pacino, 83, and 29-year-old Noor Alfallah are expecting a baby, the actor’s representative confirmed Wednesday.

Pacino’s publicist, Stan Rosenfield, verified the news first published by TMZ, but said there would be no statement at this time. The baby would be Pacino’s fourth child. He has a 33-year-old daughter, Julie Marie, with acting coach Jan Tarrant and 22-year-old twins Anton and Olivia with actor Beverly D’Angelo.

Pacino and Alfallah reportedly began dating last year. She describes herself as a “raconteur” on her Instagram page and her IMDB page notes that she’s a producer on two movies currently in post-production, including the Pacino-starrer “Billy Knight.”

Pacino’s baby news follows close on the heels of longtime friend and fellow actor Robert De Niro’s own. A representative for the 79-year-old actor confirmed earlier this month that De Niro had become a father for the seventh time, but few other details — including the identity of the mother — were released.

## Twitter may be worth one-third what Musk paid for it last fall as Fidelity marks down investment

By The Associated Press undefined

Twitter may now be worth one-third of what Elon Musk paid for the social media platform just seven months ago.

Financial services company Fidelity has reduced the market value of its equity stake in Twitter for a third time, now putting it at \$6.55 billion. That’s down from the nearly \$20 billion Fidelity valued its stake at in October.

It is unclear how Fidelity came up with its valuation figures, but as a public company it’s required to provide investors with updates on its holdings. Because Twitter is a private company now called X Holdings Corp., information about its finances can’t be verified.

Musk took control of Twitter in October, after a protracted legal battle and months of uncertainty. The CEO of Tesla, who also owns SpaceX, bought Twitter for \$44 billion.

The billionaire financed the purchase with funds including loans from a group of banks. Musk has said the \$44 billion price tag for Twitter was too high but that the company had great potential.

By April Musk was telling the BBC that running Twitter has been “quite painful” but that the social media company is now roughly breaking even after he acquired it late last year. Musk predicted at the time that Twitter could become “cash flow positive” in the current quarter “if current trends continue.”

## Filipino American chefs come into their own with multiple James Beard award nods

By TERRY TANG Associated Press

Like a lot of chefs, Aaron Verzosa has been hustling the past three years to get Archipelago, his Filipino restaurant in Seattle, through the pandemic and its ripple effects. Getting a James Beard Award nomination was a validating moment.

"Being able to amplify and showcase stories about the Filipino American culture, the communities here, specifically in the Northwest, and really the immigrant story that my parents came with ... I was just very humbled to be able to have the opportunity to showcase what the sacrifice was and be able to represent the region in that way," said Verzosa, who is up for Best Chef: Northwest and Pacific.

In the culinary world, the awards are the equivalent of the Oscars. Three Filipino restaurants will be represented at the James Beard Foundation's annual awards ceremony, on June 5 in Chicago.

Abacá, in San Francisco, scored an Outstanding Pastry Chef or Baker nod for Vince Bugtong. And Kasama, in Chicago, earned a joint Best Chef: Great Lakes nomination for husband and wife Tim Flores and Genie Kwon. Last year, Kasama was nominated for Best New Restaurant and also became the first Michelin-starred Filipino restaurant. Past Filipino American winners include Tom Cunanan, who snagged Best Chef: Mid-Atlantic in 2019 for his now closed Washington, D.C., restaurant, Bad Saint.

All this recognition is welcome praise for a cuisine that has historically been stifled by colonialism and a general lack of appreciation. These chefs are part of a younger generation giving voice to the Filipino American experience through the language of food.

Before joining Abacá in January, Bugtong said he was having an identity crisis as pastry chef for an Oakland cocktail bar. He wanted to do more Filipino-centric desserts, but at the same time felt he lacked authenticity. At Abacá, he said, chef and owner Francis Ang gave him the freedom to explore his culinary roots. He has since experimented with dishes from the Philippines' pre-Spanish days, like rice-based desserts, or kakanin in Tagalog.

"In the small amount of time that I've worked here, I definitely learned so much," Bugtong said.

He enjoys playing around with ingredients from the Philippines. For example, he wants to make a granita with barako coffee, which is grown there, and pair it with muscovado jelly and leche flan ice cream. Leche flan is the Filipino version of creme caramel.

Bugtong doesn't worry about whether something is unconventional and outside the usual traditions of Filipino culture.

"My thought process when I come up with stuff is, 'Do I like it?'" he said. "Does it represent me as a Filipino American? Then the second thing that I think about is, 'Is this approachable to other people? Filipino or otherwise?' And then I think of a composition that makes it aesthetically beautiful."

In Seattle, Archipelago, named because the Philippines is comprised of 7,100 islands, has been dishing out a seasonal tasting menu since 2018. Verzosa and his wife, Amber Manuguid, wanted a "Pacific Northwest restaurant first and foremost." But there's a "Filipino American-ness" intrinsic to the meals too.

For instance, Verzosa might swap out tamarind for wild lingonberries. He does his own take on Filipino banana ketchup with sweeter tubers or root vegetables.

