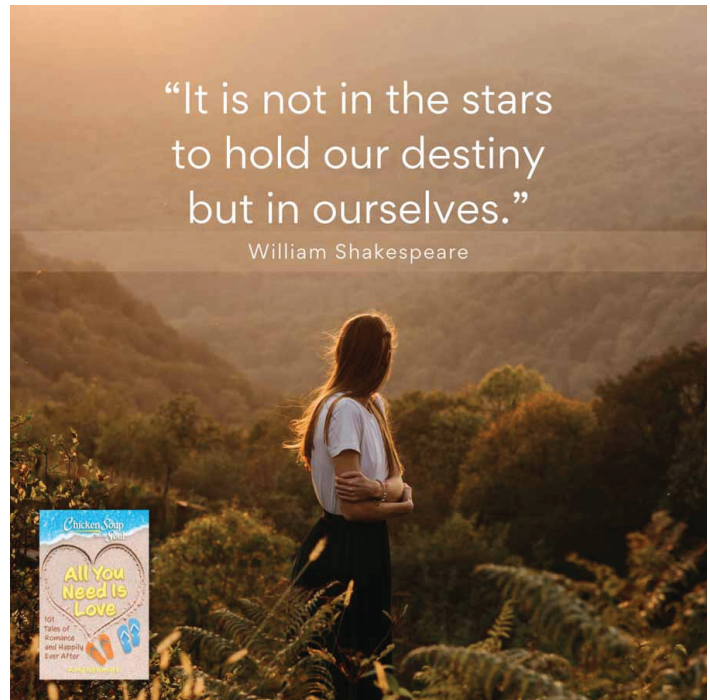


# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 1 of 76

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Newsweek Bulletin](#)
- [3- Today on GDILIVE.COM](#)
- [4- Weekly Vikings Recap](#)
- [5- Prairie Doc](#)
- [6- Groton Transit Fundraiser Ad](#)
- [7- Clay Target Team wins state title](#)
- [8- EarthTalk - Backyard Plants/Trees](#)
- [9- SD SearchLight: Letter from SD Searchlight Editor Seth Tupper](#)
- [10- SD SearchLight: Leave it to beavers to help restore streams in the Black Hills](#)
- [12- Weather Pages](#)
- [16- Daily Devotional](#)
- [17- 2023 Community Events](#)
- [18- Subscription Form](#)
- [19- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [20- News from the Associated Press](#)



## Groton Community Calendar

### Monday, June 12

- School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.
- Senior Menu: Meatballs, mashed potatoes with gravy, peas and carrots, tropical fruit, whole wheat bread.
- United Methodist: PEO meeting (outside group), 7 p.m.
- The Pantry, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., community center
- 1 p.m.: Senior Citizens Meet at the Groton Community Center.
- Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.
- Legion vs. W.I.N. at Northville, 5 p.m. (1)
- Jr. Legion vs. W.I.N. at Northville, 7 p.m. (1)
- Jr. Teener hosts W.I.N., 5:30 p.m., (2)
- U10BB R/B hosts Webster, 6 p.m. (2)
- U8 Blue hosts Webster, 6 p.m. (2)

### Tuesday, June 13

- Senior Menu: Scalloped potato with ham, beets, sunset salad, cookie, whole wheat bread.

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

- Olive Grove: Ladies League, 6 p.m.; Bridge.
- United Methodist: Bible Study with Amanda, 10 a.m.
- Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.
- The Pantry, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., community center
- Emmanuel Lutheran: Church Council, 7 p.m.
- Legion at Claremont, 6 p.m. (2)
- Jr. Teener at Webster, 5:30 p.m. (2)
- U8 Red at Britton, 5:30 p.m. (2)
- U8SB at Webster, 6 p.m. (2)
- U10SB at Webster, 6 p.m. (2)
- T-Ball black hosts Columbia, 5:30 p.m.
- U10BB R/W hosts Columbia, 6:30 p.m. (2)

### Wednesday, June 14

- Senior Menu: Spaghetti with meat sauce, lettuce salad with dressing, mandarin orange salad, whole wheat bread, ambrosia.
- Olive Grove: Men's League
- United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30

## **OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.  
© 2023 Groton Daily Independent

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 2 of 76

## The Bulletin by Newsweek

JUNE 12, 2023

### World in Brief

Italy's controversial former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi, who served three terms in office and was embroiled in multiple political scandals over his career, has died at the age of 86.

Three people were killed, and another three were injured in a mass shooting at what's believed to have been a graduation party at a house in Annapolis, Maryland, on Sunday night.

Alex Newell and J. Harrison Ghee made history after becoming the first openly nonbinary performers to win acting honors at the Tony Awards in New York City on Sunday night.

Billionaire George Soros is handing over his \$25 billion empire to his younger son Alex Soros. Alex said he is "more political"

than his father and that he is concerned about the prospect of Donald Trump returning to the White House.

At least 10 people have died, and 25 others were injured after a bus carrying wedding guests crashed in the Australian state of New South Wales. The 58-year-old driver was arrested.

Mayon, the Philippines' most active volcano, began spewing lava and sulfuric gas, prompting an evacuation of about 13,000 people in the north-eastern Albay province.

The death of Ted Kaczynski, the convicted terrorist known as the Unabomber, was an apparent suicide, according to sources involved in the investigation surrounding his death in prison.

English club Manchester City secured its first Champions League title, the biggest prize in European soccer, after defeating Inter Milan 1-0 in Istanbul on Saturday.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Kyiv said it liberated three villages in the southeast in the first territorial victories since the country launched a counter-offensive last week. Forces hoisted flags in the villages of Blahodatne and Neskuchne as well as "deoccupied" Makarivka.

### TALKING POINTS

"They've launched one witch hunt after another to try and stop our movement, to thwart the will of the American people. In the end, they're not coming after me. They're coming after you—and I'm just standing in their way. The ridiculous and baseless indictment of me by the Biden administration's weaponized 'Department of Injustice' will go down as among the most horrific abuses of power in the history of our country." Donald Trump said during his first public appearance in Georgia after he was indicted on criminal charges in connection to the classified materials investigation.

"It's so sad that asking Brittney Griner tough questions about her trade for the 'Merchant of Death' is being considered as assault by the WNBA [Women's National Basketball Association]. This is just the beginning of my beef with the WNBA. I won't stop until the entire league issues me an apology," Right-wing "provocateur" Alex Stein said after stopping Brittney Griner at the Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport.

"Appropriate counteroffensive and defensive actions are taking place in Ukraine. I will not say in detail at what stage they are. I believe we will certainly feel all this. You must trust our military. I trust them. I am in daily contact with our commanders in various areas. Syrsky, Tarnavsky, with Moskalyov, Naiev, Zaluzhny. All are now in a positive mood." Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said after meeting with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in Kyiv.

### WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAY AHEAD

The Federal Reserve's two-day meeting on interest rates and the inflation report will set the tone for markets this week. The central banks of Europe and China will also hold monetary policy meetings on Thursday.

Air Defender 23, the largest air deployment exercise in NATO history, kicks off with 25 nations expected to participate.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg is scheduled to meet with President Joe Biden at the White House to discuss the upcoming NATO Summit and ongoing support for Ukraine.

President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden are expected to host College Athlete Day at the White House. The event will recognize the women's and men's 2022-2023 season NCAA Championship teams.

# GDILIVE.COM

**GDI Subscribers can watch for free**

**GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6 School Board Meeting  
June 12, 2023 – 7:00 PM – GHS Library Conference Room**

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3 CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of minutes of May 8, 2023 school board meeting.
  2. Approval of May 2023 District bills for payment.
  3. Approval of May 2023 Financial Report, Agency Accounts, and Investments.
  4. Approval of May 2023 School Lunch Report.
  5. Approval of May 2023 School Transportation Report.
  6. Authorize request of 2023-24 newspaper quotes with due date of 4:00 PM on July 10, 2023.
  7. Authorize request of 2023-24 energy quotes (fuel/diesel/gas) with due date of 4:00 PM on July 10, 2023.
  8. Authorize Business Manager to publish 2023-24 Groton Area School District Budget with 8:00 PM public hearing set for July 10, 2023.
  9. Approve open enrollment #24-03.
  10. Approve open enrollments #24-14 and 24-15.
- OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:
1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
  2. Second reading and adoption of recommended Job Descriptions for School Nurse and Athletic Director.
  3. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report
- NEW BUSINESS:
1. Discussion and any necessary action regarding FY2024 Property/Liability insurance [Royce Erdmann].
  2. Discussion and/or action regarding 2023-2024 music trip [Mrs. Yeigh].
  3. Approve resignation from Adam Franken, Ag Teacher/FFA Advisor with liquidated damages.
  4. Authorize Business Manager to apply for credit cards from Dacotah Bank.
  5. Declare items surplus.
  6. Review and discuss report from JLG Architects regarding 1969 Gym.
  7. Executive session pursuant SDCL 1-25-2(2) student issue, SDCL 1-25-2(4) negotiations and SDCL 1-25-2(1) personnel.
  8. Act on open enrollment #24-12.
  9. Approve 2023-2024 GASA Negotiated Agreement and amended auxiliary staff work agreements.
  10. Approve 2023-2024 Administrative Negotiated Agreement and signed contracts.
  11. Issue 2023-2024 Salaried Auxiliary Staff agreements.
- ADJOURN

## Weekly Vikings Recap - Dalvin Cook Release

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

Well, it finally happened. After discussing the possibility of the Minnesota Vikings trading or releasing Dalvin Cook last week, the Vikings made it real this past Thursday by releasing him. Cook will end his Vikings' career third all-time for the franchise in career rushing yards.

For his six seasons in Minnesota, Cook was consistently among the best running backs in the NFL. After tearing his ACL during his rookie season in 2017 and spending the following year getting up to speed, Cook truly burst onto the scene in 2019. It was evident every game how much the Vikings' offense relied on him. When Cook sat out the final two games of the 2019 season to rest his shoulder, the Vikings' offense completely cratered. When Cook came back for the playoffs, the Vikings were able to upset the New Orleans Saints in the Superdome thanks to Cook's 130 total yards of offense and two touchdowns.

The following year, Cook asserted himself as the best running back in football, rushing for 1557 yards and 16 touchdowns. The sad thing about NFL running backs is their success does not last very long. By last year, it was evident that Cook had started to decline. He was easily getting tackled and seemed to struggle to stay on his feet when running through the holes in the offensive line. Many, including myself, believed by the end of last season that the Vikings should have started to utilize Alexander Mattison more than Dalvin Cook in the offense.

Now with Dalvin Cook gone, the Vikings running back room is lacking a big-name star. But, that does not mean that the Vikings' running back room cannot be successful. Mattison will be the veteran piece that the team will likely lean on early in the season. However, the Vikings have two young running backs who we should keep an eye on as the season goes along. Ty Chandler, who is coming into his second season, will likely get the most opportunities in preseason and training camp to become the backup running back. However, rookie DeWayne McBride might steal that spot if he lives up to the hype surrounding him after the Vikings drafted him in the 7th round. The only thing that might hold McBride back is his lack of pass-catching ability.

With the departure of Cook, the door is now open for the Vikings to move ahead on their contract extension discussions with Justin Jefferson and TJ Hockenson. The question will become what extension gets done first.

In other news, rumors are starting to swirl that the Vikings might look to trade Danielle Hunter. Hunter, who has been with the Vikings since 2015, has seemed to be very unhappy with his contract situation over the past 3 seasons. It might be smart for the Vikings to move on from Hunter before he starts to hit his decline. He still has plenty of value and could result in a good return for the Vikings should they trade him.

For such a slow past few weeks in Vikings' news, it appears that this offseason will be one with a lot happening. Kwesi Adofo-Mensah, and the new Vikings' regime, are starting to now create this Vikings' roster to their image.

## “Primary, deciduous, baby teeth: Do they even matter?”

In a single word, yes. Our first teeth are important in so many ways. They require just as much attention and love as our permanent teeth. Not to mention that beginning with good habits is the best way for anyone to maintain those healthy habits.

As parents, we know kids don't come with an owner's manual and that includes their teeth. One of the best ways to get the answers to all of your pediatric dental questions is to bring your little one to the dentist by age one, or 6 months after they get their first tooth. A first dental visit is often more about answering caregiver questions than examining any teeth. Some common questions may be: when do children get teeth, when do they lose them, do I need to brush them, what kind of brush or toothpaste is best?

A child's first tooth generally erupts into the mouth between 4 and 18 months, and should be brushed from the day they come in. It can also help with teething if you brush the gums before the tooth erupts. The type of toothbrush and toothpaste can be best determined by your dentist but, in general, a small soft bristle toothbrush with a rice size spot of fluoride toothpaste is a great start. Starting the twice-a-day brushing habit is always good too.

Our first set of teeth are meant to be in our mouths for between 4-10 years. Doesn't seem like too long to maintain, but they are designed with less protection during some of the hardest years to keep clean (childhood!). They have less enamel thickness and larger nerve spaces than our permanent teeth. For this reason cavities can form quickly and become problems much faster. From the moment that a tooth erupts into the mouth it is exposed to acid, sugar and bacteria. As a baby this is either in the form of breastmilk or formula and then baby food. As our children get older it's common to add juice, fruits, soda and candy to the list. We cannot completely remove food from our diet, but reducing the amount of time our children's teeth are exposed can reduce the likelihood for dental treatment, especially during their primary dentition.

If a cavity does form in a primary tooth, it is important to detect and treat, if necessary, to try and maintain the tooth. Small cavities can often be treated prophylactically, but once the cavity breaks through the enamel more involved treatment will need to occur in order to avoid nerve involvement and pain. Our primary teeth are required for the most predictable long-term maintenance of our permanent teeth - meaning, without our primary teeth it becomes difficult to maintain proper spacing and a guide path for the permanent tooth to follow.

Teeth matter at all ages, it is never too late to help your children build a healthy relationship with their teeth.

Dr. Brock Tidstrom is a dentist in Brookings, SD and owns and practices at Prairie Sky Dentistry. For more information about Dr. Tidstrom head to [www.prairieskydentistry.com](http://www.prairieskydentistry.com). Follow The Prairie Doc® at [www.prairiedoc.org](http://www.prairiedoc.org) and on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show based on science, built on trust for 21 seasons, streaming live on Facebook and SDPB most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.



Based on Science, Built on Trust



**Brock Tidstrom, DDS**

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 6 of 76



## **Groton Transit Fundraiser**

**Thursday, June 15, 2023**

**5 p.m. to 7 p.m.**

**Groton Community Center**

**\*\*\* Groton Transit Fundraiser will be**

**held at the**

**Groton Community Center**

**109 N. 3rd St. - one block east of**

**Groton Transit \*\*\***

**Let us do the cooking for you!  
Burgers, Brats, Beans, Watermelon,  
Chips and the famous Mini Donuts!!**

**\* Food \* Fund \* Door Prizes \***

**FREE WILL OFFERING**

*Please join us and help  
support the Groton Transit!*



## Groton Clay Target Team takes first at state

Top left to right Charlie Frost, Ashton Holmes, Porter Johnson, Turner Thompson, Tristan Kampa, Michael Powers-Dinger, Owen Sperry, Trey Smith

Second row left (coach) Tom Mahan, Isiah Sepaniack, Taryn Thompson, Hollie Frost, Payton Mitchell, Bryson Wambach, Danny Feist,

Bottom Left- Adeline Kotzer, Cadence Feist, Paisley Mitchell, Ashlynn Sperry, Noah Sepaniack, (coach) Stephen Wright, not pictured Jaeger Kampa, Aeydon Johnson, Tyton Stange.

(Photo courtesy Corey Mitchell)

The Groton Clay Target Team took first place this year in the State Tournament held Saturday in Aberdeen. This is the first time that Groton has won the state title in the seven years the team has been competing. Turner Thompson took first with a score of 98. Others scoring in the top 100 were: 4, Payton Mitchell, 97; 7, Porter Johnson, 96; 15, Ashton Holmes, 94; 16, Cadence Feist, 94; 32, Tyton Stange, 91; 55, Danny Feist, 88; 58, Michael Powers-Dinger, 88; 61, Paisley Mitchell, 88; and 65, Tristan Kampa, 87. According to Corey Mitchell, president of the Groton Clay Target organization, "Around 400 trap shooters where registered to shoot on Saturday."

The organization is looking for land around Groton to have a trap shoot range. "It would be great to have something closer to Groton for the kids," Mitchell said.

## EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: I would like to plant a few new trees in my backyard, and am looking for guidance on which species are native and would benefit the local ecosystem. Where can I find this kind of information?

-- Susan T., Bangor, ME

Home gardening is a great way to spend time outside, improve local ecosystems and learn more about botany and plants. When it comes to household gardening, natives are the key to success. Planting native species has numerous benefits, including providing food and habitat for native species, especially pollinators. Another important benefit is that native trees will thrive and spread naturally if they are planted in their native environment and suitable climate.

In order to plant the most well-suited flora for your garden to support a holistic, healthy ecosystem, here are some general principles to follow. As previously mentioned, go native! Secondly, look for pollinator friendly species. On a similar note, it could help to do some research on what species, both flora and fauna, are endangered or threatened in your area. Planting threatened tree species can help to support and grow their population numbers. Similarly, finding out which animal species are threatened and planting trees that could be beneficial to their survival would also be beneficial to supporting the local ecosystem. Finally, planting a variety of trees is a great way to support local biodiversity. High biodiversity levels support healthy, productive ecosystems.

Finding just the right species that ticks off all the boxes can be a daunting task. Luckily, there is a plethora of tools out there that can help. For example, Tree Wizard is a tool that helps find tree species that are suitable for specific climates and soil types. Another useful tool is the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Climate Change Tree Atlas. This tool specifically looks at how different species' suitable ranges will change as a result of rising temperatures. This is a helpful tool for determining what tree species will thrive in the future in your area. You can also do research on which species are native to your specific state or region. Most states have an inventory of native trees available through their Department of Natural Resources, as well as an inventory of native animal species.

The bottom line is that planting trees, especially native ones, is massively beneficial to the ecosystem, and is an important step in fighting climate change. Trees provide major ecosystem services, especially carbon sequestration (removing carbon from the air). Trees store large amounts of carbon, and planting large numbers of them can create carbon sinks (defined as anything that absorbs more carbon from the atmosphere than it releases), decreasing the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Other ecosystem services provided by trees include increases in biodiversity, support for local populations, and protecting soils from erosion and chemical runoff, which can help to keep water sources clean. Trees are the key to our future, so it is crucial that we do it right!



**If you choose the plants and trees in your yard carefully you can beautify your surroundings and help increase biodiversity.**





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Letter from SD Searchlight Editor Seth Tupper

South Dakota Searchlight readers:

As I prepare to attend an editors' summit this month with our parent organization, States Newsroom, I'm reflecting on how much has changed since I attended my first summit.

That was last September, when I was still hiring our staff. I had signed on as editor only a few weeks earlier.

Since then, we've launched our website and published a combined 900 pieces of content from our reporters, guest commentators and States Newsroom's D.C. and national bureaus. Those news stories and commentaries have generated 400,000 pageviews.

Meanwhile, readers all over the state have encountered our journalism in local media outlets, thanks to our policy allowing for free republication of our work.

And that work was been important. We've shed light on Gov. Kristi Noem's pardons and commutations, warned of a potential rush for Missouri River water, investigated a young mother's death in custody, reported on problems with the hand counting of ballots, and provided extensive coverage of controversial plans to run carbon-capture pipelines through the state.

With your readership and support, we did all of that and much more in our first seven months of existence.

We're excited to build on that solid foundation, and we invite you to help us continue our work — and perhaps even grow our staff — [by donating today](#).

Seth Tupper  
Editor  
South Dakota Searchlight

## Leave it to beavers to help restore streams in the Black Hills

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JUNE 11, 2023 6:00 AM

Beavers may not realize it, but they're at the heart of a project in the Black Hills National Forest to restore areas adjacent to creeks.

These spaces, called riparian zones, are crucial in maintaining water quality, preventing erosion, regulating water flow and providing habitat for aquatic and land animals.

Black Hills National Forest officials say that beavers help keep riparian zones healthy, and their absence can contribute to problems including biodiversity loss and declines in water quality.

To restore these riparian zones, Forest Service and Game, Fish and Parks workers are installing some human-made beaver dams, which the Forest Service calls "beaver dam analogs."

The structures are constructed with logs, willow branches and chunks of sod – mimicking beaver dam-building.

Beaver dams slow down the flow of water and create small ponds or wetland areas upstream. This slowing of water velocity allows sediments to settle, leading to improved water quality. It also helps in groundwater recharge in the soils nearby, which benefits vegetation. And the wetlands provide habitat for a wide range of species, including fish, amphibians, reptiles and invertebrates.

Additionally, beaver dams trap organic matter and nutrients, such as leaves and woody debris, in the wetlands they create. This accumulation of organic material contributes to increased nutrient availability for plant growth.

And the wetlands created by the dams store water during high-flow periods and gradually release it during drier periods. This process helps maintain soil moisture in a floodplain ecosystem.

While the beaver dam analogs serve as a crucial step toward restoring the riparian ecosystem, the ultimate goal is the return of beavers themselves.



**A human-made beaver dam in the Black Hills National Forest, which the Forest Service calls a "beaver dam analog."** (Courtesy of U.S. Forest Service)

# Broton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 11 of 76

Some factors affecting Black Hills beavers' natural habitats are development, deforestation, wildfires, trapping, pollution and the damming and channelization of creeks. And some landowners see beavers as pests, given they can cause flooding issues, block drainage systems and damage valuable timber.

Improved conditions in the targeted riparian areas could facilitate the natural recolonization of beavers; alternatively, reintroduction efforts

could be conducted in collaboration with the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks.

Recently, when GF&P found a beaver at its West River Outdoor Campus in Rapid City, the department decided the critter needed a better environment. Meanwhile, the Black Hills National Forest had already been working to restore an area in Schoolhouse Gulch with beaver dam analogs in the northwestern Black Hills, so the GF&P transported the beaver to the project area.