With only 12 seats in the restaurant, Verzosa chats with every patron.

"When we have Filipinos coming from the Philippines and we have Filipinos that are here from the U.S. — whether they be first, second, all the way to fifth generation — there's a really beautiful way to connect with them differently," Verzosa said.

"I think the most important thing to realize is that there is absolutely — like anything — no one way to be Filipino."

Neither Verzosa nor Bugtong seriously considered a culinary career until after college. Verzosa grew up on a diet of PBS and Food Network cooking shows, as well as the cooking of his father, aunts and uncles.

"I would come home from school, be eating my dad's food and watching these shows," said Verzosa, who was originally headed to medical school. "At some point, he was like, 'Hey, listen, Aaron, if you love

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eating as much as you do, you need to learn how to love to cook.”

Bugtong dropped plans to become a teacher and enrolled in a Bay Area culinary school in 2014. As a child, he hadn't demonstrated any passion for making things from scratch.

“I did stuff with Betty Crocker and thought I was badass, like substituting milk instead of water,” Bugtong said, chuckling. “When I was a kid, I used to put egg wash on Chips Ahoy! and bake them. They came out very gooey inside and crispy on the outside.”

Filipinos have heard on and off for the last decade that their food is having a moment, about to be the next big thing in U.S. cuisine. Its staples include steamed rice, meat, fish, and notes of sweet, salty and sour. Dishes like adobo (a meat braised in vinegar, soy sauce and garlic), lumpia (spring rolls) and pancit (fried noodles) are already part of the zeitgeist.

Yet Filipino restaurants make up only 1% of U.S. restaurants serving Asian food, according to a Pew Research Center analysis released earlier this month.

There's no one explanation why other Asian cuisines like Chinese grabbed a bigger foothold in the restaurant industry.

One reason is the “funneling” of early Filipino immigrants into particular occupations, according to Martin Manalansan IV, an American Studies professor at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. In the 1920s and '30s, he said, they came to the U.S. for agricultural work. After 1965, they worked mostly in more technical fields like nursing and engineering.

Many young Filipino Americans were discouraged from becoming chefs “because that was seen as very lowly, especially if your parents are nurses, doctors, engineers, whatever,” Manalansan said.

In addition, Filipino food was often dismissed as a fusion of Chinese, Spanish and a dash of American. That perception annoys Manalansan because it doesn't recognize the creativity of Filipino culture.

“The late '90s foodie revolution was really ... about being adventurous and being called a 'foodie,' being into more 'exotic,' interesting cuisine,” Manalansan said. “The Filipino cuisine was seen as kind of homey, kind of blasé.”

Whether this year's James Beard love is a coincidence or not, Verzosa says it feels like there are more rising, accomplished Filipino chefs than ever.

“Over the last five, 10 years or so now, they're finally coming through and developing their own voice, and wanting to showcase their own families, their own communities, their own regions,” Verzosa said.

“Having the craft and ability to make delicious food — obviously that needs to happen to tell those stories.”

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Terry Tang is a member of The Associated Press' Race and Ethnicity team. Follow her on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/ttangAP>

## Ex-New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie planning to launch GOP presidential campaign next week

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie is expected to launch a Republican presidential campaign next week in New Hampshire.

Christie, who also ran in 2016, is planning to make the announcement at a town hall Tuesday evening at Saint Anselm College's New Hampshire Institute of Politics, according to a person familiar with his thinking who spoke on condition of anonymity to confirm Christie's plans.

The timing, which was first reported by Axios, comes after several longtime Christie advisers started a super political action committee to support his expected candidacy.

The Associated Press had previously reported that Christie was expected to enter the race “imminently.”

Christie has cast himself as the only potential candidate willing to aggressively take on former President Donald Trump, the current front-runner for the nomination. Christie, a former federal prosecutor, was a longtime friend and adviser to Trump, but broke with Trump over his refusal to accept the results of the 2020 election. Christie has since emerged as a leading and vocal critic of the former president.

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Christie, who is currently polling at the bottom of the pack, dropped out of the 2016 presidential race a day after finishing sixth in New Hampshire's primary.

In addition to Trump, Christie would be joining a GOP field that includes Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, U.S. Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina, former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley, former Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson and biotech entrepreneur and "anti-woke" activist Vivek Ramaswamy.

North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum is expected to announce his candidacy on June 7, according to two GOP operatives. And former Vice President Mike Pence is also expected to launch a campaign soon.

Allies believe that Christie, who has been working as an ABC News analyst, has a unique ability to communicate. They say his candidacy could help prevent a repeat of 2016, when Trump's rivals largely refrained from directly attacking the New York businessman, wrongly assuming he would implode on his own.

Christie has also said repeatedly that he will not run if he does not see a path to victory. "I'm not a paid assassin," he recently told Politico.

While Christie is expected to spend much of his time in early-voting New Hampshire, as he did in 2016, advisers believe the path to the nomination runs through Trump and they envision an unconventional, national campaign for Christie with a focus on garnering media attention and directly engaging with Trump.