*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.*

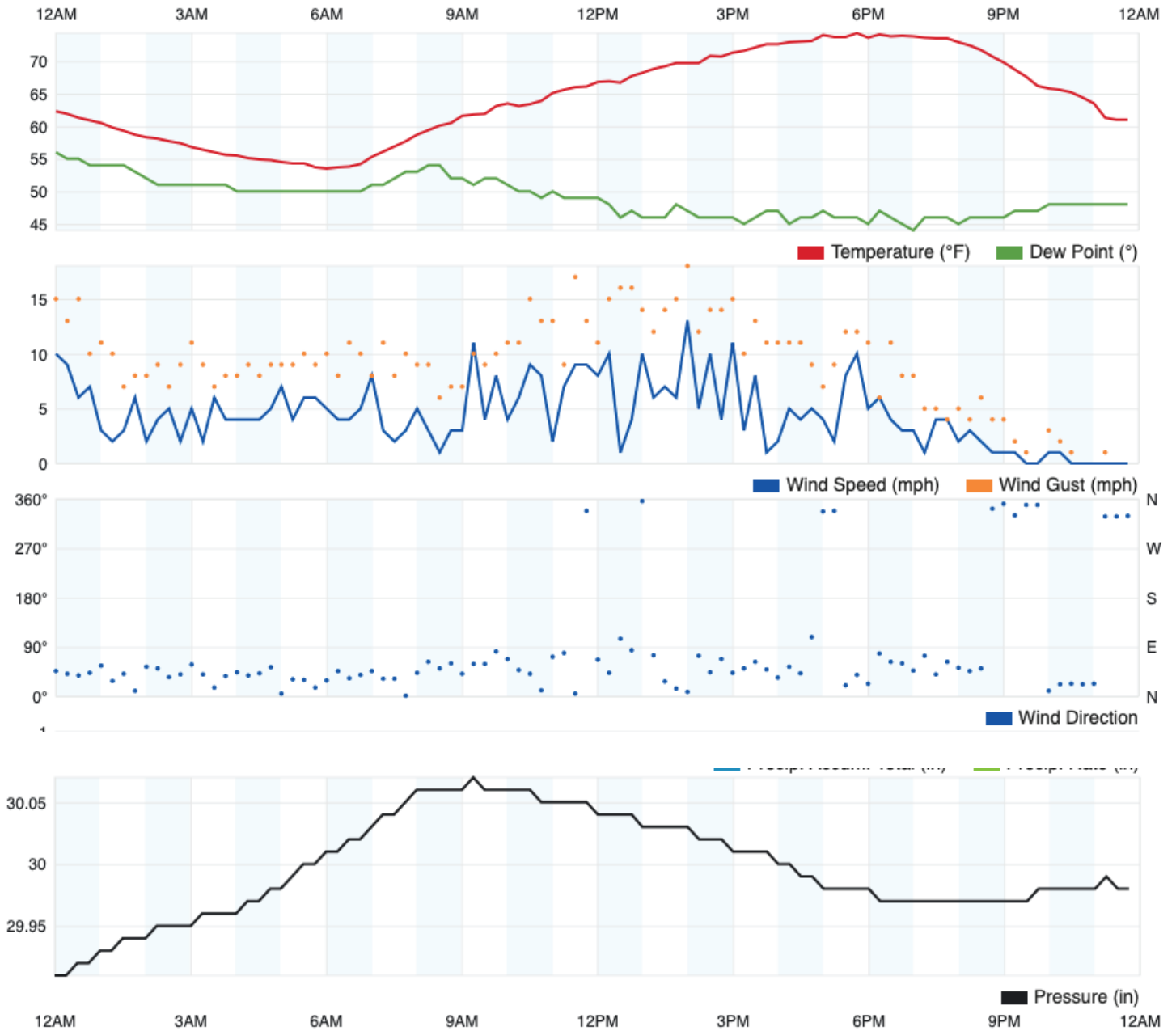


**GF&P workers release a beaver at Schoolhouse Gulch in the northwestern Black Hills.** (Courtesy of Black Hills National Forest)

# Groton Daily Independent







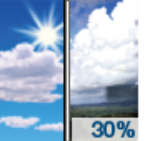
Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 12 of 76

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 13 of 76

Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
						
Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Sunny	Mostly Clear	Hot	Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny then Chance Showers
High: 81 °F	Low: 55 °F	High: 88 °F	Low: 59 °F	High: 90 °F	Low: 60 °F	High: 88 °F

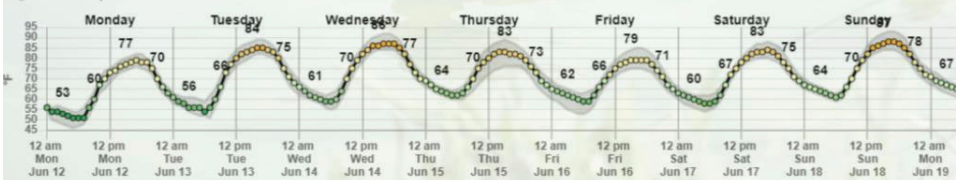


## Dry Through the Midweek & Warmer Temperatures



	Maximum Temperature Forecast									Maximum
	6/12	6/13	6/14	6/15	6/16	6/17	6/18	6/19		
Aberdeen	82	88	90	88	84	86	92	92		92
Britton	80	86	87	88	81	83	89	89		89
Brookings	78	85	88	88	80	83	87	87		88
Chamberlain	82	86	90	88	86	88	93	94		94
Clark	77	84	86	83	80	82	88	86		88
Eagle Butte	77	83	86	80	78	84	88	88		88
Ellendale	80	87	88	85	82	84	89	90		90
Eureka	79	86	88	77	80	84	89	89		89
Gettysburg	77	84	87	80	80	84	89	89		89
Huron	81	89	92	91	86	87	92	91		92
Kennebec	78	84	88	81	83	87	92	91		92
McIntosh	77	82	85	77	76	82	86	86		86
Milbank	80	87	89	90	82	84	89	89		90
Miller	78	84	88	85	82	85	90	90		90
Mobridge	81	87	90	83	83	86	91	91		91
Murdo	76	82	87	82	80	86	90	89		90
Pierre	82	88	92	82	81	90	94	90		94
Redfield	80	87	90	84	83	86	92	91		92
Sisseton	81	88	89	90	83	84	89	90		90
Watertown	79	86	88	90	82	83	89	88		90
Webster	76	83	85	86	79	81	87	86		87
Wheaton	81	88	89	90	82	84	89	89		90

### Regional Temperature Forecast



A high pressure system overhead will keep the area dry through the midweek. Otherwise, smoke aloft will return tonight into Tuesday, producing a haze. Next chance of possible precipitation does not return until the end of the week. Temps will warm through the midweek becoming cooler for Friday, then warming again for the weekend.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 14 of 76

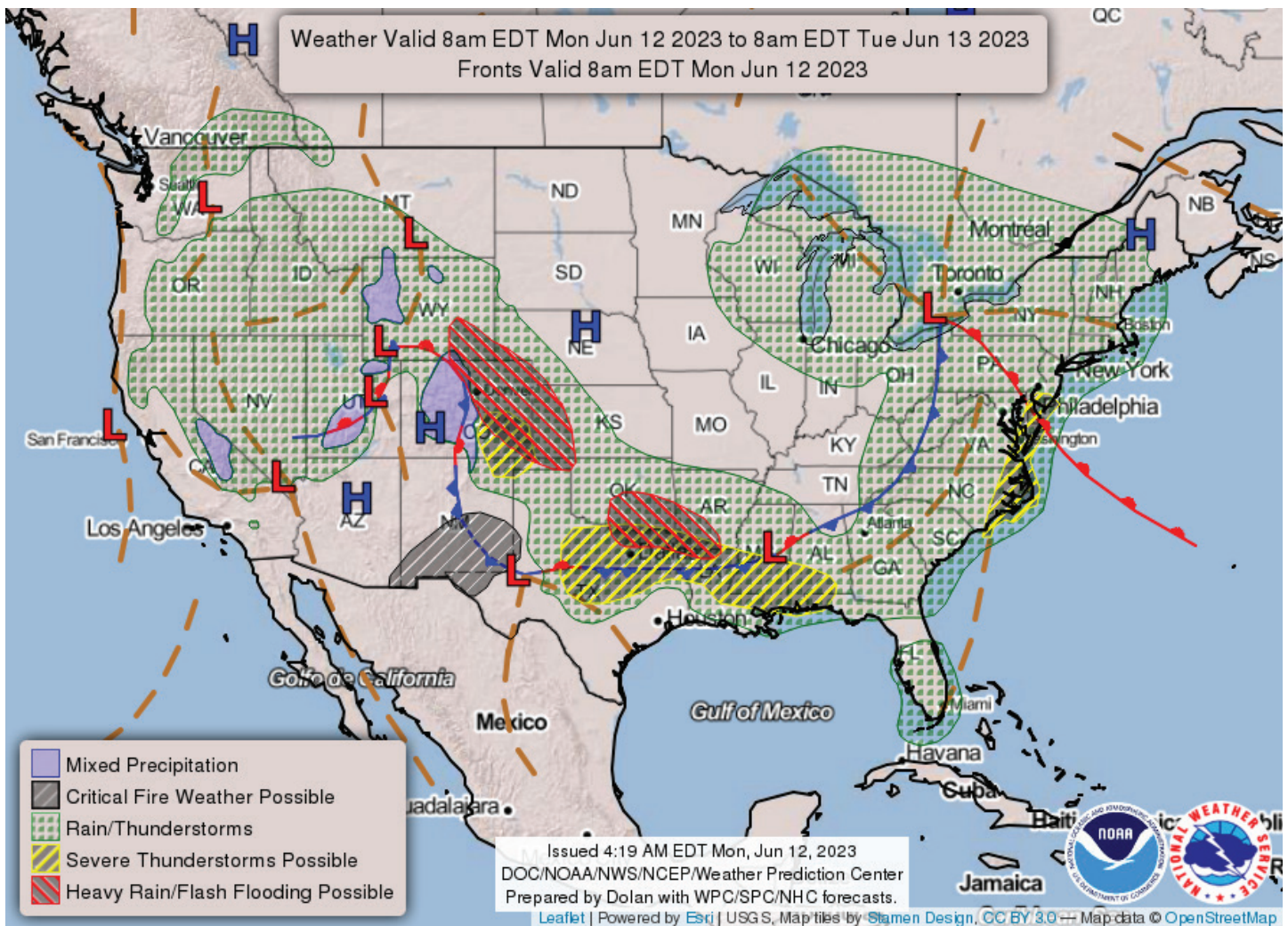
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 74 °F at 5:44 PM**  
**Low Temp: 54 °F at 5:49 AM**  
**Wind: 18 mph at 1:57 PM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 15 hours, 41 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 103 in 1956  
Record Low: 37 in 2012  
Average High: 80  
Average Low: 54  
Average Precip in June.: 1.40  
Precip to date in June.: 0.51  
Average Precip to date: 8.65  
Precip Year to Date: 8.42  
Sunset Tonight: 9:22:56 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:41:30 AM



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 15 of 76

## Today in Weather History

June 12, 1924: A tornado moved southeast from the southwestern edge of Lake Kampeska, passing southwest of Watertown. Two barns were destroyed, and 20 smaller farm buildings were heavily damaged. This tornado was estimated to have F2 strength.

June 12, 1983: Lightning struck and killed two cows near Miller in Hand County. Lightning also hit a home six miles north of Aberdeen, breaking a ceramic statue, and blow out light bulbs. Another home in Aberdeen was struck by lightning, rupturing a gas line and starting the house on fire. Also, heavy rains up to seven inches fall around the area. Some storm total rainfall amounts include; 2.00 inches at 2NW of Stephan; 2.40 inches in Miller; 3.03 at 4 miles west of Mellette; and 6.30 inches in Orient.

June 12, 1994: In Hand County, a thunderstorm caused an estimated 3 million dollars in crop damage. Hail, the largest being baseball size, was reported in drifts of three to four feet high. About 70 thousand acres of cropland and pastures were destroyed. Pheasants, ducks were killed by the hail and many cattle injured. Many windows were broken in homes, holes were punched in mobile homes, damaged occurred to contents of dwellings from hail which entered through windows, and many vehicles were extensively damaged.

June 12, 2013: A line of thunderstorms moving northeast across the region brought damaging wind gusts from 60 to 80 mph to parts of central and northeastern South Dakota. Many branches along with several trees were downed. Some buildings were also damaged with a couple of buildings destroyed. An estimated eighty mph wind destroyed a cabin on the east shore of the Missouri River and north-northwest of Pierre. A hundred foot by seventy-five-foot storage building was flattened south of Doland in Spink County. Tractors and planters and other equipment in the building were damaged.

1881 - Severe thunderstorms spawned more than half a dozen tornadoes in the Lower Missouri Valley. Five of the tornadoes touched down near Saint Joseph MO. In south central Kansas a tornado nearly wiped out the town of Floral. Hail and high winds struck Iowa and southern Minnesota. In Minnesota, Blue Earth City reported five inches of rain in one hour. (David Ludlum)

1915: An estimated F4 tornado moved northeast from northwest of Waterville, Iowa crossing the Mississippi River two miles south of Ferryville, Wisconsin. A man and his daughter were killed in one of three homes that were obliterated southwest of "Heytman," a small railroad station on the Mississippi River. 60 buildings and eight homes were destroyed in Wisconsin. This tornado caused approximately \$200,000 in damage. In addition to this tornado, another estimated F4 tornado moved northeast across Fayette and Clayton Counties in northeast Iowa. One farm was devastated, the house and barn leveled. Heavy machinery was thrown 300 yards. Clothing was carried two miles.

1947 - A heavy wet snow blanketed much of southern and central Wyoming, and gave many places their heaviest and latest snow of record. Totals included 18.4 inches at Lander, 8.7 inches at Cheyenne, and 4.5 inches at Casper. (11th-12th) (The Weather Channel)

1948: The Columbia River Basin flood peaked on this date in the Northwest. The flood produced the highest water level in the basin since the flood there in 1894. The damage estimate for the 1948 flood was \$101 million, and 75 lives were lost.

1969 - Record late season snows covered parts of Montana. Five inches was reported at Great Falls and east of Broadus. Billings, MT, tied their June record with lows of 32 degrees on the 12th and the 13th. (The Weather Channel)

1983 - The state of Utah was besieged by floods and mudslides. Streets in downtown Salt Lake City were sandbagged and turned into rivers of relief. The town of Thistle was completely inundated as a mudslide made a natural dam. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms in Nebraska produced softball size hail around Fremont and Ames, and 3.5 inches of rain in less than one hour. Four and a half inches in less than an hour caused flooding around Ithica, NE. A tornado destroyed a mobile home near Broken Bow, NE, injuring both occupants. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Fifteen cities in the southeastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Asheville with a reading of 40 degrees. Drought conditions continued to intensify across the eastern half of the nation. Rainfall at Nashville, TN, was running 12.5 inches below normal. (The National Weather Summary)

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 16 of 76

Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### THE STORMS OF LIFE

Joseph Turner was standing in front of one of his paintings of a raging sea. A friend beside him asked, "How did you paint such a realistic picture of a storm at sea. It is so real."

He answered, "I was on a ship in the midst of that storm. Not only did I see it, but I was also there and felt it."

Like that painter, Jesus felt the storms of life. Whenever we lose a loved one, we must remember that He stood beside a grave and wept.

If ever we are a victim of poverty or lack a place of our own, let's not forget that Jesus had no place to lay His head.

Whenever we feel alone, abandoned or neglected, we need to recall the times when His followers forsook Him and His disciples deserted Him.

Every event that God brings into our lives is one that Jesus has encountered, endured and experienced and successfully survived. Whatever God brings into our lives is temporary and will pass into the pages of history. Because He has overcome the extremes of life, we can take great comfort in the fact that He is willing to share His victories with us if we look to Him for His salvation.

Prayer: Father, You have been where we are or someday may be. So, we know with certainty that You've been there before us and will be with us and that we can survive. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested. Hebrews 2:18



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



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 17 of 76

## 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

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 18 of 76

## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

### Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- Black & White ..... \$48.99/year
- Colored ..... \$79.88/year
- Colored ..... \$42.60/6 months
- E-Weekly\* ..... \$31.95/year

\* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to [paperpaul@grotonsd.net](mailto:paperpaul@grotonsd.net)

## Groton Daily Independent

[www.397news.com](http://www.397news.com)

### Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- 1 Month ..... \$15.98
- 3 Months..... \$26.63
- 6 Months..... \$31.95
- 9 Months..... \$42.60
- 12 Months..... \$53.25

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Password \_\_\_\_\_

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

[paypal.me/paperpaul](https://paypal.me/paperpaul)



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 19 of 76



## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.09.23

3 19 53 60 68 13

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$260,000,000**

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 21  
DRAW: Mins 22 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.10.23

4 6 38 46 52 7

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$3,820,000**

NEXT 17 Hrs 21 Mins 22  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.11.23

14 23 24 36 47 5

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

NEXT 16 Hrs 51 Mins 22  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.10.23

5 14 19 23 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$95,000**

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 21  
DRAW: Mins 22 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.10.23

30 45 55 67 69 23

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

NEXT 17 Hrs 20 Mins 22  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.10.23

21 32 42 46 50 4

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$324,000,000**

NEXT 17 Hrs 20 Mins 22  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### **Trump, allies escalate attacks on criminal case as history-making court appearance approaches**

By ERIC TUCKER and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump and his allies are escalating efforts to undermine the criminal case against him and drum up protests as the former president braces for a history-making federal court appearance this week on dozens of felony charges accusing him of illegally hoarding classified information.

Trump's Tuesday afternoon appearance in Miami will mark his second time in as many months facing a judge on criminal charges. But unlike a New York case some legal analysts derided as relatively trivial, the Justice Department's first prosecution of a former president concerns conduct that prosecutors say jeopardized national security and that involves Espionage Act charges carrying the threat of a significant prison sentence in the event of conviction.

Ahead of his arraignment, Trump ratcheted up the rhetoric against the Justice Department special counsel who filed the case, calling Jack Smith "deranged" and his team of prosecutors "thugs" as he repeated without any evidence his claims that he was the target of a political persecution.

He called on his supporters to join a planned protest at the Miami courthouse Tuesday, where he will be arraigned on the charges.

"We need strength in our country now," Trump said, speaking to his longtime friend and adviser Roger Stone in an interview on WABC Radio. "And they have to go out and they have to protest peacefully. They have to go out."

"Look, our country has to protest. We have plenty of protest to protest. We've lost everything," he went on.

He also said there were no circumstances "whatsoever" under which he would leave the 2024 race, where he's so far been dominating the Republican primary.

Other Trump supporters have rallied to his defense with similar language, including Kari Lake, the unsuccessful Republican gubernatorial candidate in Arizona who pointedly said over the weekend that if prosecutors "want to get to President Trump," they're "going to have to go through me, and 75 million Americans just like me. And most of us are card-carrying members of the NRA."

Trump's calls for protest echoed exhortations he made ahead of a New York court appearance last April, where he faces charges arising from hush money payments made during his 2016 presidential campaign, though he complained that those who showed up to protest then were "so far away that nobody knew about 'em," And just like in that case, he plans to address supporters in a Tuesday evening speech hours after his court date.

Trump is expected to depart for Miami on Monday and will spend the rest of the day in Florida, huddled with advisers. After his court appearance, he will return to New Jersey, where he's scheduled a press event to publicly respond to the charges.

Trump supporters were also planning to load buses to head to Miami from other parts of Florida, raising concerns for law enforcement officials who are preparing for the potential of unrest around the courthouse. Mayor Francis Suarez was expected to announce additional details Monday about the preparations though there was little police presence near the courthouse as late as Sunday afternoon and barricades hadn't yet been erected nearby, a stark contrast to New York City where police planned for protests for weeks even though no violence ultimately happened.

The Justice Department unsealed Friday an indictment charging Trump with 37 felony counts, 31 relating to the willful retention of national defense information. Other charges include conspiracy to commit obstruction and false statements.

The indictment alleges Trump intentionally retained hundreds of classified documents that he took with him from the White House to his Florida estate, Mar-a-Lago, after leaving the White House in January

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 21 of 76

2021. The material he stored, including in a bathroom, ballroom, bedroom and shower, included material on nuclear programs, defense and weapons capabilities of the U.S. and foreign governments and a Pentagon "attack plan," the indictment says. The information, if exposed, could have put at risk members of the military, confidential human sources and intelligence collection methods, prosecutors said.

Beyond that, prosecutors say, he sought to obstruct government efforts to recover the documents, including by directing personal aide Walt Nauta — who was charged alongside Trump — to move boxes to conceal them and also suggesting to his own lawyer that he hide or destroy documents sought by a Justice Department subpoena.

Some fellow Republicans have sought to press the case that Trump is being treated unfairly, citing the Justice Department's decision in 2016 to not charge Democrat Hillary Clinton for her handling of classified information through a private email server she relied on as secretary of state. But those arguments overlook that FBI investigators did not find any evidence that Clinton or her aides had willfully broken laws regarding classified information or had obstructed the investigation.

New Hampshire Republican Gov. Chris Sununu, speaking Sunday on CBS News, said there was a "huge difference" between the two investigations but that it "has to be explained to the American people."

The Justice Department earlier this month informed former Vice President Mike Pence that it would not bring charges over the presence of classified documents in his Indiana home. A separate Justice Department special counsel investigation into the discovery of classified records at a home and office of President Joe Biden continues, though as in the Clinton case, no evidence of obstruction or intentional law-breaking has surfaced.

Trump's own former attorney general, William Barr, offered a grim prediction of Trump's fate, saying on Fox News that Trump had no right to hold onto such sensitive records.

"If even half of it is true," Barr said of the allegations in the indictment, "then he's toast. I mean, it's a pretty — it's a very detailed indictment, and it's very, very damning. And this idea of presenting Trump as a victim here — a victim of a witch hunt is ridiculous."

---

Colvin reported from New York.

Follow Eric Tucker on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/etuckerAP>

---

More on Donald Trump-related investigations: <https://apnews.com/hub/donald-trump>

## The Great Grift: How billions in COVID-19 relief aid was stolen or wasted

By RICHARD LARDNER, JENNIFER McDERMOTT and AARON KESSLER Associated Press  
WASHINGTON (AP) — Much of the theft was brazen, even simple.

Fraudsters used the Social Security numbers of dead people and federal prisoners to get unemployment checks. Cheaters collected those benefits in multiple states. And federal loan applicants weren't cross-checked against a Treasury Department database that would have raised red flags about sketchy borrowers.

Criminals and gangs grabbed the money. But so did a U.S. soldier in Georgia, the pastors of a defunct church in Texas, a former state lawmaker in Missouri and a roofing contractor in Montana.

All of it led to the greatest grift in U.S. history, with thieves plundering billions of dollars in federal COVID-19 relief aid intended to combat the worst pandemic in a century and to stabilize an economy in free fall.

An Associated Press analysis found that fraudsters potentially stole more than \$280 billion in COVID-19 relief funding; another \$123 billion was wasted or misspent. Combined, the loss represents 10% of the \$4.2 trillion the U.S. government has so far disbursed in COVID relief aid.

That number is certain to grow as investigators dig deeper into thousands of potential schemes.

How could so much be stolen? Investigators and outside experts say the government, in seeking to quickly spend trillions in relief aid, conducted too little oversight during the pandemic's early stages and instituted too few restrictions on applicants. In short, they say, the grift was just way too easy.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 22 of 76

"Here was this sort of endless pot of money that anyone could access," said Dan Fruchter, chief of the fraud and white-collar crime unit at the U.S. Attorney's office in the Eastern District of Washington. "Folks kind of fooled themselves into thinking that it was a socially acceptable thing to do, even though it wasn't legal."

The U.S. government has charged more than 2,230 defendants with pandemic-related fraud crimes and is conducting thousands of investigations.

Most of the looted money was swiped from three large pandemic-relief initiatives launched during the Trump administration and inherited by President Joe Biden. Those programs were designed to help small businesses and unemployed workers survive the economic upheaval caused by the pandemic.

The pilfering was wide but not always as deep as the eye-catching headlines about cases involving many millions of dollars. But all of the theft, big and small, illustrates an epidemic of scams and swindles at a time America was grappling with overrun hospitals, school closures and shuttered businesses. Since the pandemic began in early 2020, more than 1.13 million people in the U.S. have died from COVID-19, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Michael Horowitz, the U.S. Justice Department inspector general who chairs the federal Pandemic Response Accountability Committee, told Congress the fraud is "clearly in the tens of billions of dollars" and may eventually exceed \$100 billion.

Horowitz told the AP he was sticking with that estimate, but won't be certain about the number until he gets more solid data.

"I'm hesitant to get too far out on how much it is," he said. "But clearly it's substantial and the final accounting is still at least a couple of years away."

Mike Galdo, the U.S. Justice Department's acting director for COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement, said, "It is an unprecedented amount of fraud."

Before leaving office, former President Donald Trump approved emergency aid measures totaling \$3.2 trillion, according to figures from the Pandemic Response Accountability Committee. Biden's 2021 American Rescue Plan authorized the spending of another \$1.9 trillion. About a fifth of the \$5.2 trillion has yet to be paid out, according to the committee's most recent accounting.

Never has so much federal emergency aid been injected into the U.S. economy so quickly. "The largest rescue package in American history," U.S. Comptroller General Gene Dodaro told Congress.

The enormous scale of that package has obscured multi-billion dollar mistakes.

An \$837 billion IRS program, for example, succeeded 99% of the time in getting economic stimulus checks to the proper taxpayers, according to the tax agency. Nevertheless, that 1% failure rate translated into nearly \$8 billion going to "ineligible individuals," a Treasury Department inspector general told AP.

An IRS spokesman said the agency does not agree with all the figures cited by the watchdog and noted that, even if correct, the loss represented a tiny fraction of the program's budget.

The health crisis thrust the Small Business Administration, an agency that typically gets little attention, into an unprecedented role. In the seven decades before the pandemic struck, for example, the SBA had doled out \$67 billion in disaster loans.

When the pandemic struck, the agency was assigned to manage two massive relief efforts — the COVID-19 Economic Injury Disaster Loan and Paycheck Protection programs, which would swell to more than a trillion dollars. SBA's workforce had to get money out the door, fast, to help struggling businesses and their employees. COVID-19 pushed SBA's pace from a walk to an Olympic sprint. Between March 2020 and the end of July 2020, the agency granted 3.2 million COVID-19 economic injury disaster loans totaling \$169 billion, according to an SBA inspector general's report, while at the same time implementing the huge new Paycheck Protection Program.

In the haste, guardrails to protect federal money were dropped. Prospective borrowers were allowed to "self-certify" that their loan applications were true. The CARES Act also barred SBA from looking at tax return transcripts that could have weeded out shady or undeserving applicants, a decision eventually reversed at the end of 2020.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 23 of 76

"If you open up the bank window and say, give me your application and just promise me you really are who you say you are, you attract a lot of fraudsters and that's what happened here," Horowitz said.

The SBA inspector general's office has estimated fraud in the COVID-19 economic injury disaster loan program at \$86 billion and the Paycheck Protection program at \$20 billion. The watchdog is expected in coming weeks to release revised loss figures that are likely to be much higher.

In an interview, SBA Inspector General Hannibal "Mike" Ware declined to say what the new fraud estimate for both programs will be.

"It will be a figure that is fair, that is 1,000% defensible by my office, fully backed by our significant criminal investigative activity that is taking place in this space," Ware said.

Ware and his staff are overwhelmed with pandemic-related audits and investigations. The office has a backlog of more than 80,000 actionable leads, close to a 100 years' worth of work.

"Death by a thousand cuts might be death by 80,000 cuts for them," Horowitz said of Ware's workload. "It's just the magnitude of it, the enormity of it."

A 2022 study from the University of Texas at Austin found almost five times as many suspicious Paycheck Protection loans as the \$20 billion SBA's inspector general has reported so far. The research, led by finance professor John Griffin, found as much as \$117 billion in questionable and possibly fraudulent loans, citing indicators such as non-registered businesses and multiple loans to the same address.

Horowitz, the pandemic watchdog chairman, criticized the government's failure early on to use the "Do Not Pay" Treasury Department database, designed to keep government money from going to debarred contractors, fugitives, felons or people convicted of tax fraud. Those reviews, he said, could have been done quickly.

"It's a false narrative that has been set out, that there are only two choices," Horowitz said. "One choice is, get the money out right away. And that the only other choice was to spend weeks and months trying to figure out who was entitled to it."

In less than a few days, a week at most, Horowitz said, SBA might have discovered thousands of ineligible applicants.

"24 hours? 48 hours? Would that really have upended the program?" Horowitz said. "I don't think it would have. And it was data sitting there. It didn't get checked."

The Biden administration put in place stricter rules to stem pandemic fraud, including use of the "Do Not Pay" database. Biden also recently proposed a \$1.6 billion plan to boost law enforcement efforts to go after pandemic relief fraudsters.

"I think the bottom line is regardless of what the number is, it emanates overwhelmingly from three programs that were designed and originated in 2020 with too many large holes that opened the door to criminal fraud," Gene Sperling, the White House American Rescue Plan coordinator, said in an interview.

"We came into office when the largest amounts of fraud were already out of the barn," Sperling added.

In a statement, an SBA spokesperson declined to say whether the agency agrees with the figures issued by Ware's office, saying the federal government has not developed an accepted system for assessing fraud in government programs. Previous analyses have pointed to "potential fraud" or "fraud indicators" in a manner that conveys those numbers as a true fraud estimate when they are not, according to the statement.

The coronavirus pandemic plunged the U.S. economy into a short but devastating recession. Jobless rates soared into double digits and Washington sent hundreds of billions of dollars to states to help the suddenly unemployed.

For crooks, it was like tossing chum into the sea to lure fish. Many of these state unemployment agencies used antiquated computer systems or had too few staff to stop bogus claims from being paid.

"Yes, the states were overwhelmed in terms of demand," said Brent Parton, acting assistant secretary of the U.S. Labor Department's Employment and Training Administration. "We had not seen a spike like this ever in a global event like a pandemic. The systems were underfunded. They were not resilient. And I would say, more importantly, were vulnerable to sophisticated attacks by fraudsters."

Fraud in pandemic unemployment assistance programs stands at \$76 billion, according to congressional

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 24 of 76

testimony from Labor Department Inspector General Larry Turner. That's a conservative estimate. Another \$115 billion mistakenly went to people who should not have received the benefits, according to his testimony.

Turner declined AP's request for an interview.

Turner's task in identifying all of the pandemic unemployment insurance fraud has been complicated by a lack of cooperation from the federal Bureau of Prisons, according to a September "alert memo" issued by his office. Scam artists used Social Security numbers of federal prisoners to steal millions of dollars in benefits.

His office still doesn't know exactly how much was swiped that way. The prison bureau has declined to provide current data about federal prisoners. The agency did not respond to a request for comment.

Ohio's State Auditor Keith Faber saw trouble coming when safeguards to ensure the unemployment aid only went to people who legitimately qualified were lowered, making conditions ripe for fraud and waste. The state's unemployment agency took controls down because on the one hand, they literally were drinking from a firehose," Faber said. "They had a year's worth of claims in a couple of weeks. The second part of the problem was the (federal government) directed them to get the money out the door as quickly as possible and worry less about security. They took that to heart. I think that was a mistake."

Ohio's Department of Job and Family Services reported in February \$1 billion in fraudulent pandemic unemployment claims and another \$4.8 billion in overpayments.

The ubiquitous masks that became a symbol of the COVID-19 pandemic are seen on fewer and fewer faces. Hospitalizations for the virus have steadily declined, according to CDC data, and Biden in April ended the national emergency to respond to the pandemic.

But on politically divided Capitol Hill, lawmakers have not put the pandemic behind them and are engaged in a fierce debate over the success of the relief spending and who's to blame for the theft.

Too much government money, Republicans argue, breeds fraud, waste and inflation. Democrats have countered that all the financial muscle from Washington saved lives, businesses and jobs.

Republicans and Democrats did, however, find common ground last year on bills to give the federal government more time to catch fraudsters. Biden in August signed legislation to increase the statute of limitations from five to 10 years on crimes involving the two major programs managed by the SBA.

The extra time will help federal prosecutors untangle pandemic fraud cases, which often involve identity theft and crooks overseas. But there's no guarantee they'll catch everyone who jumped at the chance for an easy payday. They're busy, too, with crimes unrelated to pandemic relief funds.

"Do we have enough cases and leads that we could be doing them in 2030? We absolutely could," said Fruchter, the federal prosecutor in the Eastern District of Washington. "But my experience tells me that likely there will be other priorities that will come up and will need to be addressed. And unfortunately, in our office, we don't have a dedicated pandemic fraud unit."

Congress has not yet passed a measure that would give prosecutors the additional five years to go after unemployment fraudsters. That worries Turner, the Labor Department watchdog. Without the extension, he told Congress in a late May report, people who stole the benefits may escape justice.

Sperling, the White House official, said any future crisis that requires government intervention doesn't have to be a choice between helping people in need and stopping fraudsters.

"The prevention strategy going forward is that in a crisis, you can focus on fast delivery to people in desperate situations without feeling that you can only get that speed by taking down common sense anti-fraud guardrails," he said.

McDermott reported from Providence, Rhode Island.



## Driver charged after bus carrying wedding guests in Australia rolls over, killing 10 and injuring 25

By ROD McGUIRK and NICK PERRY Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — The driver of a bus was charged Monday after the vehicle carrying wedding guests rolled over on a foggy night in Australia's wine country, killing 10 people and injuring 25 in the nation's most deadly road accident in almost 30 years, police said.

Brett Button has been in custody since the accident Sunday night and will appear in court on Tuesday on multiple charges of dangerous and negligent driving, a police statement said.

It was Australia's most deadly road accident since 1994, when a bus skidded on its side across a highway and down a steep embankment in Brisbane, killing 12 people and injuring 38.

Sunday's crash happened just after 11:30 p.m. in foggy conditions at a roundabout on Wine Country Drive in the town of Greta in the Hunter Valley region of New South Wales state north of Sydney.

The guests had attended a wedding at the Wandin Estate Winery and were heading to their accommodations in the town of Singleton, Chapman said. One guest told Seven News it had been a nice day and a fairytale wedding.

A motorist who drove past the crash scene, identified by Australian Broadcasting Corp. only as Alison, said the fog was so heavy she could not make out the colors of the flashing lights of police cars, ambulances and fire trucks.

"The fog was terrible," she told the ABC. "You could barely see in front of you."

Of the 25 people injured, one was in critical condition and several others remained in hospitals, the state government said. The conditions of the others were described as stable.

Police had said 18 passengers escaped injury. But they later said there were only 36 people on the bus: the 10 dead, the 25 injured and the driver. The 18 were the least seriously injured among the passengers taken to hospitals.

Police Commissioner Karen Webb said investigators have not yet determined what caused the bus to roll on its side.

"The cause may not be known for some time. It will require scientific examination," Webb told reporters.

Whether passengers were wearing seatbelts also "will come under scrutiny," Webb said.

Chapman said rescuers smashed the front window to remove people from the wrecked bus.

Linq Buslines, which provides school bus and event charters, owned the bus involved in the crash, media reported. Its website says all its buses are equipped with seatbelts.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese thanked first responders and offered government support to victims and their families, saying the "mental scars of this will not go away."

"For a joyous day like that, in a beautiful place, to end with such terrible loss of life and injury is so cruel and so sad and so unfair," Albanese told reporters.

"People hire a bus for weddings in order to keep their guests safe. And that just adds to the unimaginable nature of this tragedy," he said.

Jay Suvaal, the mayor of Cessnock, said the crash was "truly horrific."

"We are a major wedding and tourist destination in the Hunter Valley, and so there will be people from all over the state and the country that have been to these areas and have probably done similar things," he said. "I think it will send shock waves right through the broader community."

Greta is in the heart of the Hunter Valley wine region, a picturesque area dotted with vineyards and restaurants. It was the first wine region established in Australia.

The wedding was in the middle of a long weekend, with Monday a public holiday across most Australian states.

— Perry reported from Wellington, New Zealand.

## Ukraine claims recapture of 4th village in eastern Donetsk as counteroffensive operations roll on

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian military officials said Monday their troops have retaken another southeastern village from Russian forces, among the first — small — successes in stepped-up counteroffensive operations against Moscow's more than 15-month invasion of Ukraine.

Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Maliar wrote on Telegram that Ukraine's flag was again flying over the village of Storozhiv, and she predicted the liberation of "all Ukrainian land" would be the final outcome. A day earlier, Ukrainian officials said three other small villages clustered together south of the town of Velika Novosilke in the eastern Donetsk region had been liberated.

The villages are located in the so-called "Vremivka ledge," a section of the front line where the Russian-controlled area protrudes into territory held by Ukraine. The area has become one of several epicenters of intense fighting.

The Russian Defense Ministry hasn't confirmed the Russian retreat from the villages, but some military bloggers have acknowledged the loss of Russian control over them.

Russian authorities, meanwhile, have said their troops have largely held their ground along the more than 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) arc of front line along southern and eastern Ukraine.

Western analysts and military officials have cautioned any effort to rid entrenched, powerfully armed and skilled Russian troops will likely take months, and the success of any Ukrainian counteroffensive is far from certain.

On Saturday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said "counteroffensive, defensive actions are taking place" without specifying it was an all-out counteroffensive, a day after Russian President Vladimir Putin asserted that the counteroffensive had started — and Ukrainian forces were taking "significant losses." He did not elaborate, and Ukrainian authorities have not publicly specified losses among their troops.

The reported Ukrainian advance comes as authorities on both sides of the active front line along the Dnieper River in the southern Kherson region pressed on with rescue and relocation efforts for civilians driven from their homes by flooding from the breach of the Kakhovka dam last week.

The U.N. and other aid groups say access to fresh drinking water is a crucial need and the possible spread of water-borne disease a big worry.

On Sunday, a local official said three people were killed when Moscow's troops opened fire at a boat evacuating people from Russian-occupied areas.

Late Sunday, Zelenskyy said envoys from the International Criminal Court have visited the region to investigate the disaster, which has driven thousands from their homes, and left at least 14 people dead.

"It is very important that the representatives of international justice have seen the consequences of this Russian act of terrorism with their own eyes and heard for themselves that Russian terror continues," Zelenskyy said.

Ukrainian authorities have accused Russian forces, which controlled the area around the dam, of deliberately destroying it. Russian officials have blamed Ukrainian shelling for its destruction.

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

## Food prices are squeezing Europe. Now Italians are calling for a pasta protest

By COLLEEN BARRY AP Business Writer

MILAN (AP) — When it comes to skyrocketing pasta prices, Italians are crying: Basta!

They have had enough after the cost of the staple of every Italian table soared by twice the rate of inflation. One consumer advocate group is calling for a weeklong national pasta strike starting June 22 after the Rome government held a crisis meeting last month and decided not to intervene on prices.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 27 of 76

"The macaroni strike is to see if keeping pasta on the shelves will bring down the prices, in the great Anglo-Saxon tradition of boycotting goods," said Furio Truzzi, president of the group, Assoutenti. "The price of pasta is absolutely out of proportion with production costs."

Grocery prices have risen more sharply in Europe than in other advanced economies — from the U.S. to Japan — driven by higher energy and labor costs and the impact of Russia's war in Ukraine. That is even though costs for food commodities have fallen for months from record highs, including wheat for the flour used to make pasta.

Stores and suppliers have been accused of profit-padding "greedflation," but economists say retail profits have been stable and the problem comes down to the higher cost to produce food.

Feeling the pressure, some governments in Europe have capped prices on staples or pushed for agreements with grocery stores to bring down costs, something that's popular with the public but can actually make food prices worse.

Shoppers like Noée Borey, a 26-year-old picking up groceries at a chain store in Paris, said she is all for setting ceilings for some food to help low-income workers and students.

She buys less meat and opts for less expensive grocery stores.

"Inevitably, all the products I buy have gone up by 20%, whether it's butter or berries," Borey said. "I'm not buying cherries anymore because they cost 15 euros a kilo" (about \$8 a pound).

The French government reached a three-month agreement with supermarket chains for them to cut prices on hundreds of staples and other foods, which is expected to be extended through the summer. Britain — where food inflation has reached 45-year highs — is discussing a similar move.

Countries like Hungary, with the highest food inflation in the European Union, and Croatia have mandated price controls for items like cooking oil, some pork cuts, wheat flour and milk.

The Italian government says it will strengthen price monitoring by working more closely with the country's 20 regions but won't impose such limits.

Spain has avoided price controls but abolished all value-added tax on essential products and halved tax on cooking oil and pasta to 5%.

The measures come as food banks are seeing soaring demand in some countries.

"Things are not getting better, they are getting worse for people," said Helen Barnard of the Trussell Trust, a charity that operates more than half of the food banks in the United Kingdom.

Spending much more to buy essentials like milk, pasta and fresh vegetables to "top up" donations received from supermarkets is a struggle for Anna Sjovorr-Packham, who runs several community food pantries serving discounted groceries to some 250 families in south London.

"While the demand from families hasn't gone up hugely, the cost has, and that's been really difficult to support," she said.

Prices for food and non-alcoholic drinks have actually fallen in Europe, from 17.5% in the 20-country euro area in March to a still-painful 15% in April. It comes as energy prices — key to growing and transporting what we eat — have dropped from record highs last year. But economists say it will be many months before prices in stores settle back down.

In comparison, U.S. food prices rose 7.7% in April from a year earlier, 8.2% in Japan and 9.1% in Canada. They hit 19% in the U.K.

The numbers play into expectations that the European Central Bank will raise interest rates again this week to counter inflation, while the U.S. Federal Reserve is expected to skip a hike.

In Europe, turning to price controls plays to voters, who get constant reminders of the inflation every time they hit the checkout counter, said Neil Shearing, group chief economist for Capital Economics. But he said such changes should be reserved for instances of supply shocks, like war.

Such controls could actually make food inflation worse by increasing demand from shoppers but discouraging new supply, he said.

"The current food price shock does not warrant such intervention," Shearing said.

While pasta remains one of the most affordable items in many grocery baskets, the symbolism hits the Italian psyche hard and comes as families are absorbing higher prices across the board, from sugar to

rice, olive oil and potatoes.

Italian families of four are spending an average of 915 euros (\$984) more a year on groceries, an increase of nearly 12%, for a total of 7,690 euros a year, according to Assoutenti. A full one-third of Italians have reduced grocery store spending, according to SWG pollsters, and nearly half are shopping at discount stores.

But even discounts are not what they used to be, and it's toughest for pensioners.

"Before, you could get two packs (of pasta) for 1 euro," said Carlo Compellini, a retiree who was shopping in central Rome. "Now with 2 euros, you get three packs."

Inflation is putting little indulgences out of reach for many, creating a new divide between the haves and have-nots.

The recent opening of a Sacher Café in Trieste, an Italian city whose Austro-Hungarian roots are evident in its stately architecture, led the mayor to a much-ridiculed response recalling for many an out-of-touch remark attributed to Marie Antoinette.

Asked about complaints that a slice of the famed Viennese chocolate cake was too pricey at nearly 10 euros, Mayor Roberto Dipiazza responded, "If you have money, go. If you don't, watch."

---

AP reporters Sacha Bianchi and Angela Charlton in Paris; Sylvia Hui in London; Rebecca Preciutti in Rome; Justin Spike in Budapest, Hungary; and Jennifer O'Mahony in Madrid contributed.

## **From GPS-guided bombs to electronic warfare, Russia improves its weaponry in Ukraine**

By The Associated Press undefined

Ukrainian troops are probing Russian defenses as spring gives way to a second summer of fighting, and Kyiv's forces are facing an enemy that has made mistakes and suffered setbacks in the 15-month-old war. But analysts say Moscow also has learned from those blunders and improved its weapons and skills.

Russia has built heavily fortified defenses along the 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line, honed its electronic weapons to reduce Ukraine's edge in combat drones, and turned heavy bombs from its massive Cold-War-era arsenal into precision-guided gliding munitions capable of striking targets without putting its warplanes at risk.

The changing Russian tactics along with increased troop numbers and improved weaponry could make it challenging for Ukraine to score any kind of quick decisive victory, threatening to turn it into a long battle of attrition.

U.S. Joint Chiefs chairman Gen. Mark Milley said in an interview with The Associated Press on Tuesday that while Ukraine's military is well-prepared, as time goes on, "this will be a back-and-forth fight for a considerable length of time."

Most attention last week focused on catastrophic flooding in southern Ukraine caused by the destruction of the Kakhovka dam that both sides blame on each other.

At the same time, however, Ukrainian troops have unleashed a series of attacks in several parts of the front that so far have made only marginal gains against multilayered Russian defenses.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Saturday that counteroffensive and defensive actions are underway against Russian forces, asserting that his commanders are in a "positive" mindset about its success. Ukrainian authorities have stopped short of announcing the start of a full-blown counteroffensive.