## Today in History: June 1, GM enters bankruptcy protection

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, June 1, the 152nd day of 2023. There are 213 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 1, 1813, the mortally wounded commander of the USS Chesapeake, Capt. James Lawrence, gave the order, "Don't give up the ship" during a losing battle with the British frigate HMS Shannon in the War of 1812.

On this date:

In 1533, Anne Boleyn, the second wife of King Henry VIII, was crowned as Queen Consort of England.

In 1792, Kentucky became the 15th state.

In 1796, Tennessee became the 16th state.

In 1812, President James Madison, in a message to Congress, recounted what he called Britain's "series of acts hostile to the United States as an independent and neutral nation"; Congress ended up declaring war.

In 1916, Louis Brandeis took his seat as an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, the first Jewish American to serve on the nation's highest bench.

In 1943, a civilian flight from Portugal to England was shot down by Germany during World War II, killing all 17 people aboard, including actor Leslie Howard.

In 1957, Don Bowden, a student at the University of California at Berkeley, became the first American to break the four-minute mile during a meet in Stockton, California, in a time of 3:58.7.

In 1958, Charles de Gaulle became premier of France, marking the beginning of the end of the Fourth Republic.

In 1967, the Beatles album "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" was released.

In 1980, Cable News Network made its debut.

In 2009, General Motors filed for Chapter 11, becoming the largest U.S. industrial company to enter bankruptcy protection.

In 2020, police violently broke up a peaceful and legal protest by thousands of people in Lafayette Park across from the White House, using chemical agents, clubs and punches to send protesters fleeing; the protesters had gathered following the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis a week earlier. President Donald Trump, after declaring himself "the president of law and order" and threatening to deploy the U.S. military in a Rose Garden speech, then walked across the empty park to be photographed holding a Bible in front of St. John's Church, which had been damaged a night earlier.

Ten years ago: In a scene reminiscent of the Arab Spring, thousands of people flooded Istanbul's main square after a crackdown on an anti-government protest turned city streets into a battlefield clouded by

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tear gas. The death toll rose to nine a day after a tornado struck Oklahoma City. A nationwide smoking ban went into effect for most public spaces in Russia. Grant Hill, a seven-time NBA All Star who had his best years with the Detroit Pistons, announced his retirement.

Five years ago: After a week of hard-nosed negotiation and diplomatic gamesmanship, President Donald Trump announced that the nuclear-weapons summit with North Korea's Kim Jong Un that he had earlier canceled would take place on June 12th in Singapore. Trump directed Energy Secretary Rick Perry to take "immediate steps" to bolster struggling coal-fired and nuclear power plants to keep them open, calling it a matter of national and economic security. An Ecuadorean immigrant, Pablo Villavicencio, was held for deportation after delivering pizza to an Army installation in Brooklyn, New York; a judge later ordered him freed while he continued his efforts to gain legal status. Health officials said four more deaths had been linked to a national food poisoning outbreak blamed on tainted lettuce, bringing the total to five.

One year ago: The U.S. unveiled a \$700 million package of sophisticated weapons for Ukraine, in an urgent effort to prevent Russia from seizing the final swaths of land in the Donbas region. A Virginia jury ruled in favor of Johnny Depp in his libel lawsuit against ex-wife Amber Heard, vindicating his stance that Heard fabricated claims that she was abused by Heard and awarding him \$15 million. But jurors also found in favor of Heard, who said she was defamed by Depp's lawyer when he called her abuse allegations a hoax, giving her \$2 million. A federal judge found that John Hinckley, who shot President Ronald Reagan in 1981, was "no longer a danger to himself or others" and should be freed. (Hinckley would be released two weeks later.)

Today's Birthdays: Singer Pat Boone is 89. Actor Morgan Freeman is 86. Opera singer Frederica von Stade is 78. Actor Brian Cox is 77. Rock musician Ronnie Wood is 76. Actor Jonathan Pryce is 76. Actor Gemma Craven is 73. Actor John M. Jackson (TV: "JAG," "NCIS: Los Angeles") is 73. Blues-rock musician Tom Principato is 71. Country singer Ronnie Dunn is 70. Actor Lisa Hartman Black is 67. Actor Tom Irwin is 67. Singer-musician Alan Wilder is 64. Rock musician Simon Gallup (The Cure) is 63. Actor-comedian Mark Curry is 62. Actor-singer Jason Donovan is 55. Actor Teri Polo is 54. Basketball player-turned-coach Tony Bennett is 54. Actor Rick Gomez is 51. Model-actor Heidi Klum is 50. Singer Alanis Morissette is 49. Actor Sarah Wayne Callies is 46. Comedian Link Neal (Rhett & Link) is 45. TV personality Damien Fahey is 43. Americana singer-songwriter Brandi Carlile is 42. Actor Johnny Pemberton is 42. Actor-writer Amy Schumer is 42. Former tennis player Justine Henin is 41. Actor Taylor Handley is 39. Actor Zazie Beetz is 32. Actor Willow Shields is 23.