A day earlier, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that it had begun, but that Ukraine failed to make any headway and suffered "significant" losses.

Sir Richard Barrons, a retired general who led the U.K. Joint Forces Command, said the Russian military has built "textbook" defensive lines and adjusted its tactics following its hasty retreat from wide swaths of the Kharkiv and Kherson regions last fall under the brunt of a swift Ukrainian campaign.

He pointed at the improved Russian ability to both counter and use drones and also noted that Moscow has learned to keep key assets like command headquarters and ammunition dumps out of artillery range.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 29 of 76

"And they have sharpened up how they can fire at Ukrainian artillery and tanks when they spot them," he told AP. "So if you add all that together, everybody knows this will be a harder fight than for Kherson or Kharkiv in the autumn of last year.

"People are still using those two successes, and they were successes, as benchmarks, which I think is unfair, unreasonable in the circumstances," he said.

Russia has fielded more troops to protect the long front line, even though many of them could be poorly trained, he said.

At the start of the war, Russian military convoys stretched for miles to become easy prey for Ukrainian artillery and drones during a failed attempt to capture Kyiv, in what was seen as a major blunder.

Ukrainian missiles then sank the Russian cruiser Moskva, the flagship of its Black Sea Fleet, in a major blow to Moscow's pride; Kyiv's rockets pummeled Russian ammunition depots and command headquarters; and Kremlin forces hastily pulled back from large areas in the east and the south in the fall.

Despite those setbacks, Russia dug in to defend broad parts of Ukrainian territory it captured early in the invasion. Last month, it claimed control of the eastern city of Bakhmut after the war's longest and bloodiest battle.

Fundamental Russian weaknesses remain.

Russian troops continue to suffer from low morale, there are shortages of ammunition, and coordination between units has remained poor. Vicious infighting has erupted between the military brass and the Wagner private military contractor, which has fielded tens of thousands of mercenaries to the battlefield to spearhead the battle for Bakhmut.

A major factor still limiting Russia's capability has been its decision to keep its air force from forging deep into Ukraine after it suffered heavy losses in the war's initial stages. Its attempts to knock out Ukraine's air defenses have failed. Thanks to supplies of Western weaponry, Ukraine now poses an even more formidable challenge to Russian aircraft.

Barrons emphasized it's essential for military leaders in Kyiv to continue keeping its adversary's warplanes at bay so that "the counteroffensive isn't the moment the Russian air force suddenly finds its capability and courage and romps ... all over Ukraine."

Ukrainian military analyst Oleh Zhdanov notes that Moscow has maintained a numerical advantage in troops and weapons, despite any weaknesses.

While Russia has increasingly tapped its Cold-War arsenals, deploying tanks dating to the 1950s to replenish its massive, early losses, such old weapons can still perform well, Zhdanov said.

"It doesn't matter what tanks they have; they have thousands of them," Zhdanov told AP, noting Russia put many of them to use as stationary weapons in their defensive lines, including in the Zaporizhzhia region where they proved effective.

He acknowledged Russian success in hitting Ukrainian military depots, relying on Moscow's agents and collaborators, but said such losses were "tolerable." He also said the Russians increasingly use drones and improved electronic warfare to jam those from Ukraine.

Russia has stopped using battalion-sized tactical groups it deployed early in the war and shifted to smaller units, Zhdanov said.

While the Russian air force has operated in relatively small numbers, it has modernized its stock of bombs to turn them into gliding weapons that have proven efficient, he said. The 500-kilogram (1,100-pound) bombs adapted with a GPS module can inflict massive damage.

"The Soviet Union produced those bombs in uncountable numbers," Zhdanov said, adding that the Russians drop up to 50 a day for a "major psychological effect."

One such bomb accidentally released over the Russian city of Belgorod near the border with Ukraine in April blasted a huge crater and slightly injured one person.

Russian military bloggers hailed the punch of the gliding bombs and their ability to hit targets up to 70 kilometers (over 43 miles) away. One former military pilot said in his blog that work is under way to convert 1,500-kilogram (3,300-pound) bombs into gliding munitions.

These conversions allow the Russian air force to ramp up strikes on Ukrainian forces without risking its

warplanes.

The Royal United Service Institute, a London-based think-tank that focuses on defense and security issues, listed these gliding bombs along with other improvements in Russian weapons and tactics.

"Although they only have limited accuracy, the size of these munitions poses a serious threat," RUSI said in a recent report, adding Russia was working to improve their accuracy.

Russian engineers have shown prowess in building field fortifications and complex obstacles along the front line, including concrete-reinforced trenches and command bunkers, wire-entanglements, ditches, anti-tank hedgehogs or "dragon's teeth" and complex minefields, the report said.

Extensive placement of sophisticated mines for use against tanks and infantry poses "a major tactical challenge to Ukrainian offensive operations," the RUSI authors said.

Other Russian improvements noted in the report include better thermal camouflage for tanks; nimbler deployment of artillery into multiple positions, including integration with drones to avoid losses; and attacking Ukrainian artillery with loitering munitions — drones that hover until they acquire a target.

Such responsive Russian fire represents "the greatest challenge to Ukrainian offensive operations," the RUSI report said.

Improved Russian electronic warfare systems have destroyed about 10,000 Ukrainian drones a month, while they also have been able to intercept and decrypt Ukrainian tactical communications in real time, it added.

They also have learned to intercept GPS-guided rockets fired by Western-supplied launchers like the U.S.-made HIMARS, which embarrassed the Russians and inflicted major damage, the report said.

Russia's military "is able to improve and evolve its employment of key systems," RUSI said, but noted it could struggle to respond to similar quick adjustments by Kyiv that could make Moscow's units "likely to rapidly lose their coordination."

---

Associated Press writers Danica Kirka in London, Tara Copp in Normandy, France, and Yuras Karmanau in Tallinn, Estonia, contributed.

---

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

## **Tony Awards telecast makes inclusive history and puts on quite a show despite Hollywood strike**

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The intimate, funny-sad musical "Kimberly Akimbo" nudged aside splashier rivals on Sunday to win the musical crown at the Tony Awards on a night when Broadway flexed its creative muscle amid the Hollywood writers' strike and made history with laurels for nonbinary actors J. Harrison Ghee and Alex Newell.

"Kimberly Akimbo," with songs by Jeanine Tesori and a book by David Lindsay-Abaire, follows a teen with a rare genetic disorder that gives her a life expectancy of 16 navigating a dysfunctional family and a high school romance. Victoria Clark, as the lead in the show, added a second Tony to her trophy case, having previously won one in 2005 for "The Light in the Piazza."

Producer David Stone credited the musical's writers for penning a magic trick, calling "Kimberly Akimbo" a "musical comedy about the fragility of life, so healing and so profound and joyous that is almost impossible." The musical took home a leading five awards, including best book and score.

Earlier, Tony Awards history was made when Newell and Ghee became the first nonbinary people to win Tonys for acting. Last year, composer and writer Toby Marlow of "Six" became the first nonbinary Tony winner.

"Thank you for the humanity. Thank you for my incredible company who raised me up every single day," said leading actor in a musical winner Ghee, who stars in "Some Like It Hot," the adaptation of the classic

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 31 of 76

Scottsboro Boys," was honored with a special lifetime award. He thanked his parents; his husband, Albert Stephenson; and music, which "has stayed my friend through my entire life and has promised to stick with me until the end."

Jennifer Grey handed her father, "Cabaret" star Joel Grey, the other lifetime achievement Tony. "Being recognized by the theater community is such a gift because it's always been, next to my children, my greatest, most enduring love," the actor said.

Echoing the theme of antisemitism, "Parade" — a doomed musical love story set against the real backdrop of a murder and lynching in pre-World War I Georgia that won Tonys as a new musical in 1999 — won for best musical revival, with Michael Arden winning for best musical director.

"Parade" tells the story of a life that was cut short at the hands of the belief that one group of people is more valuable than another and that they might be more deserving of justice," Arden said. "This is a belief that is the core of antisemitism, white supremacy, homophobia and transphobia and intolerance of any kind. We must come together. We must battle this."

The telecast featured performances from all the nominated musicals and Will Swenson — starring on Broadway in a Neil Diamond musical — led the audience in a vigorous rendition of "Sweet Caroline." Lea Michele of "Glee" and now "Funny Girl" fame also performed a soaring version of "Don't Rain on My Parade."

It all took place at the United Palace Theatre, in the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan — a new venue for the ceremony, many miles from Times Square and the theater district.

"Thank you all for coming uptown. Never in my wildest dreams, truly," Lin-Manuel Miranda joked onstage. He, of course, wrote the musical "In the Heights," set in Washington Heights.

---

AP National Writer Jocelyn Noveck contributed to this report.

---

Mark Kennedy is at <http://twitter.com/KennedyTwits>

---

For more coverage of the 2023 Tony Awards, visit <https://apnews.com/hub/tony-awards>

## Moms for Liberty rises as power player in GOP politics after attacking schools over gender, race

By ALI SWENSON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — To its members, it's a grassroots army of "joyful warriors" who "don't co-parent with the government."

To anti-hate researchers, it's a well-connected extremist group that attacks inclusion in schools.

And to Republicans vying for the presidency, it has become a potential key partner in the fight for the 2024 nomination.

Moms for Liberty didn't exist during the last presidential campaign, but the Florida-based nonprofit that champions "parental rights" in education has rapidly become a major player for 2024, boosted in part by GOP operatives, politicians and donors.

The group that has been at the forefront of the conservative movement targeting books that reference race and gender identity and electing right-wing candidates to local school boards nationwide is hosting one of the next major gatherings for Republican presidential primary contenders. At least four are listed as speakers at the Moms for Liberty annual summit in Philadelphia later this month.

Former President Donald Trump, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley and biotech entrepreneur and "anti-woke" activist Vivek Ramaswamy have announced they will speak at the meeting at the end of June.

The group said it is in talks to bring others to the conference, including Republican Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina and Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a fringe Democrat known for pushing anti-vaccine conspiracy theories.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 32 of 76

The high interest in the event underscores how fights surrounding gender and race have become core issues for Republican voters. It also spotlights Republicans' eagerness to embrace a group that has drawn backlash for spreading anti-LGBTQ+ ideas and stripping libraries and classrooms of diverse material.

The group was founded in 2021 by Tiffany Justice, Tina Descovich and Bridget Ziegler, all current and former school board members in Florida who were unhappy with student mask and quarantine policies during the pandemic.

In two years, the organization has ballooned to 285 chapters across 44 states, Justice said. The group claims 120,000 active members.

It has expanded its activism in local school districts to target books it says are inappropriate or "anti-American," ban instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity, require teachers to disclose students' pronouns to parents, and remove diversity, equity and inclusion programs from schools.

The group also has sought to elect like-minded candidates to school boards. In 2022, just over half the 500 candidates it endorsed for school boards nationwide won their races, Justice said.

Moms for Liberty pitches itself as a nonpartisan, grassroots effort started by passionate parents who call themselves "joyful warriors." Yet the group's close ties to Republican organizations, donors and politicians raise questions about partisanship and doubts over how grassroots it really is.

Co-founder Ziegler, who stepped down from the board in late 2021 but remains supportive of the group, is married to the chairman of the Florida Republican Party. Still a school board member in Sarasota County, she also is a director at the Leadership Institute, a conservative organization that regularly trains Moms for Liberty members.

Marie Rogerson, who took Ziegler's place on the Moms for Liberty board, is an experienced political strategist who had previously managed the 2018 campaign of Florida state Rep. Randy Fine, a Republican.

The group also has quickly gained a close ally in DeSantis. In 2021, he signed Florida's "Parents Bill of Rights," which identified parents' rights to direct their kids' education and health care and was used to fight local student mask mandates. In 2022, he signed a law barring instruction about sexual orientation and gender identity in kindergarten through the third grade, a ban opponents had labeled the "Don't Say Gay" bill and which has since been extended through 12th grade. Moms for Liberty had loudly advocated both pieces of legislation.

Ziegler appeared behind DeSantis in photographs of the latter bill's signing ceremony. When the group held its inaugural summit in Tampa last year, it hosted speeches by DeSantis and his wife, Casey, presenting the governor with a "liberty sword."

And though the group is a 501(c)4 nonprofit that doesn't have to disclose its donors, there are other glimpses of how powerful Republicans have helped fuel its rise.

Its summit sponsors, which paid tens of thousands of dollars for those slots, include the Leadership Institute, the conservative Heritage Foundation and Patriot Mobile, a far-right Christian cellphone company whose PAC has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in an effort to take over Texas school boards.

Maurice Cunningham, a former political science professor at the University of Massachusetts-Boston who has tracked Moms for Liberty's growth and relationships, said its ability to draw so many top Republican candidates to its second annual summit is a testament to its establishment support.

"Yes, there are certainly moms that live in their communities and so forth who are active," Cunningham said. "But this is a top down, centrally controlled operation with big-money people at the top and political professionals working for them."

Justice said the group's work with conservative organizations and DeSantis shows they take interest in the group's cause, but doesn't mean it isn't grassroots.

Even as Moms for Liberty has aligned with establishment Republicans, researchers say its activism is part of a new wave of far-right anti-student inclusion efforts around the country.

The Southern Poverty Law Center, which tracks hate and extremism around the country, designated Moms for Liberty as an "anti-government extremist" group in its annual report released last week, along with 11 other groups it said use parents' rights as a vehicle to attack public education and make schools less welcoming for minority and LGBTQ+ students.



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 33 of 76

The label comes after some of the group's leaders and chapter chairs have been accused of harassing community members and amplifying false claims related to gender controversies.

Justice said calling Moms for Liberty's activities extremist is "alarming" and that the group's efforts to fund and endorse school board races show it is not anti-government.

She said the group removes chapter chairs who break its code of conduct and that it has members and leaders who are gay, including one member of its national leadership team.

A growing coalition of local organizations that promote inclusivity in education has begun to mobilize against Moms for Liberty and are petitioning Marriott to stop the upcoming conference. Defense of Democracy, a New York organization founded in direct opposition to Moms for Liberty, plans to bring members to Philadelphia to protest in person.

"They're so loud and so aggressive that people are kind of scared into silence," Defense of Democracy founder Karen Svoboda said of Moms for Liberty. "You know, if you see bigotry and homophobia, there is a civic responsibility to speak out against it."

Moms for Liberty, in turn, said it will increase security for its meeting. Marriott hasn't responded to the petition, and the Southern Poverty Law Center's "extremist" designation hasn't deterred any Republican candidate who plans to speak.

Haley responded by tweeting, "If @Moms4Liberty is a 'hate group,' add me to the list." Ramaswamy went onstage for a Thursday town hall with Justice and tweeted that SPLC stands for "Selling Political Lies to Corporations."

Those responses are unsurprising to Cunningham, who said in today's climate, the "extremist" label is "almost a badge of honor" within the GOP.

Moms for Liberty, for its part, is fundraising off it. After the SPLC report was public, Justice said the group quickly raised \$45,000, an amount a larger donor has agreed to match.

The Associated Press receives support from several private foundations to enhance its explanatory coverage of elections and democracy. See more about AP's democracy initiative here. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## School's out and Jill Biden is gearing up to raise money for President Biden's reelection campaign

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — At almost every stop last year, Jill Biden delivered a clear message to supporters as she campaigned for Democrats in the run-up to the 2022 midterm elections: Put voting on your "to-do" list, she'd say.

"Like a lot of educators, to stay organized, I use to-do lists," said Biden, a community college English professor. "So this election is going to be won or lost by where voting falls on your to-do list."

"Put voting at the top of your to-do list," she implored.

This year, the first lady has a new task atop her list. Though the 2024 election in which President Joe Biden is seeking reelection is more than a year away, helping him win a second term is a top priority for the first lady now that school's out for the summer.

A week after she returned from a grueling six-day trip abroad, the first lady is ready for her first solo outing of the 2024 campaign season. She heads out Monday on a three-day fundraising swing to New York City, San Francisco and Los Angeles, with most of her time to be spent raking in money at four political events, including two in California's Bay Area, to benefit the president's campaign, the Democratic National Committee and Democratic state party committees.

Biden will also join Gabrielle Giffords at a separate event in Los Angeles to mark 30 years of anti-gun violence work by the Giffords Law Center, a nonprofit led by the former congresswoman. Giffords was shot in the head in 2011 during a constituent event in her Arizona district.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 34 of 76

As she was in 2020 and the 2022 campaigns, Jill Biden will be active in the 2024 election cycle, helping the Democratic Party build up its resources and infrastructure while reminding supporters of what's at stake.

"As she has been for all her husband's presidential campaigns, she will continue to be a formidable presence on the stump," said Elizabeth Alexander, a senior campaign adviser. "Her warmth and approachability, combined with her 30-plus years as a classroom teacher, make her an effective messenger on the campaign trail."

The first lady, who introduces herself simply as "Jill," is widely viewed by the political establishment as one of her husband's strongest assets. Democratic consultants and pollsters say people see her as someone they can relate to, maybe even reminding them of their favorite teacher.

"Some people go to presidential fundraisers because, quote, unquote, it's necessary," said Bob Mulholland, a longtime Democratic campaign strategist. "People go to Jill Biden's fundraisers because they want to hear from her."

"Everybody who meets this woman loves her," added Steve Westly, a Bay Area venture capitalist who helped raise large sums of money for Biden in 2020.

Westly, who is set to host the president at his home later in June, said Jill Biden is the "most genuine, sunny, warmhearted, kind person you're ever going to meet. She just exudes that."

Though the young woman whose future husband told her she would never have to give a political speech has become a seasoned public speaker, she still has an occasional off moment. The first lady was criticized, and then apologized, last year for likening the diversity of Hispanics to the flavor of breakfast tacos, and earlier this year she set off a kerfuffle with an off-hand remark that the losers in the NCAA women's basketball final should come to the White House as well as the winners. That idea was roundly panned and quickly died.

Republican strategist Doug Heye said he hasn't really heard Jill Biden's name come up in conversations on that side of the political aisle.

"First ladies tend not to be 'capital P' political, which is a benefit to them," Heye said. "She's not really in that thought process."

He said presidents' wives generally are liked by independent voters and that political parties should be careful about trying to turn them into targets.

"If you're criticizing the first lady, that can backfire," Heye said.

Celinda Lake, who conducts polling for the Democratic Party, said voters "love, love, love" that Biden still teaches at a community college and didn't jump to a more prestigious private college or university.

"As a teacher, she knows how to listen and single out people that she thinks needs extra attention or extra conversation," added Mulholland.

Earlier this year, Jill Biden told The Associated Press in an interview that her husband has more he would like to get done for the American people.

"He says he's not done," she said. "He's not finished what he's started. And that's what's important."

The 72-year-old first lady participated in nearly 40 campaign and fundraising events in the fall of 2022 in more than a dozen states for Democratic candidates up and down the ballot. She is nine years younger than the president, who turns 81 in November.

In some cases, she appeared with candidates who were in tight reelection races, taking the place of the president, who wasn't always welcome. His public standing was — and remains — below 50%.

She promoted administration accomplishments and legislation that Biden was able to get passed and signed into law in his first two years in office despite what at the time were slim Democratic majorities in both the House and Senate, such as COVID-19 relief funds to help schools reopen and money for the nation's infrastructure needs. She urged supporters to send more Democrats to Congress, but Republicans ended up winning back the House while Democrats kept the Senate, picking up one seat in that chamber.

The first lady also got personal and began appealing, mostly to women but also to men, after the Supreme Court last June overturned the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling that established a constitutional right to an abortion.

She started telling the story of a high school friend's struggle to end her pregnancy in the late 1960s, when the procedure was illegal, and how she helped her friend recover.

"How could we go back to that time?" she asked.

## **Biden to host outgoing NATO secretary-general Stoltenberg as competition to replace him heats up**

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is welcoming outgoing NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg to the White House for talks on Monday as the competition to find his successor to lead the military alliance heats up.

Stoltenberg, who has led the NATO since 2014 and has had his tenure extended three times, said earlier this year he would move on when his current time expires at the end of September. The jockeying to replace him is intensifying as leaders of the 31-member military alliance are set to meet next month for their annual summit in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Last week, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak made the case for U.K. Defense Minister Ben Wallace directly to Biden. The U.S. president also met with Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, another potential contender.

Asked about the NATO job at a news conference with Sunak by his side, Biden called Wallace "very qualified" but noted that the conversation among NATO leaders to find a "consensus" pick to replace Stoltenberg was ongoing. Biden's opinion carries enormous weight as the U.S. spends more than any other member in the alliance on defense.

Frederiksen sought to play down her candidacy after she met with Biden last week. She declined to say whether she discussed the coming vacancy with him, telling reporters that she did not want to go "further in these speculations about NATO." The alliance has never had a female secretary-general.

A British government official, who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity, said ahead of Sunak's visit that the British leader wants to be sure the next secretary general "carries on Stoltenberg's good work of modernization but also understands the importance of defense spending at this critical time."

Denmark has lagged behind NATO's target for members to spend 2% of gross domestic product on military budgets by 2030. But the centrist government announced late last month that it would look to invest some 143 billion kroner (\$20.6 billion) in the country's defense over the next decade, citing a "serious threat picture."

Biden and Stoltenberg are also expected to discuss Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine and efforts to persuade fellow NATO member Turkey to back off blocking Sweden from joining the military alliance.

Sweden and Finland, both historically unaligned militarily, jointly sought NATO membership after being rattled by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Turkey initially blocked both countries from joining the alliance before agreeing to membership for Finland while continuing to object to Sweden.

In public comments since Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was reelected last month, Biden has spoken with a measure of certainty that Sweden will soon join the alliance.

"It will happen. I promise you," Biden said of Sweden's NATO ascension earlier this month.

Stoltenberg and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken have both expressed hope that Sweden will be brought into the NATO fold by the time allied leaders meet in Lithuania on July 11-12.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 36 of 76

cross-dressing comedy film. The soulful Ghee stunned audiences with their voice and dance skills, playing a musician — on the run from gangsters — who tries on a dress and is transformed.

Newell, who plays Lulu — an independent, don't-need-no-man whiskey distiller in "Shucked" — has been blowing audiences away with their signature number, "Independently Owned." They won for best featured actor in a musical.

"Thank you for seeing me, Broadway. I should not be up here as a queer, nonbinary, fat, Black little baby from Massachusetts. And to anyone that thinks that they can't do it, I'm going to look you dead in your face that you can do anything you put your mind to," Newell said to an ovation.

Tom Stoppard's "Leopoldstadt," which explores Jewish identity with an intergenerational story, won best play, also earning wins for director Patrick Marber, featured actor Brandon Uranowitz and Brigitte Reiffenstuel's costumes.

The British-Czech playwright, who now has five best play Tony Awards, joked he won his first in 1968 and noted that playwrights were "getting progressively devalued in the food chain" despite being "the sharp ends of the inverted pyramid."

Second-time Tony Awards host Ariana DeBose opened a blank script backstage before dancing and leaping her way to open the main show with a hectic opening number that gave a jolt of electricity to what is usually an upbeat, safe and chummy night. The writers' strike left the storied awards show honoring the best of musical theater and plays without a script.

Before the pre-show began, DeBose revealed to the audience the only words that would be seen on the teleprompter: "Please wrap up." Later in the evening, virtually out of breath after her wordless opening performance, she thanked the labor organizers for allowing a compromise.

"I'm live and unscripted. You're welcome," she said. "So to anyone who may have thought that last year was a bit unhinged, to them, I say, 'Darlings, buckle up.'"

Winners demonstrated their support for the striking writers either at the podium or on the red carpet with pins. Miriam Silverman, who won the Tony for best featured actress in a play for "The Sign in Sidney Brustein's Window," ended her speech with: "My parents raised me to believe in the power of labor and workers being compensated and treated fairly. We stand with the WGA in solidarity!"

Jodie Comer, the three-time Emmy nominated star of "Killing Eve" won leading actress in a play for her Broadway debut, the one-woman play "Prima Facie," which illustrates how current laws fail terribly when it comes to sexual assault cases.

Sean Hayes won lead actor in a play for "Good Night, Oscar," which dramatizes a long night's journey into the scarred psyche of pianist Oscar Levant, now obscure but once a TV star.

"This has got to be the first time an Oscar won a Tony," Hayes cracked.

Suzan-Lori Parks' "Topdog/Underdog," a Pulitzer Prize-winning play about sibling rivalry, inequality and society's false promises, won the Tony for best play revival. She thanked director Kenny Leon and stars Corey Hawkins and Yahya Abdul-Mateen II: "They showed up to be large in a world that often does not much want the likes of us living at all."

Bonnie Milligan, who won for best featured actress in a musical for "Kimberly Akimbo," also had a message to the audience: "I want to tell everybody that doesn't maybe look like what the world is telling you what you should look like — whether you're not pretty enough, you're not fit enough, your identity is not right, who you love isn't right — that doesn't matter."

"Cause just guess what?" she continued, brandishing her award. "It's right, and you belong."

Many of the technical awards — for things like costumes, sound, lighting and scenic design — were handed out at a breakneck pace during a pre-show hosted by Skylar Astin and Julianne Hough, allowing winners plenty of airtime for acceptance speeches but little humor.

The pre-show telecast on Pluto featured some awkwardly composed shots and some presenters slipped up on certain words. The tempo was so rapid, it ended more than 10 minutes before the main CBS broadcast was slated to start.

John Kander, the 96-year-old composer behind such landmark shows as "Chicago," "Cabaret" and "The

## Rape and torture: Transgender women open up about their suffering under Argentina's dictatorship

By DANIEL POLITI Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — Julieta González stepped inside the blocky white building where the Argentine military dictatorship held her for a month, and the flashbacks began.

Blood stains on the mattresses. Hearing screaming as she was inside her cell. Being forced to wash blood out of cars. The endless sexual abuse.

Transgender women like González often pretended to be asleep when a guard appeared in the middle of the night, she remembered.

"I was always the one who bore the brunt," González, 65, told AP journalists during a visit to the cell where she was held. "I was younger."

González and four other transgender women testified at the trial of former security officers in April on charges of crimes against humanity, part of what human-rights lawyers and activists call Argentina's long-overdue effort to recognize the suffering of the trans community under military rule from 1976 to 1983. Members of the community took part in a demonstration last month in support of a bill under discussion in a congressional committee that would provide a lifetime pension for trans people over 40.

Patricia Alexandra Rivas, 56, said at the demonstration that she was raped and tortured while illegally detained for five days in 1981, when she was 14.

The people who did the dictatorship's dirty work were particularly brutal to members of the trans community, which continued to suffer after the return of democracy in 1983. But things have been changing in Argentina: More than a decade ago, the country approved a landmark gender-identity law that allowed people to change their gender on documents without permission. More recently, Congress passed a law that reserves 1% of public sector jobs for trans individuals.

"They were brought to this place, tortured, raped, subjected to slave labor, deprived of their freedom and then released," assistant prosecutor Ana Oberlin said while standing outside a set of cells at the Banfield Pit, a suburban former police station that was one of hundreds of illegal detention and torture centers in the capital.

Military rule engulfed much of Latin America in the 1970s and '80s and human rights organizations say some 30,000 people were illegally detained and disappeared without a trace in Argentina. Until recently, little was said about how the trans community suffered under the military rulers.

Part of the reason why the recognition has taken so long is because violence against members of the trans community, "is completely normalized," said Marlene Wayar, 53, a transgender activist and author who gave expert testimony at the trial.

This dynamic largely played out in the 296 trials relating to dictatorship-era crimes against humanity that have taken place since 2006, after amnesty laws were struck down, in which 1115 people have been convicted, according to the Public Prosecutor's Office.

It's only recently that Argentina has begun discussing gender roles and sexual mores under the dictatorship, Oberlin said, including a "model of family that laid out the role that men and women must play."

Oberlin played a key role in including the testimony of the five transgender women who were held in the Banfield Pit as part of a trial that started in 2020, in which 12 officers are facing crimes against humanity charges for actions that took place in three clandestine detention centers involving some 700 victims.

Violence at the hands of security forces was something that González was used to when she and other trans women were detained by police in 1977 or 1978 — she doesn't remember the exact date — while working as prostitutes. They ended up in the Banfield Pit.

"They pick us up, and I didn't want to get in the truck, so he hit me on the back with a rifle like this, grabbed me by the hair, 'Of course you're going inside,'" González recalled.

González and her friends were locked up in a cell where they often heard people they didn't see cry out in pain.

One night they heard a girl yell out several times and then a baby could be heard crying, González said.

"I spent my whole life wondering" about that baby, she said.

Security officers often stole babies that were born from pregnant detainees, who were then disappeared. González and her cellmates were forced to do various types of work, including cooking and cleaning cars, "many of which had blood inside," González testified in April.

"They also abused us sexually," González testified at the trial, frequently describing instances in which she was raped.

"Could you refuse?" Oberlin asked González.

"No, no," González answered with a shrug. "It was, I don't know, at the time it was normal."

One time, she was picked up and gang-raped by a group of soldiers.

"When those things happen, you know, I think about other things," she said in her old cell.

Although trans women, who largely had to resort to prostitution to make a living, were used to abuse from security forces, things worsened for them during the dictatorship that pushed a traditional conception of the family.

"In addition to rape and torture, they were subjected to extreme brutality precisely because of their gender identities," Oberlin said.

The sentences in the case, which are expected by the end of the year "will be very important," notes Oberlin, because trans women were taken to illegal detention centers "across the country" and it could open the door for others to testify.

For her part, González said she "never" thought that she was going to be testifying at a trial. For a long time, she thought that what she had experienced at the Banfield Pit "was not important."

But now she knows "it is important," González said.

"Now that we can talk ... be listened to when we were always so quiet," she said.

---

Associated Press journalist Victor R. Caivano contributed to this report.

## **60 years after Medgar Evers' murder, his widow continues a civil rights legacy**

By EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — At 90, Myrlie Evers-Williams still speaks in a clear, strong voice as she says she terribly misses her first love, civil rights icon Medgar Evers, as she reflects on his work to push the U.S. toward a promise of equality and justice for all.

It's been 60 years since a white supremacist hid in the darkness of night and assassinated Evers outside the family's Jackson home, shooting the Mississippi NAACP leader hours after then-President John F. Kennedy gave a televised speech advocating civil rights legislation.

Evers-Williams and the couple's three young children were in the house. After hearing the crack of a rifle, she rushed to her mortally wounded husband, who lay bleeding in the carport.

"Medgar is so very much a part of me, and he's here," Evers-Williams told about 200 people who gathered on a hot and humid morning last week for the ceremonial opening of the Medgar and Myrlie Evers Home National Monument, a unit of the National Park Service.

The monument is in a subdivision where people still raise families in modest two- and three-bedroom homes. The Evers home is open for tours by appointment, but anybody can stop by a new visitors' space nearby, which has a herb and vegetable garden.

Evers was a World War II veteran who fought in Europe and then faced the hostile realities of a deeply segregated society after returning home to Mississippi. As the first field secretary of the Mississippi NAACP beginning in 1954, he led voter registration drives and boycotts to push for racial equality. He also investigated lynchings, beatings and other violence that Black residents suffered at the hands of white segregationists. His wife worked alongside him as his secretary.

"When my husband was shot at the doorstep of our home — June 12, 1963 — I thought my life was over,"

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 39 of 76

Evers-Williams said. "And I realized it was just beginning because there were three children — Medgar's children, my children — who were looking up to me."

Mississippi's white power structure in the early 1960s prevented most Black people from registering to vote, and most public schools remained segregated until 1970.

Evers-Williams said her home state needed to overcome division and "show the rest of this nation that Mississippi was not at the bottom of the heap, but that we could rise to be what we should be." She and the children moved to California in 1964, and she raised them there.

In 1976, she married Walter Williams, a longshoreman and union activist.

"God was very good and sent another man in my life — a man who loved and appreciated Medgar," she said.

White supremacist Byron De La Beckwith stood trial twice in the 1960s in the killing of Evers, but all-white juries deadlocked. Prosecutors reopened the case in the early 1990s after new witnesses came forward. In 1994, an integrated jury convicted Beckwith of murder and sentenced him to life in prison, where he died in 2001.

Evers-Williams said Evers never wanted to give up on Mississippi, even when he knew he was in danger. He "gave his life so it could be better for all of us," she said.

During last week's ceremony at the Evers home, Jackson Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba said the family's work is honorable.

"I want you to recognize the humanity here," Lumumba told the crowd. "The humanity of a family that has given it all. The humanity of a family that did not allow a coward's bullet to stop them."

Evers-Williams has been a civil rights activist in her own right. She served as national chairperson of the NAACP from 1995 to 1998, winning the position shortly after Williams died of cancer.

The airport and the main post office in Jackson have both been named for Evers for many years, and a statue of him stands at a busy intersection.

About 38% of Mississippi residents are Black — the largest percentage of any U.S. state. In the six decades since Evers was murdered and the federal government enacted voting rights legislation, Black voter registration in Mississippi has increased dramatically. Black people have won hundreds of local offices and dozens of Mississippi legislative seats but no statewide offices. Among the state's four U.S. House members, one is Black.

In the past week, several events have been held in and around Jackson to commemorate the Evers family legacy. Young people attended seminars about human rights activism. A Voices of Courage and Justice gala honored people committed to social change.

At a "More Than a Widow" brunch for Evers-Williams, a gospel choir sang: "What do you do when you've done all you can? ... God has a purpose. Yes, God has a plan."

Evers-Williams' daughter Reena Evers-Everette accompanied her to the events. She said it's important for people to learn about the Civil Rights Movement, even as politicians try to restrict how history is taught.

"We are trying to ... make sure our history is never erased," Evers-Everette said.

She said the commemorative events are likely to be her mother's final big public appearances. After moving from California to Oregon and back to Mississippi, Evers-Williams is living in California again.

Evers-Williams, who spoke at the opening of the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum in 2017, said last week that she is proud of her native state — something she could not always say.

"I haven't said it's perfect or even near perfect," she said. "But it's changed so much since my birth, and I hope it continues to do so in a very positive way."

She chuckled as she mentioned being 90, and then said she remains committed to trying to eliminate racism and prejudice: "I hope I will be able to do so until I take my last breath."

## Ukraine's dam collapse is both a fast-moving disaster and a slow-moving ecological catastrophe

By LORI HINNANT, SAM McNEIL and ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KHERSON, Ukraine (AP) — The destruction of the Kakhovka Dam was a fast-moving disaster that is swiftly evolving into a long-term environmental catastrophe affecting drinking water, food supplies and ecosystems reaching into the Black Sea.

The short-term dangers can be seen from outer space — tens of thousands of parcels of land flooded, and more to come. Experts say the long-term consequences will be generational.

For every flooded home and farm, there are fields upon fields of newly planted grains, fruits and vegetables whose irrigation canals are drying up. Thousands of fish were left gasping on mud flats. Fledgling water birds lost their nests and their food sources. Countless trees and plants were drowned.

If water is life, then the draining of the Kakhovka reservoir creates an uncertain future for the region of southern Ukraine that was an arid plain until the damming of the Dnieper River 70 years ago. The Kakhovka Dam was the last in a system of six Soviet-era dams on the river, which flows from Belarus to the Black Sea.

Then the Dnieper became part of the front line after Russia's invasion last year.

"All this territory formed its own particular ecosystem, with the reservoir included," said Kateryna Filiuta, an expert in protected habitats for the Ukraine Nature Conservation Group.

### THE SHORT TERM

Ihor Medunov is very much part of that ecosystem. His work as a hunting and fishing guide effectively ended with the start of the war, but he stayed on his little island compound with his four dogs because it seemed safer than the alternative. Still, for months the knowledge that Russian forces controlled the dam downstream worried him.

The six dams along the Dnieper were designed to operate in tandem, adjusting to each other as water levels rose and fell from one season to the next. When Russian forces seized the Kakhovka Dam, the whole system fell into neglect.

Whether deliberately or simply carelessly, the Russian forces allowed water levels to fluctuate uncontrollably. They dropped dangerously low in winter and then rose to historic peaks when snowmelt and spring rains pooled in the reservoir. Until Monday, the waters were lapping into Medunov's living room.

Now, with the destruction of the dam, he is watching his livelihood literally ebb away. The waves that stood at his doorstep a week ago are now a muddy walk away.

"The water is leaving before our eyes," he told The Associated Press. "Everything that was in my house, what we worked for all our lives, it's all gone. First it drowned, then, when the water left, it rotted."

Since the dam's collapse Tuesday, the rushing waters have uprooted landmines, torn through caches of weapons and ammunition, and carried 150 tons of machine oil to the Black Sea. Entire towns were submerged to the rooflines, and thousands of animals died in a large national park now under Russian occupation.

Rainbow-colored slicks already coat the murky, placid waters around flooded Kherson, the capital of southern Ukraine's province of the same name. Abandoned homes reek from rot as cars, first-floor rooms and basements remain submerged. Enormous slicks seen in aerial footage stretch across the river from the city's port and industrial facilities, demonstrating the scale of the Dnieper's new pollution problem.

Ukraine's Agriculture Ministry estimated 10,000 hectares (24,000 acres) of farmland were underwater in the territory of Kherson province controlled by Ukraine, and "many times more than that" in territory occupied by Russia.

Farmers are already feeling the pain of the disappearing reservoir. Dmytro Neveselyi, mayor of the village of Maryinske, said everyone in the community of 18,000 people will be affected within days.

"Today and tomorrow, we'll be able to provide the population with drinking water," he said. After that, who knows. "The canal that supplied our water reservoir has also stopped flowing."

### THE LONG TERM



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 41 of 76

The waters slowly began to recede on Friday, only to reveal the environmental catastrophe looming. The reservoir, which had a capacity of 18 cubic kilometers (14.5 million acre-feet), was the last stop along hundreds of kilometers of river that passed through Ukraine's industrial and agricultural heartlands. For decades, its flow carried the runoff of chemicals and pesticides that settled in the mud at the bottom.

Ukrainian authorities are testing the level of toxins in the muck, which risks turning into poisonous dust with the arrival of summer, said Eugene Simonov, an environmental scientist with the Ukraine War Environmental Consequences Working Group, a non-profit organization of activists and researchers.

The extent of the long-term damage depends on the movement of the front lines in an unpredictable war. Can the dam and reservoir be restored if fighting continues there? Should the region be allowed to become arid plain once again?

Ukrainian Deputy Foreign Minister Andriy Melnyk called the destruction of the dam "the worst environmental catastrophe in Europe since the Chernobyl disaster."

The fish and waterfowl that had come to depend on the reservoir "will lose the majority of their spawning grounds and feeding grounds," Simonov said.

Downstream from the dam are about 50 protected areas, including three national parks, said Simonov, who co-authored a paper in October warning of the potentially disastrous consequences, both upstream and downstream, if the Kakhovka Dam came to harm.

It will take a decade for the flora and fauna populations to return and adjust to their new reality, according to Filiuta. And possibly longer for the millions of Ukrainians who lived there.

In Maryinske, the farming community, they are combing archives for records of old wells, which they'll unearth, clean and analyze to see if the water is still potable.

"Because a territory without water will become a desert," the mayor said.

Further afield, all of Ukraine will have to grapple with whether to restore the reservoir or think differently about the region's future, its water supply, and a large swath of territory that is suddenly vulnerable to invasive species — just as it was vulnerable to the invasion that caused the disaster to begin with.

"The worst consequences will probably not affect us directly, not me, not you, but rather our future generations, because this man-made disaster is not transparent," Filiuta said. "The consequences to come will be for our children or grandchildren, just as we are the ones now experiencing the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, not our ancestors."

---

Hinnant reported from Paris. Novikov reported from Kyiv. Jamey Keaten in Kyiv and Volodymyr Yurchuk in Kherson, Ukraine, contributed to this report.

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

## Philippines' Mayon Volcano spews lava down its slopes in gentle eruption putting thousands on alert

By JIM GOMEZ AND AARON FAVILA Associated Press

LEGAZPI, Philippines (AP) — The Philippines' most active volcano was gently spewing lava down its slopes Monday, alerting tens of thousands of people they may have to quickly flee a violent and life-threatening explosion.

More than 12,600 people have left the mostly poor farming communities within a 6-kilometer (3.7-mile) radius of Mayon Volcano's crater in mandatory evacuations since volcanic activity increased last week. But thousands more remain within the permanent danger zone below Mayon, an area long declared off-limits to people but where generations have lived and farmed because they have nowhere else to go.

With the volcano beginning to expel lava Sunday night, the high-risk zone around Mayon may be expanded should the eruption turn violent, said Teresito Bacolcol, director of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology. Bacolcol said if that happens, people in any expanded danger zone should be prepared to evacuate to emergency shelters.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 42 of 76

"What we are seeing now is an effusive eruption," Bacolcol told The Associated Press. "We are looking at this on a day-to-day basis."

From a distance, Associated Press journalists watched lava flow down the volcano's southeastern gullies for hours Sunday night. People hurriedly stepped out of restaurants and bars in a seaside district of Legazpi, the capital of northeastern Albay province about 14 kilometers (8.5 miles) from Mayon, many of them snapping pictures of the volcano that's a popular tourist draw known for its picturesque conical shape.

Albay was placed under a state of emergency Friday to allow for quicker distribution of any disaster relief funds in the event of a major eruption.

The volcano had been raised to alert level three on a five-step system Thursday, warning that the volcano was in a state of high unrest and a hazardous eruption is possible in weeks or days.

With lava flowing down from the volcano gently, Bacolcol said the alert level would stay at three but it could be moved up higher if the eruption turns perilous.

The highest alert, level five, would mean a violent and life-threatening eruption is underway with ash plumes shooting into the sky and superheated pyroclastic streams endangering more communities at Mayon's lush foothills.

Mayon is one of 24 active volcanoes in the Philippines. It last erupted violently in 2018, displacing tens of thousands of villagers. In 1814, Mayon's eruption buried entire villages and reportedly left more than 1,000 people dead.

Many of Albay's people, however, have accepted the volcano's sporadic fury as part of their lives.

On Sunday morning, throngs of people jogged, biked and walked their dogs in a seaside promenade in Legazpi. The 2,462-meter (8,077-foot) volcano lay hidden in thick clouds at a distance.

Some locals have grown wealthy from the tourism industry that has sprung from Mayon or the gravel, sand and ornamental rocks and boulders found around the volcano in abundance.

Inside the permanent danger zone, authorities and villagers on Sunday were moving cows and water buffaloes from the high-risk farms to temporary grazing areas a safe distance away.

"It's not only people that should be brought to safety but their farm animals, too," Albay provincial veterinarian Manny Victorino told AP. He said authorities were taking steps to avoid a deeper economic impact should the volcano erupt.

They gave deworming medicine and vitamins and punched identifying tags onto the ears of several cows and buffaloes for better monitoring.

The cattle evacuations underscore how wide the potential threats are from natural disasters in the Philippines.

The archipelago is lashed by about 20 typhoons and tropical storms a year and is located on the so-called Pacific "Ring of Fire," the rim of seismic faults where most of the world's earthquakes and volcanic eruptions occur.

In 1991, Mount Pinatubo north of Manila blew its top in one of the biggest volcanic eruptions of the 20th century, killing hundreds.

---

Associated Press journalist Joael Calupitan contributed to this report.

---

Find more of AP's Asia-Pacific coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/asia-pacific>

## **In Uganda, a recent ban on charcoal making disrupts a lucrative but destructive business**

By RODNEY MUHUMUZA Associated Press

GULU, Uganda (AP) — The charcoal makers in the forests of northern Uganda fled into the bush, temporarily abandoning their precious handiwork: multiple heaps of timber yet to be processed.

The workers were desperate to avoid capture by local officials after a new law banned the commercial production of charcoal. They risked arrest and beatings if they were caught.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 43 of 76

But what's really at stake for the charcoal makers is their livelihood.

"We are not going to stop," said Deo Ssenyimba, a bare-chested charcoal maker who has been active in northern Uganda for 12 years. "We stop and then we do what? Are we going to steal?"

The burning of charcoal, an age-old practice in many African societies, is now restricted business across northern Uganda amid a wave of resentment by locals who have warned of the threat of climate change stemming from the uncontrolled felling of trees by outsiders. In reality, not much has changed as charcoal producers skirt around the rules to keep supply flowing and watchful vigilantes take matters into their own hands.

Much of northern Uganda remains lush but sparsely populated and impoverished, attracting investors who desire the land mostly for its potential to sustain the charcoal business. And demand is assured: charcoal accounts for up to 90% of Africa's primary energy consumption needs, according to a 2018 report by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization.

Before the charcoal ban, local activists formed vigilante groups in districts such as Gulu, where a former lawmaker recently led an attack on a truck that was dispossessed of 380 bags of charcoal. Although Odonga Otto was then charged with aggravated robbery, the country's chief justice praised him as a hero.

"I have not heard anybody who is destroying our environment being charged," said Chief Justice Alfonse Owiny-Dollo, who is from northern Uganda. "If you steal from a thief, are you a thief?"

The week after Owiny-Dollo's public comments, President Yoweri Museveni issued an executive order banning the commercial production of charcoal in northern Uganda, disrupting a national trade that has long been influenced by cultural sensibilities as much as the seeming abundance of idle land. Commercial charcoal production is still permitted in other regions.

The ban follows a climate change law, enacted in 2021, that empowers local authorities across the country to regulate activities deemed harmful to the environment. Trees suck in planet-warming carbon dioxide from the air, but burning charcoal emits the heat-trapping gas instead.

Days after Museveni's order, a team of Associated Press journalists walked into a charcoal-burning enclave in a remote part of Gulu, 335 kilometers (208 miles) from the Ugandan capital of Kampala.

One local official, Patiko Sub-County Chairman Patrick Komakech, gave chase when he heard fleeing footsteps. A small patch of bamboo opened up to an almost bare patch where trees were being cut, juicy stumps still fresh here and there.

Komakech was agitated and on the verge of tears.

Timber had been heaped like contraband ivory in different spots, and grey smoke rose from one pile being processed. Beside it stood loaded bags of charcoal. The charcoal makers slept in little tarp tents draped in dry leaves.

"I am completely perturbed (by) all this destruction," Komakech said, speaking of charcoal makers who "are actually imported and put in this community, and they do this thing without the mercy of leaving any vegetation."

He kicked at felled logs, saying they were those of the African Shea tree, a plant prized by the region's Acholi people for its fruit as well as its oil, often used in cosmetics.

The charcoal burners eventually approached Komakech, who wished to destroy the heaps of timber with kerosene, and said they were simply earning a living and responding to demand.

Uganda's population explosion has heightened the need for cheap plant-based energy sources, especially charcoal. In this east African country of 45 million people, charcoal is preferred in households across the income spectrum but especially in those of the urban poor — seen as ideal in the preparation of certain dishes that require slow cooking. Middle-class families maintain both gas cookers and charcoal stoves.

"Even those policemen who are coming to beat us, they are cooking with charcoal," said Peter Ejal. "We are not here to spoil the environment. We are here by their orders, those people who are selling these trees."

His colleague, the ragtag charcoal maker Ssenyimba, said bluntly, "When we finish this place we will go to another place."

One charcoal maker asserted that charcoal from northern Uganda was likely used even in the State

House. Others charged that they were cutting the trees with the complicity of landlords who sell charcoal-making rights by the acre to interested dealers.

The industry can be lucrative for landowners and investors.

In nearby towns a bag of charcoal fetches about \$14, but the price rises further as the goods approach Kampala. Ssenyimba said he's paid about \$3 for every bag he makes.

An acre of property with plenty of trees goes for up to \$150 in Gulu, although the sum can be much smaller in remote but vegetation-rich ranches owned by the poorest families. The investors then deploy men armed with power saws and machetes, working over specific places and leaving when they have cut down all the trees they were sold.

District councils in the region raise revenue from licensing and taxes, and corrupt members of the armed services have been protecting charcoal truckers, according to Museveni and Otto, the former lawmaker now leading vigilantes against charcoal makers.

Otto has helped cause the impounding of multiple trucks in recent weeks, including two recently seized ones parked outside a police station where a crowd gathered one recent afternoon, hoping to grab the goods.

He said he plans to serve hundreds of local officials with letters of intent to sue for any lapses in protecting the environment. Otto told the AP his goal is to make the rest of Uganda "lose appetite" for charcoal from his region.

"We go to the fields where the charcoal ovens are and we destroy the bases," he said. "We managed to make the business risky. As of now, you drive a hundred kilometers and you will not find any single truck carrying charcoal."

The ban on commercial production in northern Uganda is almost certainly bound to push up the retail price of charcoal. Otto and others were concerned that charcoal dealers would avoid authorities by ferrying charcoal bags in small numbers — on the backs of passenger motorcycles — to towns where the merchandise could be stealthily loaded into trucks.

Alfred Odoch, an environmental activist in the region, said he supports the work of vigilantes, describing charcoal making as "the biggest threat" since the end of a rebel insurgency in the region two decades ago.

Vigilantes pressurize charcoal burners as well as local officials to minimize "mass tree cutting" in northern Uganda, said Odoch. Charcoal making, he said, should be acceptable only as a small business by families selling "two or three sacks" in a week or so.

"My fellow vigilantes who are doing a lot of work to stop this, I support them," he said. "The fight for environmental justice is not only (for) one person."

---

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.

## Section of heavily traveled I-95 collapses in Philadelphia after tanker truck catches fire

By RON TODT Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — An elevated section of Interstate 95 collapsed early Sunday in Philadelphia after a tanker truck carrying flammable cargo caught fire, closing a heavily traveled segment of the East Coast's main north-south highway indefinitely, authorities said.

Transportation officials warned of extensive delays and street closures and urged drivers to avoid the area in the city's northeast corner. Officials said the tanker contained a petroleum product that may have been hundreds of gallons of gasoline. The fire took about an hour to get under control.

The northbound lanes of I-95 were gone and the southbound lanes were "compromised" by heat from the fire, said Derek Bowmer, battalion chief of the Philadelphia Fire Department. Runoff from the fire or perhaps broken gas lines caused explosions underground, he added.

Some kind of crash happened on a ramp underneath northbound I-95 around 6:15 a.m., said state

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 45 of 76

Transportation Department spokesman Brad Rudolph, and the northbound section above the fire collapsed quickly.

The southbound lanes were heavily damaged, "and we are assessing that now," Rudolph said.

Gov. Josh Shapiro, who said Sunday evening he planned to issue a disaster declaration Monday to speed federal funds, said at least one vehicle was still trapped beneath the collapsed roadway.

"We're still working to identify any individual or individuals who may have been caught in the fire and the collapse," he said. There were no immediate reports of injuries.

Video from the scene showed a massive concrete slab had fallen from I-95 onto the road below. Shapiro said his flight over the area showed "just remarkable devastation."

"I found myself thanking the Lord that no motorists who were on I-95 were injured or died," he said.

Mark Fusetti, a retired Philadelphia police sergeant, said he was driving south toward the city's airport when he noticed thick, black smoke rising over the highway. As he passed the fire, the road beneath began to "dip," creating a noticeable depression that was visible in video he took of the scene, he said.

He saw traffic in his rearview mirror come to a halt. Soon after, the northbound lanes of the highway crumbled.

"It was crazy timing," Fusetti said. "For it to buckle and collapse that quickly, it's pretty remarkable."

The collapsed section of I-95 was part of a \$212 million reconstruction project that wrapped up four years ago, Rudolph said. There was no immediate time frame for reopening the highway, but officials would consider "a fill-in situation or a temporary structure" to accelerate the effort, he said.

Motorists were sent on a 43-mile (69-kilometer) detour, which was going "better than it would do on a weekday," Rudolph said. The fact that the collapse happened on a Sunday helped ease congestion, but he expected traffic "to back up significantly on all the detour areas."

Pennsylvania Transportation Secretary Michael Carroll said the I-95 segment carries roughly 160,000 vehicles per day and was likely the busiest interstate in Pennsylvania. He said work would continue through the night to remove the collapsed section as rapidly as possible.

Shapiro said he had been spoken directly to U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and had been assured that there would be "absolutely no delay" in getting federal funds quickly to rebuild what he called a "critical roadway" as safely and efficiently as possible.

But Shapiro he said the complete rebuild of I-95 would take "some number of months," and in the meantime officials were looking at "interim solutions to connect both sides of I-95 to get traffic through the area."

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said in a Twitter post that President Joe Biden was briefed on the collapse and that White House officials were in contact with Shapiro and Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney's offices to offer assistance. Buttigieg, in a social media post, called it "a major artery for people and goods" and said the closure would have "significant impacts on the city and region until reconstruction and recovery are complete."

The National Transportation Safety Board said it was sending a team to investigate the fire and collapse.

Most drivers traveling the I-95 corridor between Delaware and New York City use the New Jersey Turnpike rather than the segment of interstate where the collapse occurred. Until 2018, drivers did not have a direct highway connection between I-95 in Pennsylvania and I-95 in New Jersey. They had to use a few miles of surface roads, with traffic lights, to get from one to the other.

Officials were also concerned about the environmental effects of runoff into the nearby Delaware River.

After a sheen was seen in the Delaware River near the collapse site, the Coast Guard deployed a boom to contain the material. Ensign Josh Ledoux said the tanker had a capacity of 8,500 gallons, but the contents did not appear to be spreading into the environment.

"As far as waterways go, it's being contained, and it seems like things are under control," he said.

Thousands of tons of steel and concrete were piled atop the site of the fire, and heavy construction equipment would be required to start to remove the debris, said Dominick Mireles, director of Philadelphia's Office of Emergency Management.

The fire was strikingly similar to another blaze in Philadelphia in March 1996, when an illegal tire dump under I-95 caught fire, melting guard rails and buckling the pavement.

The highway was closed for several weeks, and partial closures lasted for six months. Seven teenagers were charged with arson. The dump's owner was sentenced to seven to 14 years in prison and ordered to pay \$3 million of the \$6.5 million repair costs, The Philadelphia Inquirer reported.

More recently in Atlanta, an elevated portion of Interstate 85 collapsed in a fire, shutting down the heavily traveled route through the heart of the city in March 2017. A homeless man was accused of starting the blaze. But federal investigators said in a report that the state transportation department's practice of storing combustible construction materials under the highway increased the risk of fire.

Associated Press writers Mark Scoloro in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and Jake Offenhartz in New York contributed to this report.

## **Report: Billionaire investor, philanthropist George Soros cedes control of empire to a younger son**

The Associated Press undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — Billionaire investor turned philanthropist George Soros is ceding control of his \$25 billion empire to a younger son, Alexander Soros, according to an exclusive interview with The Wall Street Journal published online Sunday.

Soros' business holdings include his nonprofit Open Society Foundations, which is active in more than 120 countries around the world and funnels about \$1.5 billion annually to groups such as those that back human rights and promote the growth of democracies around the world, according to its website.

The 37-year-old, who goes by Alex, told the Wall Street Journal that he is "more political" than his 92-year-old father, who has been a right-wing target for his backing of liberal causes such as reducing racial bias in the justice system. But he noted that the two "think alike."

Alex said he was broadening his father's "liberal aims" and embracing different causes including voting and abortion rights, as well as gender equity. He said he aims to keep using the family's wealth to back left-leaning U.S. politicians.

Alex told the Wall Street Journal that he recently met with Biden administration officials, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and heads of state, including Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, to push for issues related to the family foundation.

In December, the board of Open Society Foundations, known as OSF, elected Alex as its chairman, succeeding his father. The newspaper also reported that Alex now directs political activity as president of Soros' super PAC.

The Wall Street Journal reported that the younger Soros is the only family member on the investment committee overseeing Soros Fund Management, which manages money for the foundation and the family.

During the interview with the newspaper, Alex expressed concern that former President Donald Trump would return to the White House and hinted that the Soros organization would play a key financial role in the 2024 presidential race.

"As much as I would love to get money out of politics, as long as the other side is doing it, we will have to do it, too," he said in the interview that took place at the fund manager's New York offices.

Alex is the oldest of two sons from George Soros' marriage with his second wife, Susan Weber, according to the Wall Street Journal.

The appointment passes over George Soros' elder son Jonathan Soros, 52, a lawyer with a background in finance. He had been believed to be the clear successor until "a falling out and a change of heart," according to the paper.

## 'Unabomber' Ted Kaczynski died by suicide in prison medical center, AP sources say

By MICHAEL R. SISAK AND MIKE BALSAMO AND JAKE OFFENHARTZ undefined

Ted Kaczynski, known as the "Unabomber," who carried out a 17-year bombing campaign that killed three people and injured 23 others, died by suicide, four people familiar with the matter told The Associated Press.

Kaczynski, who was 81 and suffering from late-stage cancer, was found unresponsive in his cell at the Federal Medical Center in Butner, North Carolina, around 12:30 a.m. on Saturday. Emergency responders performed CPR and revived him before he was transported to a hospital, where he was pronounced dead later Saturday morning, the people told the AP. They were not authorized to publicly discuss Kaczynski's death and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

Kaczynski's death comes as the federal Bureau of Prisons has faced increased scrutiny in the last several years following the death of wealthy financier Jeffrey Epstein, who also died by suicide in a federal jail in 2019.

Kaczynski had been held in the federal Supermax prison in Florence, Colorado, since May 1998, when he was sentenced to four life sentences plus 30 years for a campaign of terror that set universities nationwide on edge. He admitted committing 16 bombings from 1978 and 1995, permanently maiming several of his victims.

In 2021, he was transferred to the federal medical center in North Carolina, a facility that treats prisoners suffering from serious health problems. Bernie Madoff, the infamous mastermind of the largest-ever Ponzi scheme, died at the facility of natural causes the same year.

A Harvard-educated mathematician, Kaczynski lived as a recluse in a dingy cabin in rural Montana, where he carried out a solitary bombing spree that changed the way Americans mailed packages and boarded airplanes.

His targets included academics and airlines, the owner of a computer rental store, an advertising executive and a timber industry lobbyist. In 1993, a California geneticist and a Yale University computer expert were maimed by bombs within the span of two days.

Two years later, he used the threat of continued violence to convince The New York Times and The Washington Post to publish his manifesto, a 35,000 word screed against modern life and technology, as well as damages to the environment.

The tone of the treatise was recognized by his brother, David, and David's wife, Linda Patrik, who tipped off the FBI, which had been searching for the Unabomber for years in the nation's longest, costliest manhunt.

Authorities in April 1996 found him in a small plywood and tarpaper cabin outside Lincoln, Montana, that was filled with journals, a coded diary, explosive ingredients and two completed bombs.

While awaiting trial, in 1998, Kaczynski attempted to hang himself with a pair of underwear. Though he was diagnosed by a psychiatrist as a paranoid schizophrenic, he was adamant that he wasn't mentally ill. He eventually pleaded guilty rather than allow his attorneys to present an insanity defense.

Growing up in Chicago, Kaczynski skipped two grades before attending Harvard at age 16, where he published papers in prestigious mathematics journals.

His explosives were carefully tested and came in meticulously handcrafted wooden boxes sanded to remove possible fingerprints. Later bombs bore the signature "FC" for "Freedom Club."

The FBI called him the "Unabomber" because his early targets seemed to be universities and airlines. An altitude-triggered bomb he mailed in 1979 went off as planned aboard an American Airlines flight; a dozen people aboard suffered from smoke inhalation.

During his decades in prison, Kaczynski maintained regular correspondence with the outside world, becoming an object of fascination – and even reverence – among those opposed to modern civilization.

"He's turned into an iconic figure for both the far-right and far-left," said Daryl Johnson, a domestic terrorism expert at the New Lines Institute, a nonprofit think tank. "He definitely stands out from the rest of the pack as far as his level of education, the meticulous nature in which he went about designing his bombs."

This story corrects the last name of the expert in final paragraph to Johnson.

Balsamo reported from Miami.

## **Oldest of 4 siblings who survived Colombian plane crash told family their mother lived for days**

By MARKO ÁLVAREZ Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — The four Indigenous children who survived 40 days in the Amazon jungle after their plane crashed have shared limited but harrowing details of their ordeal with their family, including that their mother survived the crash for days before she died.

The siblings, aged 13, 9, 4 and 1, are expected to remain for at least two weeks in a hospital receiving treatment after their rescue Friday, but some are already speaking and wanting to do more more than lie in bed, relatives said.

Manuel Ranoque, father of the two youngest children, told reporters outside the hospital Sunday that the oldest of the four siblings — 13-year-old Lesly Jacobombaire Mucutuy — had described to him how their mother was alive for about four days after the plane crashed on May 1 in the Colombian jungle.

Ranoque said before she died, the mother likely would have told them: "Go away," apparently asking them to leave the wreckage site to survive. He provided no more details. Authorities have not said anything about this version.

Details of what happened to the youngsters, and what they did, have been emerging gradually and in small pieces, so it could take some time to have a better picture of their ordeal, during which the youngest, Cristin, turned 1 year old.

Henry Guerrero, an Indigenous man who was part of the search group, told reporters that the children were found with two small bags containing some clothes, a towel, a flashlight, two cellphones, a music box and a soda bottle.

He said they used the bottle to collect water in the jungle, and he added that after they were rescued the youngsters complained of being hungry. "They wanted to eat rice pudding, they wanted to eat bread," he said.

Fidencio Valencia, a child's uncle, told the media outlet Noticias Caracol that the children were starting to talk and one of them said they hid in tree trunks to protect themselves in a jungle area filled with snakes, animals and mosquitoes. He said they were exhausted.

"They at least are already eating, a little, but they are eating," he said after visiting them at the military hospital in Bogota, Colombia. On Saturday, Defense Minister Iván Velásquez had said the children were being rehydrated and couldn't eat food yet.

Later, Valencia provided new details of the children's recovery two days after the rescue: "They have been drawing. Sometimes they need to let off steam." He said family members are not talking a lot with them to give them space and time to recover from the shock.

The children were traveling with their mother from the Amazonian village of Araracuara to the town of San Jose del Guaviare when the plane went down.

The Cessna single-engine propeller plane was carrying three adults and the four children when the pilot declared an emergency due to engine failure. The small aircraft fell off the radar a short time later and a search for survivors began.

Dairo Juvenal Mucutuy, another uncle, told local media that one of kids said he wanted to start walking.

"Uncle, I want shoes, I want to walk, but my feet hurt," Mucutuy said the child told him.

"The only thing that I told the kid (was), 'When you recover, we will play soccer,'" he said.

Authorities and family members have said the siblings survived eating cassava flour and seeds, and that some familiarity with the rainforest's fruits were also key to their survival. The kids are members of the Huitoto Indigenous group.



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 49 of 76

After being rescued on Friday, the children were transported in a helicopter to Bogota and then to the military hospital, where President Gustavo Petro, government and military officials, as well as family members met with the children on Saturday.

An air force video released Friday showed a helicopter using lines to pull the youngsters up because it couldn't land in the dense rainforest where they were found. The military on Friday tweeted pictures showing a group of soldiers and volunteers posing with the children, who were wrapped in thermal blankets. One of the soldiers held a bottle to the smallest child's lips.

Gen. Pedro Sanchez, who was in charge of the rescue efforts, said that the children were found 5 kilometers (3 miles) away from the crash site in a small forest clearing. He said rescue teams had passed within 20 to 50 meters (66 to 164 feet) of where the children were found on a couple of occasions but had missed them.

Two weeks after the crash, on May 16, a search team found the plane in a thick patch of the rainforest and recovered the bodies of the three adults on board, but the small children were nowhere to be found.

Soldiers on helicopters dropped boxes of food into the jungle, hoping that it would help sustain the children. Planes flying over the area fired flares to help search crews on the ground at night, and rescuers used speakers that blasted a message recorded by the siblings' grandmother telling them to stay in one place.

Colombia's army sent 150 soldiers with dogs into the area, where mist and thick foliage greatly limited visibility. Dozens of volunteers from Indigenous tribes also joined the search.

Ranoque, the father of the youngest children, said the rescue shows how as an "Indigenous population, we are trained to search" in the middle of the jungle.

"We proved the world that we found the plane... we found the children," he added.

Some Indigenous community members burned incense as part of a ceremony outside the Bogota military hospital Sunday to give thanks for the rescue of the kids.

Luis Acosta, coordinator of the Indigenous guard that was part of the search in the Amazon, said the children were found as part of what he called a "combination of ancestral wisdom and Western wisdom... between a military technique and a traditional technique."

The Colombian government, which is trying to end internal conflicts in the country, has highlighted the joint work of the military and Indigenous communities to find the children.

## Most active Philippine volcano spews lava, locals ready to evacuate in event of explosion

By JIM GOMEZ and AARON FAVILA Associated Press

DARAGA, Philippines (AP) — The Philippines' most active volcano has begun spewing lava in a gentle eruption, putting thousands of people on heightened alert for the possibility of a violent explosion that would force them to suddenly evacuate from their homes, authorities said Monday.

More than 12,000 villagers have left their homes so far in mandatory evacuations from the mostly poor farming communities within a 6-kilometer (3.7-mile) radius of Mayon volcano's crater in northeastern Albay province. Those evacuations began after the volcano begun showing signs of renewed restlessness last week.

Authorities cautioned that thousands more remain within the permanent danger zone below Mayon, which has long been declared off limits.

With the volcano beginning to expel lava Sunday night, the high-risk zone around Mayon may be expanded should the eruption turn violent, said Teresito Bacolcol, director of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology. Bacolcol said if that happens, people in any expanded danger zone should be prepared to evacuate to emergency shelters.

From a distance Sunday night, a team of Associated Press journalists witnessed the volcano spewing lava down its southeastern gullies for hours. People hurriedly stepped out of restaurants and bars in a seaside district of Albay's capital city of Legazpi, about 14 kilometers (8.5 miles) from Mayon, many snapping pictures of the country's most popular volcano.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 50 of 76

Albay was placed under a state of emergency on Friday to allow for quicker distribution of any disaster relief funds in the event of a major eruption. On Thursday, authorities raised the alert level for the 2,462-meter (8,077-foot) volcano.

A key tourist draw for its picturesque conical shape, Mayon is one of the country's 24 active volcanoes. It last erupted violently in 2018, displacing tens of thousands of villagers.

In 1814, Mayon's eruption buried entire villages and reportedly left more than 1,000 people dead. But many of Albay's people have accepted the volcano's sporadic fury as part of their lives.

Aside from villagers living in communities perilously close to the volcano, authorities and villagers began moving large numbers of cows and water buffaloes on Sunday from high-risk farms to 25 temporary grazing areas a safe distance away. They're following more than 12,600 villagers who have moved to emergency shelters since last week, when Mayon began spewing superheated gas and producing heavy ashfall in a sign of a possible major eruption imminent within days or weeks.

"It's not only people that should be brought to safety but their farm animals too," Albay provincial veterinarian Manny Victorino told The AP. He said authorities were taking steps to avoid a deeper economic impact should the volcano erupt.

In Matnog village in Daraga town, Victorino and his team of veterinarians provided deworming medicine, injected vitamin supplements and punched identifying tags onto the ears of several cows and buffaloes for better monitoring.

The cattle evacuations underscore the government's dilemma in dealing with threats from about two dozen active volcanoes, led by Mayon, spread across the sprawling archipelago. Located in the so-called Pacific "Ring of Fire," a region prone to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, the Philippines is also lashed by about 20 typhoons and storms a year, making the Southeast Asian nation one of the world's most disaster-prone.

On Sunday morning, throngs of people jogged or biked, joined a group dancing to disco music and walked their dogs in a seaside promenade in Legazpi. The volcano lay hidden in thick clouds at a distance.

A resident, Violeto Peralta, caught the attention of passersby, painting an image of Mayon's explosive eruption on the concrete fence of his roadside house. Passing schoolchildren, he said, would be happy to use his painting as a backdrop for their selfies.

He said that many businesses in the province have grown rich from diverse tourist activities that have sprung from Mayon, including sightseeing tours around the country's most active volcano.

"We're not scared of it," the 76-year-old said. "We've learned to live with it."

---

Associated Press journalist Joael Calupitan contributed to this report.

## Join the military, become a US citizen: Uncle Sam wants you and you and tu

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When Esmita Spudes Bidari was a young girl in Nepal, she dreamed of being in the military, but that wasn't a real option in her country.

Last week, she raised her right hand and took the oath to join the U.S. Army Reserves, thanks in part to a recruiter in Dallas who also is Nepalese and reached out to her through an online group.

Bidari, who heads to basic training in August, is just the latest in a growing number of legal migrants enlisting in the U.S. military as it more aggressively seeks out immigrants, offering a fast track to citizenship to those who sign up.

Struggling to overcome recruiting shortfalls, the Army and the Air Force have bolstered their marketing to entice legal residents to enlist, putting out pamphlets, working social media and broadening their outreach, particularly in inner cities. One key element is the use of recruiters with similar backgrounds to these potential recruits.

"It is one thing to hear about the military from locals here, but it is something else when it's from your

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 51 of 76

fellow brother, from the country you're from," said Bidari, who was contacted by Army Staff Sgt. Kalden Lama, the Dallas recruiter, on a Facebook group that helps Nepalese people in America connect with one another. "That brother was in the group and he was recruiting and he told me about the military."

The military has had success in recruiting legal immigrants, particularly among those seeking a job, education benefits and training as well as a quick route to becoming an American citizen. But they also require additional security screening and more help filling out forms, particularly those who are less proficient in English.

Both the Army and the Air Force say they will not meet their recruiting goals this year, and the Navy also expects to fall short. Pulling more from the legal immigrant population may not provide large numbers, but any small boosts will help. The Marine Corps is the only service on pace to meet its goal.

The shortfalls have led to a wide range of new recruiting programs, ad campaigns and other incentives to help the services compete with often higher-paying, less risky jobs in the private sector. Defense leaders say young people are less familiar with the military, are drawn more to corporate jobs that provide similar education and other benefits, and want to avoid the risk of injury and death that service in defense of the United States could bring. In addition, they say that little more than 20% meet the physical, mental and character requirements to join.

"We have large populations of legal U.S. residents who are exceptionally patriotic, they're exceptionally grateful for the opportunities that this country has provided," said Air Force Maj. Gen. Ed Thomas, head of the service's recruiting command.

The biggest challenges have been identifying geographic pockets of immigrant populations, finding ways to reach them and helping any of those interested navigate the complex military recruiting applications and procedures.

Last October, the Army reestablished a program for legal permanent residents to apply for accelerated naturalization once they get to basic training. Recruiters began to reach out on social media, using short videos in various languages to target the top 10 countries that recruits had come from during the previous year.

The Air Force effort began this year, and the first group of 14 graduated from basic training and were sworn in as new citizens in April. They included recruits from Cameroon, Jamaica, Kenya, the Philippines, Russia and South Africa. As of mid-May there were about 100 in basic training who had begun the citizenship process and about 40 who had completed it.

Thomas said the program required changes to Air Force policy, coordination with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and a careful screening process to ensure there are no security risks.

"We have to take exceptional measures to be able to thoroughly vet and go through the security clearance investigation," he said, adding that in many cases the immigrants are not immediately put in jobs that require top secret clearance.

Under the new program, recruits are quickly enrolled in the citizenship system and when they start basic training, an expedited process kicks off, including all required paperwork and testing. By the time Air Force recruits finish their seven weeks of training, the process is complete and they are sworn in as American citizens.

The first group of 14 included several who are seeking various medical jobs, while another wants to be an air transportation specialist. Thomas said Airman 1st Class Natalia Laziuk, 31, emigrated from Russia nine years ago, has dreamed of being a U.S. citizen since she was 11, and learned about the military by watching American movies and television.

"Talking to this young airman, she essentially said, 'I just wanted to be useful to my country,'" he said. "And that's a story that we see played over and over and over again. I've talked to a number of these folks around the country. They're hungry to serve."

For Bidari, who arrived in the U.S. in 2016 to attend college, the fast track to citizenship was important because it will make it easier for her to travel and bring her parents to the United States to visit. Speaking in a call from Chicago just a day after she was sworn in, she said she enlisted for six years and hopes that

her future citizenship will help her become an officer.

In Chicago earlier this year, Army Secretary Christine Wormuth heard from a number of recruiters about the increased outreach to immigrant communities and how it helped them meet their numbers. In the 2022 budget year, they said, the Chicago recruiting battalion enlisted 70 legal permanent residents and already this year they have enlisted 62.

More broadly across the Army, close to 2,900 enlisted during the first half of this budget year, compared with about 2,200 during the same period the previous year. The largest numbers are from Jamaica, with 384, followed by Mexico, the Philippines and Haiti, but many are from Nepal, Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, Colombia and the Dominican Republic.

"As a little girl, looking at the soldiers, I always had admiration for them," said Bidari, recalling British troops in Nepal. "Yesterday, when I was able to take that oath ... I don't think I have words to really explain how I was feeling. When they said, 'Welcome future soldier,' I was like, 'Oh my goodness, this is happening.'"

## Pro-EU group projected to win Montenegro snap parliamentary election

By PREDRAG MILIC Associated Press

PODGORICA, Montenegro (AP) — A recently formed centrist group that advocates Montenegro joining the European Union was projected to win the small Balkan country's early parliamentary election Sunday, but without enough support to form a government on its own, according to independent vote monitors.

The Center for Democratic Transition pollsters group said that based on all of the votes counted, the Europe Now movement won 26% percent of the vote, while the coalition led by the Democratic Party of Socialists of former President Milo Djukanovic got 23%.

The unofficial results were based on pollster projections and on results from representative samples from individual polling stations. The state election commission is to announce the official election results in coming days.

The vote Sunday was expected to put an end to deep political divisions and years of instability that have hampered the small NATO-member country on its route to joining the European Union.

But, the political instability is likely continue, with no clear winner and difficult coalition talks ahead.

"Tomorrow is a new day," said Milojko Spajic, a leader of the Europe Now movement. "We are not going to be arrogant, and we will sit down with anyone who shares our values. We will obviously form a new pro-European government."

Some 542,000 voters were eligible to choose among 15 parties and coalitions fielding candidates, ranging from groups that are staunchly pro-Western to ones that are pro-Serbian and pro-Russian.

As the polls closed, the turnout was just over 56% — the lowest in Montenegro since it split from Serbia to become an independent state in 2006. Analysts say turnout was low because many voters are fed up with frequent elections that produced no major changes on the local political scene.

Unlike in the previous elections, when campaigning focused on whether the country should be leaning toward the EU or closer to Russia and Serbia, the economy and living standards dominated this time.

"Finally, we are deciding on the quality of life, rather than on the East or West," Tanja Bojovic, 38, said as she cast her ballot in the Montenegrin capital, Podgorica. "I expect the victory of those who will lead us to a better life."

The election is Montenegro's first in more than 30 years that does not feature Djukanovic, who served almost continuously as the country's prime minister or president since 2001. He lost a presidential election in April and has taken a back seat in national politics.

President Jakov Milatovic, who belongs to the Europe Now movement, said he hoped that "following the parliamentary elections, the new Assembly of Montenegro will reflect what is currently a new political reality in the country."

The Democratic Party of Socialists, the party formerly led by Djukanovic, has experienced a decline in popularity after three decades of dominance and has new leadership that was looking for a chance to

make a comeback.

The pro-Serb coalition For the Future of Montenegro has emerged as a kingmaker in the formation of a future coalition government by winning some 15% of the vote Sunday, according to the independent pollsters.

Political analyst Ana Nenezic, executive director of the Centre for Monitoring and Research, said the focus on the economy "is beneficial for society" but politicians' promises of salary hikes "are not based on a real economy."

She added that based on the latest election forecasts, "I will be really surprised if we get a politically stable government."

Djukanovic led Montenegro to independence from Serbia in 2006 and defied Russia to join NATO in 2017. An alliance dominated by parties seeking closer ties with Serbia and Russia ousted the Democratic Party of Socialists from power in the previous parliamentary elections, held in 2020.

The new ruling coalition, however, soon plunged into disarray, which stalled Montenegro's path toward the EU and created a political deadlock. The government fell in a no-confidence vote last year but remained in office for months because of the stalemate.

Montenegro, a picturesque Adriatic Sea country of about 620,000 people, was once viewed as the country first in line to join the EU from the Western Balkans.

---

Associated Press writer Dusan Stojanovic in Belgrade, Serbia, contributed to this report.

## **Abstinence not required: How a Baltimore drug treatment program prioritizes saving lives**

By LEA SKENE Associated Press

BALTIMORE (AP) — Anthony Kelly trudged through southwest Baltimore, each labored footstep a reminder of the roofing accident that left him with chronic pain and a raging opioid addiction several years after he returned home from serving in the Marines.

Doctors used metal plates to reconstruct his lower legs and Kelly spent months learning to walk again. So began his plodding journey into the depths of substance use disorder, a downward spiral that would gradually weaken his body and consume his mind, pulling him farther and farther away from the person he once was: a supportive husband and father, a hard-working professional, a proud veteran.

After his prescribed painkillers ran out, Kelly repeatedly traveled to Florida to take advantage of the state's loosely regulated pain management clinics. Finally, he turned to a combination of heroin and cocaine that sometimes cost \$500 per day.

More than a decade later, his substance use is more manageable and less expensive, though it remains a controlling force in his life. He takes buprenorphine, a prescription medication that's considered the gold standard for treating opioid addiction by reducing cravings and easing withdrawal symptoms.

He gets the medication through a mobile health clinic housed in a retrofitted van, which parks in some of Baltimore's most drug-ravaged communities, including Kelly's neighborhood. Doctors and nurses meet with patients, write prescriptions and provide basic wound care, hepatitis C treatment, packages of the overdose reversal agent naloxone and more, all free of charge.

The clinic exemplifies an ongoing shift in the nation's approach to stemming overdose deaths, which surged during the pandemic to unprecedented heights as the potent synthetic opioid fentanyl replaced heroin in drug markets across the country.

The so-called harm reduction model, which has received endorsement and funding from the Biden administration, offers potentially life-saving services to opioid users, without requiring abstinence in return.

Advocates say it acknowledges the importance of keeping people alive, first and foremost, while they confront the sometimes insurmountable challenges associated with recovery. Critics argue it enables illegal activity.

In Baltimore's "Healthcare on the Spot" program, most patients continue using street drugs, but the vast

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 54 of 76

majority report using less, according to clinic staff.

"Being an addict, it's more complicated than people think," said Kelly, 49. "We built this web we're entangled in. We didn't get here overnight and we're not gonna get better overnight. You can't just snap out of it."

Baltimore's overdose death rate is significantly higher than the statewide and nationwide averages, with more than 1,000 lives lost in 2020, the most recent data available. The city makes up about 10% of Maryland's population but logs more than 35% of its overdose deaths.

Though efforts to address the problem have fallen short of achieving large-scale change, Baltimore has long been ahead of the curve. The city launched a needle exchange program in 1994, and in recent years, officials have focused on expanding access to naloxone while reducing low-level narcotics and drug paraphernalia arrests. A local organization runs another mobile treatment program that parks outside the city's jail and offers buprenorphine prescriptions to people getting released.

"We should be thinking about harm reduction on a spectrum. Some people want to stop using, others want to use safer. This is about truly meeting people where they are," said Dr. Letitia Dzirasa, who served as the city's health commissioner until recently being appointed deputy mayor. "It's also about reducing the stigma. Because this is a disease, not a moral failing."

The Spot van has a waiting area, two small exam rooms and an even smaller bathroom. During private consultations, medical providers often address their patients like old friends. They might discuss family dynamics, housing issues, mental health concerns, long-term goals, recent substance use and more.

The clinic coordinates with several pharmacies across the city so patients can get their prescriptions filled almost immediately after leaving the van. They don't need an ID or health insurance to enroll. And there's just one requirement for them to keep getting buprenorphine through the clinic: They have to demonstrate they're taking the medication somewhat regularly.

Buprenorphine, which received federal approval for treatment of opioid use disorder in 2002, binds to opioid receptors in the brain without producing a euphoric high. Often prescribed under the brand name Suboxone, it typically comes in orange strips that dissolve under the tongue.

Research shows the drug significantly reduces a person's risk of overdose and death. Despite its effectiveness, a relatively small percentage of people experiencing opioid addiction are prescribed the medication. In contrast to methadone treatment, which is highly regulated and often requires patients to visit a clinic every day, buprenorphine prescriptions can last weeks or months.

In December 2022, federal lawmakers passed legislation making it easier for doctors to prescribe buprenorphine, recognizing its life-saving potential. Drug overdoses nationwide have claimed more than 100,000 lives annually since 2020, with about two-thirds of them related to fentanyl.

Asked why they sought treatment, many Spot patients said they're just tired — tired of chasing fentanyl's dangerous high and living in perpetual fear of withdrawal sickness, wondering whether the next dose would kill them, sometimes even hoping it would.

"You're using just to feel normal, spending all your money on dope," said Saprena Culver, 40, who enrolled in the program earlier this year. "It controls your whole entire life, your whole entire being."

Culver's four children are living with relatives in West Virginia, but she thinks about them constantly and hopes to be reunited soon. She said this isn't her first time seeking treatment: She previously spent 12 years participating in a methadone program, which had stricter rules. Even though she ultimately was kicked out after relapsing, she found the added accountability measures helpful.

It's currently not uncommon for people to buy Suboxone off the street, often to stave off debilitating withdrawal symptoms, which means some Spot patients could be profiting off their prescriptions.

Despite their firm belief in expanding access to the medication, clinic staff are continuously grappling with how best to serve people who aren't ready to stop using.

Kelly grew up in Baltimore, where his paternal grandparents settled after migrating from Ireland.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 55 of 76

Always an adrenaline junkie, he competed on his high school's wrestling team and joined the Marines in 1992. He served eight years on active duty, including stints in Egypt, Thailand and elsewhere around the world. Kelly said he couldn't believe his luck, finding a job that let him fulfill a lifelong dream, experience other cultures and get paid to work out.

It was through the military that he met his future wife, a fellow Marine. Their son was born in 2000 and spent much of his childhood in Baltimore.

Sometime after the marriage dissolved, mother and son moved to Florida while Kelly stayed put. He was living in his grandmother's southwest Baltimore rowhouse, which he later inherited.

During a recent visit, an unopened package of naloxone lay on the kitchen table alongside dishes, pans and groceries. A framed photo showed a teenage Kelly competing in a wrestling match, muscles bulging as he overpowered his opponent. A sign above the front door bestowed "Irish Blessings" upon the building's occupants.

Kelly's beloved dog, an elderly, Pomeranian-long haired Chihuahua mix named Annie Oakley, bounded down the carpeted staircase and wriggled across the linoleum kitchen floor, wagging her tail for attention.

"She runs this house," Kelly said, laughing and hugging her to his chest. He recalled a time when he overdosed and Annie alerted a neighbor, who found him unconscious and called an ambulance.

The three-story brick rowhouse is sturdy and well-maintained. For Kelly, it's filled with family memories spanning generations. But the interior has seen better days, with sparse furniture and cluttered surfaces. Kelly rents out rooms, sometimes to people experiencing addiction and desperate for somewhere to stay, which he said can create a volatile environment.

The previous few weeks were especially tough. He developed a leg infection after a bicycle accident and was dealing with a dispute involving a former tenant who owed someone money. Pain and stress, he said — two common triggers of addiction.

"I'm trying to do right every day," he said, stroking the top of Annie's head. "But sometimes, it's like you're damned if you do, damned if you don't."

His face softened talking about his son, who is in college studying to become an environmental engineer. Scrolling through his phone, Kelly proudly displayed a recent photo of him. Something worth fighting for, he thought. He becomes nostalgic thinking about the years before his addiction, when he was a hard-working dad.

Kelly said he wants more people to understand the realities of substance use disorder, how it gradually consumes your life until you almost don't recognize yourself anymore. He compared the process to a "road full of IEDs" — you're so focused on sidestepping immediate danger that you don't realize you're headed deeper into hostile territory.

Kelly was visiting his family in Florida when he first tried taking Suboxone several years ago, hoping to avoid using heroin around his son. While the medication reduces his opioid cravings, he said it makes him feel dull and doesn't do much for the persistent pain he still experiences from the roofing accident. That demands something stronger.

Meanwhile, heroin and fentanyl are readily available for purchase in his neighborhood, which has suffered from rising poverty and population loss in recent decades.

"You can't blame it on your surroundings, but they don't make it any easier," he said.

---

Every Monday morning, the Spot van parks in west Baltimore's Upton community, a historic Black cultural hub once known for its renowned jazz clubs, upscale shops and vibrant nightlife.

Now a shadow of its former self, the neighborhood is filled with visible impacts of the local drug trade: dealers doing business outside vacant buildings, their customers nodding drowsily on public benches, stumbling through alleys and trying to scrounge up enough money to make it through another day.

Baltimore police cruisers routinely patrol the area, part of the city's crime-fighting strategy to increase law enforcement presence in communities plagued by gun violence.

Less than a block from the van's parking spot, a tangle of deflated balloons commemorates a January shootout that wounded three people and killed two, including a young mother who was waiting to pick

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 56 of 76

up a takeout order when she and her children were caught in the gunfire.

Lenwood Johnson, 62, often visits the location.

After about three months on buprenorphine, Johnson said he has significantly reduced his opioid use, keeping more money in his pockets and allowing him to stay sober for family visits and other important occasions. He also is taking fewer risks with fentanyl because he's not desperate to maintain a consistent supply.

An ex-correctional officer at Baltimore's jail, Johnson said he started using opioids decades earlier when an arrest for marijuana possession derailed his budding law enforcement career.

The Spot program, which launched in 2018, operates under a partnership between the Baltimore City Health Department and the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. It typically serves about 900 patients annually. An estimated 40% have a recent history of intravenous drug use, almost 75% are Black and more than half are experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

"The population we're serving, many of these people are profoundly underserved and mistrustful of the health system," said Dr. Kathleen Page, a Johns Hopkins medical school professor who helped launch the program. "Building trust is a big part of it."

Darryl Jackson Sr., who enrolled last year along with his adult son, said the clinic sometimes feels like the only source of stability in his life. He recently had to leave his last apartment and has been researching rental assistance programs, which are often mired in bureaucracy and hobbled by impossibly long waitlists.

Jackson, 58, said he can't tolerate shelter environments because he's a stickler for cleanliness. He takes pride in maintaining a neat appearance. After a career in construction, he still dresses almost exclusively in canvas work pants and sneakers. But on the inside, he struggles to keep his addiction in check and stave off a growing feeling of hopelessness. He recently returned to the Spot van after some missed appointments.

"They care," he said. "So I keep coming back."

Program staff are acutely aware of the daily hurdles facing Jackson and other participants. Sometimes it seems like a miracle when they show up at all.

"I cannot imagine living a day in the shoes of my patients," Dr. Amanda Rosecrans, clinical chief, said in a March interview. She had received news earlier that morning about a patient's recent death, which is a tragically common occurrence as overdoses and gun violence plague Baltimore's poorest communities.

For this vulnerable population, stable housing is the single most important piece of the recovery equation, said Bobby Harris, the program's medical director.

"If folks need housing, how are you supposed to focus on anything else when you don't feel safe?" he said.

When the big picture seems overwhelming, he focuses on treating the patients in front of him.

Islah Hadith, 45, said her life changed drastically after she discovered the clinic in 2019.

That was several years after she broke her ankle playing basketball and was prescribed Percocet. When her refills ran out, she went into withdrawal and started buying pills off the street. Despite working and raising children, she said she was living in a haze, not fully present.

Hadith said she arrived at the Spot van nervous and ashamed, but left feeling hopeful.

She started taking buprenorphine and stopped using other opioids. After about four years on the medication, she recently began reducing her doses to wean herself off. She also sought therapy and severed ties with people and places that could jeopardize her progress.

"It doesn't get easier, but it does get better," she said.

When Kelly showed up to the clinic last month, his infected leg had taken a serious turn for the worse. He could barely walk, hobbling down the sidewalk and up the van's steps, leaning heavily on a metal cane. His shoulders hunched, as if his body would soon collapse under the crushing weight of addiction.

"It hurts like hell," he said, smiling through the pain.

Despite this latest setback, he was clear-eyed and upbeat, having recently returned from visiting family in Florida. The trip gave him a break from Baltimore and left him feeling somewhat more positive. He envisioned moving out of the city, maybe to South Carolina, where he could focus on work and start a



new chapter.

Kelly said he's grateful for the support system he has, though he worries about becoming a burden. His addiction still threatens some of his most precious relationships.

He thought about what it would look like to truly prioritize his health: What if he started taking the Suboxone more consistently and stopped muddying the waters with illicit drugs? What if he could finally give his family the support and stability they deserve?

He planned to check into the hospital later that afternoon and get his leg checked. But first, he was headed to the pharmacy to fill his prescription. One step at a time.

## Ukraine recaptures village as Russian forces hold other lines, fire on fleeing civilians elsewhere

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's military on Sunday reported recapturing a southeastern village as Russian forces claimed to repel multiple attacks in the area, while a regional official said three people were killed when Moscow's troops opened fire at a boat evacuating people from Russian-occupied areas to Ukrainian-held territory along a flooded front line far to the south.

The battlefield showdown in the southeast and chaotic scenes from inundated southern Ukraine marked the latest upheaval and bloodshed in Russia's war in Ukraine, now in its 16th month.

Oleksandr Prokudin, governor of the Kherson region, said on his Telegram account that a 74-year-old man who tried to protect a woman was among those who died in the attack on evacuees, which wounded another 10. An Associated Press team on site saw three ambulances drop off injured evacuees at a hospital, one of whom was splattered with blood and whisked by stretcher into the emergency room.

The Kherson region straddles the Dnieper River and has suffered heavy flooding since last week's breach of a dam that Ukraine and Russia accuse each other of causing. Russian forces occupy parts of the region on the eastern side of the river.

Many civilians have said Russian authorities in occupied areas were forcing would-be evacuees to present Russian passports before taking them to safety. Since then, many small boats have shuttled from Ukrainian-held areas on the west bank across the river to rescue desperate civilians stuck on rooftops, in attics and other islands of dry amid the deluge.

To the northeast, nearly half-way up the more than 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line, Ukrainian forces said they drove out Russian fighters from the village of Blahodatne, in the partially occupied Donetsk region. Ukraine's 68th Separate Hunting Brigade posted a video on Facebook that showed soldiers installing a Ukrainian flag on a damaged building in the village.

Myroslav Semeniuk, spokesman for the brigade, told The Associated Press that an assault team captured six Russian troops after entering several buildings where some 60 soldiers were holed up. "The enemy keeps shelling us but this won't stop us," Semeniuk said. "The next village we plan to reclaim is Urozhayne. After that, (we'll proceed) further south."

Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Maliar said Ukrainian troops in the area had advanced up to 1.5 kilometers (about a mile) and had taken control of another village, Makarivka.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Saturday that Ukrainian counteroffensive actions were underway. But while the recapture of Blahodatne pointed to a small Ukrainian advance, Western and Ukrainian leaders have repeatedly cautioned that efforts to expel Russian troops more broadly are expected take time. Russia has made much of how its troops have held their ground elsewhere.

The Russian Defense Ministry on Sunday continued to insist that it was repelling Ukrainian attacks in the area. It said in a statement that Ukrainian attempts at offensive operations on the southern Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia axes of the frontline over the past 24 hours had been "unsuccessful."

Vladimir Rogov, a Russian-installed official in the Zaporizhzhia region, insisted that Blahodatne and two other villages in the region were in a "gray area" in terms of who controls them. However, Rogov said in

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 58 of 76

a Telegram post that Russian fighters had been forced to leave the village of Neskuchne in the Donetsk region. In a video, fighters identifying themselves as members of a Ukrainian volunteer force claimed to have taken the village.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has asserted that that Ukraine's counteroffensive had started, and said Ukrainian forces were taking "significant losses."

In other developments:

Ukrhydroenergo, Ukraine's hydropower generator, said Sunday that water levels on a reservoir above the ruptured Kakhovka dam continued to decline — at 9.35 meters (30 feet, 6 inches) on Sunday morning, marking a drop of more than seven meters since the dam break on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, below the dam, Prokudin said water levels on the Ukrainian-held west bank were receding, even if more than 32 settlements remained flooded. He said conditions were worse on the Russian-occupied eastern bank, which sits at a lower elevation and where water levels were slower to drop back down.

Also Sunday, the Russian military accused Ukrainian forces of attacking — albeit unsuccessfully — one of its ships in the Black Sea.

According to Russia's Defense Ministry, the attempted attack took place when six unmanned speedboats targeted Russia's Priazovye reconnaissance vessel that was "monitoring the situation and ensuring security along the routes of the TurkStream and Blue Stream gas pipelines in the southeastern part of the Black Sea."

All the speedboats were destroyed by the Russian military, and the ship didn't sustain any damage, the ministry said. The claim could not be independently verified, and Ukrainian officials made no immediate comment.

Ukraine and Russia reported exchanging scores of prisoners of war on Sunday; Russia said 94 of its soldiers were freed and Yermak said 95 Ukrainians were released.

Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu has signed a decree ordering all Russian volunteer formations to sign contracts with the ministry by July 1, according to his deputy Nikolai Pankov. The move would give the formations legal status and allow them to receive the same state benefits as contract soldiers.

Observers say the move likely targets the Wagner private military company. Wagner owner Yevgeny Prigozhin, who has a long-running feud with the Russian military, said Sunday that the group would not sign such contracts "precisely because Shoigu cannot manage military formations normally."

## **Novak Djokovic wins his 23rd Grand Slam title by beating Casper Ruud in the French Open final**

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

PARIS (AP) — Novak Djokovic made clear for years this was his goal. What drove him. What inspired him. The biggest titles from his sport's biggest stages were Djokovic's main aim and now he finally stands alone — ahead of Rafael Nadal, ahead of Roger Federer, ahead of every man who ever has swung a racket.

If Djokovic could wait this long to hold this record, he certainly could wait for the half-hour or so it took to straighten out his strokes in the French Open final. And so, after a bit of a shaky start in thick, humid air and under foreboding clouds Sunday, he imposed himself. The opponent at Court Philippe Chatrier, Casper Ruud, never really stood a serious chance after that.

Djokovic earned his men's-record 23rd Grand Slam singles championship, breaking a tie with Nadal and moving three in front of the retired Federer, with a 7-6 (1), 6-3, 7-5 victory over Ruud that was not in doubt for most of its 3 hours, 13 minutes.

Djokovic puts this one alongside the French Open titles he earned in 2016 and 2021, making him the only man with at least three from each major. He won his very first at the 2008 Australian Open and now possesses a total of 10 trophies from there, seven from Wimbledon and three from the U.S. Open.

"I knew that going into the tournament, going into the match, especially, today, that there is history on the line, but I try to focus my attention and my thoughts into preparing for this match in the best way

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 59 of 76

possible to win, like any other match," Djokovic said, wearing a red jacket with "23" stitched on the chest. "Of course I would lie if I say that I didn't think about the finish line that is right there and that one more match is needed to win a trophy — a historic one."

Also worth noting: He again is halfway to a calendar-year Grand Slam — winning all four majors in one season — something no man has achieved since Rod Laver in 1969. Djokovic came close in 2021, when he won the Australian Open, French Open and Wimbledon and made it all the way to the title match at the U.S. Open before losing to Daniil Medvedev.

Djokovic will resume that pursuit at Wimbledon, which begins on the grass of the All England Club on July 3.

"He has this software in his head that he can switch (on) when a Grand Slam comes," said his coach, Goran Ivanisevic. "The day we arrived here, he was better, he was more motivated, he was more hungry. Every day, he played better and better."

Entering the 2011 season, this is how the Slam count looked: 16 for Federer, nine for Nadal, one for Djokovic.

"Pretty decent 12 years, I must say, for me," Djokovic said with a smile.

The climb began with a trio that year and accelerated lately: He has clutched the trophy at 11 of the last 20 Slams, a remarkable run made even more so when considering that he did not participate in two majors during that span because he did not get vaccinated against COVID-19. Djokovic was deported in January 2021 before the Australian Open, and he was not allowed to fly to the United States ahead of last year's U.S. Open under a rule that since has been lifted.

Getting to 23 not only sets the mark for men, but it also lets Djokovic equal Serena Williams, who wrapped up her career last year, for the most by anyone in the Open era, which began in 1968. Margaret Court won some of her all-time record of 24 Slam trophies in the amateur era.

At 20 days past his 36th birthday, the Serb is the oldest singles champion at Roland Garros, considered the most grueling of the majors because of the lengthy, grinding points required by the red clay, which is slower than the grass or hard courts underfoot elsewhere.

Nadal's 22nd major arrived in Paris a year ago, two days after he turned 36. He has been sidelined since January by a hip injury and had arthroscopic surgery on June 2.

"Many congrats on this amazing achievement," Nadal tweeted shortly after the final concluded. "23 is a number that just a few years back was (impossible) to think about, and you made it!"

Djokovic's triumph on Sunday means he will return to No. 1 in the ATP rankings on Monday, replacing Carlos Alcaraz. Djokovic already has spent more weeks at the top spot than any player — man or woman — since the inception of computerized tennis rankings a half-century ago.

It was Djokovic who eliminated Alcaraz in the semifinals on Thursday, wearing him down over two thrilling sets until the 20-year-old Spaniard's body cramped up badly. Alcaraz continued to play, but the scores of the last two sets of the four-set match told the story: 6-1, 6-1.

This was the third Slam final in the past five events for Ruud, a 24-year-old from Norway, but he is now 0-3. He lost to Nadal at the French Open a year ago and to Alcaraz at the U.S. Open last September.

Perhaps due to an awareness of all that was at stake, Djokovic, in his 34th major final, was the one who got off to a shaky start.

"Maybe feeling a bit nervous, little stressed," Ruud said about his opponent.

But by the close of the first set, Djokovic was downright Djokovic-esque, as he was while taking 12 of the last 13 points of the match, most accompanied by spectators' thunderous chants of his two-syllable nickname, "No-le! No-le! No-le!"

When one last miscue from Ruud landed out, Djokovic dropped onto his back with limbs spread wide.

"He kind of pressures you, in a way, to go for more risks, and that's tough," Ruud said. "He just stepped up, like he knows how to do."

At first, though, Djokovic kept missing forehands — into the net, wide, long — then made a different sort of mistake, shanking an overhead from near the net way beyond the opposite baseline to get broken and trail 2-0.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 60 of 76

For whatever reason, that shot always has been Djokovic's "bête noire," and he missed another overhead later in the set.

Soon, Ruud led 4-1, thanks in part to Djokovic's troubles. By then, Djokovic accumulated 13 unforced errors, while Ruud made just four.

And then everything changed.

After finishing the first set with 18 unforced errors, Djokovic recalibrated himself, with merely 14 over the last two sets combined.

Then it was Ruud's turn to flub an overhead, rocking back and depositing his into the net to end a 29-stroke point. Djokovic's first service break made it 4-3, and he shook his right fist.

"A bit devastating," Ruud called it.

They went to a tiebreaker, truly Djokovic's dominion. When the import rises, along with the tension, he simply excels.

"He sort of just goes into this mode," Ruud said, "where he just becomes like a wall."

During the first-to-7 segment, Djokovic contributed four winners and zero unforced errors.

That made his career mark in tiebreakers 308-162, a winning percentage of .655. In 2023, he is 15-4, including 6-0 in Paris — there were 55 points played across that half-dozen, and Djokovic's sum total of unforced errors was zero.

"He just steps up," Ruud said. "Either he plays ridiculous defense or he plays beautiful winners. Just doesn't do any mistakes."

That set alone lasted 1 hour, 21 minutes, chock full of extended exchanges, the sort of points about which entire stories could be written. There were those that lasted 20, 25, 29 strokes. One was won by Ruud with the help of a back-to-the-net, between-the-legs shot. On another, Djokovic tumbled behind the baseline, smudging his red shirt, blue shorts and skin with the rust-colored clay.

Djokovic's scrambling and stretching and bending and twisting on defense shows up on the scoreboard, for sure. But all of the long points also sap an opponent's energy and will.

"It's just annoying for me," Ruud said, "but it's very, very impressive."

When Djokovic broke to lead 3-0 in the second set, his powers now on full display, he jabbed his right index finger against his temple over and over and over. He wheeled to face his nearby box in the stands, where the group included Ivanisevic, Djokovic's wife and two children, his parents, his agent and even seven-time Super Bowl champion Tom Brady.

The retired Brady is widely viewed as the NFL's "Greatest Of All Time" — or "GOAT," for short — and there has been a debate in the tennis world for quite some time over which among Djokovic, Nadal or Federer deserves that sobriquet.

If the barometer is Grand Slam championships, no one can argue against Djokovic's status at the moment.

"I leave those kind of discussions of 'who is the greatest?' to someone else. I have, of course, huge faith and confidence and belief (in) myself and for everything that I am and who I am and what I am capable of doing," Djokovic said at his news conference, the Coupes des Mousquetaires at arm's length. "So this trophy obviously is another confirmation of the quality of tennis that I'm still able to produce, I feel."

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

## NASCAR, Hendrick Motorsports celebrate finishing 24 Hours of Le Mans

By JENNA FRYER AP Auto Racing Writer

LE MANS, France (AP) — They started lining up the champagne glasses inside the Hendrick Motorsports garage with 30 minutes remaining in the 24 Hours of Le Mans.

The No. 24 Chevrolet Camaro wasn't going to win the most prestigious endurance race in the world — the specialized "Garage 56" entry wasn't eligible for any class victories — but simply completing a full 24

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 61 of 76

hours was good enough to declare NASCAR's massive effort to return to Le Mans for the first time since 1976 a smashing success.

"How's it feel to take the checkered flag at Le Mans?" team owner Rick Hendrick radioed seven-time NASCAR champion Jimmie Johnson as he completed the 285th lap for the Camaro around the Circuit de la Sarthe.

"Awesome," Johnson replied.

Anticipation had built all week for the car dubbed "Le Monster," in part because it was so different from the rest in the 62-car field, its V8 engine had a distinct rumble that drowned out the competition, and because few had any expectations for the NASCAR entry.

Jim France, owner of both NASCAR and IMSA, had brokered this deal to get NASCAR's second-year Next Gen stock car into the race as part of Le Mans' "Innovative Car" class that showcases technology. He then recruited Rick Hendrick, Chevrolet and Goodyear — the winningest team, manufacturer and tire in NASCAR's 75-year history — to collaborate on the project.

It was a passion project for France, who first attended Le Mans in 1962 with his father, the late NASCAR founder Bill France Sr. His father twice brought NASCAR to Le Mans but failed to come close to finishing the race.

To complete the family dream, France wanted to ensure he had the partners to put forth a top-notch effort that wouldn't embarrass the racing series that got its start beach racing in Daytona, Florida, and found that North Carolina moonshine runners were its earliest stars.

"I wasn't going to let that happen," Rick Hendrick told The Associated Press. "The last thing we were going to do was come here and fall on our nose."

France was thrilled.

"That was thousands of hours of hard work by hundreds of people that went into making this thing happen. And then the way the team and the pit crews and everybody performed all week, it was just fantastic," France said. "I hope my dad and my brother are somewhere up there looking down and smiling, but the goal when we set out was to try and finish the race running at the end and not be last. And we accomplished that."

Hendrick tasked Chad Knaus, winner of seven Cup championships with Johnson, to run the project and told him to spare no expense. The lineup of Johnson, 2009 Formula One champion Jenson Button and two-time Le Mans winner Mike Rockenfeller arrived in France after more than a year of testing Garage 56 hoping only to finish the race.

But Knaus had pushed the Next Gen to its limits and the final product was heavily modified from what is currently being used in the Cup Series. Although the systems and components on the Le Mans model are similar to the Next Gen car, the Le Mans version had functioning headlights and taillights.

The major differences in the Le Mans entry were that it was about 500 pounds (226 kg) lighter than the Cup car, had a larger fuel cell by roughly 12 gallons (45 liters) because of the length of the 8.467-mile (13.626 km) track, carbon brake discs and a Goodyear tire designed specifically for the race.

It was also much faster than anyone expected.

And after Hendrick Motorsports' pit crew won its class in the pit crew competition — finishing fifth overall — Rockenfeller qualified the car more than three seconds faster than the entire 21-car GTE AM class. It called for an adjustment of goals, especially when race organizers decided the Garage 56 entry would not start last and moved to 39th, ahead of all the GTE cars because of the speed discrepancy.

Suddenly, the Hendrick team began fantasizing about beating some GTE cars.

And when it found itself with an actual chance to win the entire class, well, expectations changed. Hendrick said he watched the race until 3 a.m., and when he checked his phone when he woke up Sunday morning, thought "holy cow, we can win the GT class!"

"That class, leading those guys, there were some puckered up Porsches and Corvettes," Hendrick said. "So we checked all the boxes."

Two late mechanical problems — first the car had to make an unplanned stop to change the brakes with about five hours remaining — took the Camaro out of contention to beat the GTE class. A later stop to

change the gearbox dropped the NASCAR effort to a 39th-place overall finish, but 10th in the GTE class. Johnson couldn't help but be disappointed.

"We're not the same category, but we are the same type of car, and our own estimations we thought we'd be mid-to-back pack of the GT cars and you use that for motivation," Johnson said.

"We were laughing at ourselves when they were changing the transmission because the goal was only to finish, and then after the first laps on track, we thought 'Maybe there's more for us' and over the course of the week, we started the race with the desire to win the GT race.

"We are bummed."

But the bond that had grown during the project and the pride from what NASCAR accomplished was what caught Johnson's emotions.

"I wish we could come back and do it again," he said. "This moment, like with everybody, I hate that it is over. Like, I hate that. We had such a good time. I hope to come back without a doubt and do this race again. But this moment in time, this group of people, it won't happen again. It's just impossible."

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

## **Ex-Scottish leader Nicola Sturgeon released after arrest by police in party finance probe**

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Former Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, who dominated politics in Scotland for almost a decade, was arrested and questioned for several hours on Sunday by police investigating the finances of the governing, pro-independence Scottish National Party.

Police Scotland said a 52-year-old woman was detained Sunday morning "as a suspect in connection with the ongoing investigation into the funding and finances of the Scottish National Party."

She was "released without charge pending further investigation" about six hours later, the force said. British police do not identify suspects until they are charged.

Sturgeon said after her release that her arrest had been "both a shock and deeply distressing."

"Obviously, given the nature of this process, I cannot go into detail," she said in a statement on social media. "However, I do wish to say this, and to do so in the strongest possible terms. Innocence is not just a presumption I am entitled to in law. I know beyond doubt that I am in fact innocent of any wrongdoing."

The SNP said the party had been "cooperating fully with this investigation and will continue to do so. However, it is not appropriate to publicly address any issues while that investigation is ongoing."

Scottish police opened an investigation in 2021 into how more than 600,000 pounds (\$754,000) designated for a Scottish independence campaign was spent.

Two former SNP officials, Colin Beattie, who was treasurer, and Peter Murrell, who was chief executive, were previously arrested and questioned as part of the investigation. Like Sturgeon, both were released pending further inquiries.

Murrell is Sturgeon's husband, and police searched the couple's home in Glasgow after his arrest in April.

It is highly unusual for a leader or former leader of a UK political party to be arrested. The last such case also concerned the Scottish Nationalists: Sturgeon's predecessor as first minister, Alex Salmond, was arrested in 2019 and charged with a series of sexual offenses, including attempted rape. He was acquitted on all 13 charges after a trial in January 2020.

Before that, in 1979, the former Liberal party leader, Jeremy Thorpe, went on trial, accused of conspiracy and incitement to murder. The man he was charged with trying to kill claimed they had a sexual relationship at a time when homosexuality was illegal. Thorpe denied his claim and was acquitted.

Sturgeon unexpectedly resigned in February after eight years as Scottish National Party leader and first minister of Scotland's semi-autonomous government. She said then that she knew "in my head and in my heart" that it was the right time for her, her party and her country to make way for someone else.

The first female leader of Scotland's devolved government, Sturgeon led her party to dominance in

Scottish politics and refashioned the SNP from a largely one-issue party into a dominant governing force with liberal social positions.

She guided her party during three U.K.-wide elections and two Scottish elections, and led Scotland through the coronavirus pandemic, winning praise for her clear, measured communication style.

But Sturgeon left office amid divisions in the SNP and with her main goal — independence from the U.K. for the nation of 5.5 million people — unmet.

Scottish voters backed remaining in the U.K. in a 2014 referendum that was billed as a once-in-a-generation decision. The party wants a new vote, but the U.K. Supreme Court has ruled that Scotland can't hold one without London's consent. The central government has refused to authorize another referendum.

Sturgeon's departure unleashed a tussle for the future of the SNP amid recriminations over the party's declining membership and divisions over the best path towards independence. Opinion polls suggest support for the party has sagged, though it remains the most popular in Scotland.

An acrimonious leadership contest to replace her saw contenders feud over tactics and Sturgeon's legacy, particularly a bill she introduced to make it easier for people to legally change gender. It was hailed as a landmark piece of legislation by transgender rights activists, but faced opposition from some SNP members who said it ignored the need to protect single-sex spaces for women.

First Minister Humza Yousaf, who won the party contest in March, told the BBC before Sturgeon's arrest that the SNP had been through "some of the most difficult weeks our party has probably faced, certainly in the modern era."

"I know there will be people, be it our opposition, be it the media, that have somehow written the SNP off already," he said. "They do that at their own peril."

## England's health service says it won't give puberty blockers to children at gender clinics

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The publicly funded health service in England has decided it will not routinely offer puberty-blocking drugs to children at gender identity clinics, saying more evidence is needed about the potential benefits and harms.

The National Health Service said Friday that "outside of a research setting, puberty-suppressing hormones should not be routinely commissioned for children and adolescents."

People under 18 can still be given puberty blockers in exceptional circumstances, the NHS said, and a clinical study on their impact on kids is due to start by next year.

Four new regional clinics are due to open later this year. They replace London's Gender Identity Development Service, previously the only facility of its kind in England. It is scheduled to shut down after a review said it was overburdened by increasing demand and there was not enough evidence about the outcomes of its treatment.

Hormone blockers can pause the development of puberty, and are sometimes prescribed to children with gender dysphoria. Transgender medical care for minors has been available in the United States for more than a decade and is endorsed by major medical associations.

The issue of gender-affirming care for children is not as heated in Britain as in the U.S., where several Republican-led states have banned puberty blockers and other treatment for transgender minors. But it has been the subject of both political and legal battles.

The NHS said the new rules were "an interim policy" that would undergo further review, including the outcome of a research study on the impact puberty-suppressing hormones have on gender dysphoria in children and young people.

Findings published last year from a review of children's gender services led by a pediatrician, Dr. Hilary Cass, said there were "gaps in the evidence base" about the blockers.

The NHS said doctors at the new clinics still would be allowed to prescribe the drugs outside of a research setting "on an exceptional, case-by-case basis" and subject to approval from a national team of

medical experts.

The health service's decision does not prevent children and their families from obtaining puberty blockers elsewhere, but that will be "strongly discouraged," the NHS said.

The NHS said it recognized that once the policy was adopted, it would need to end a related requirement for young people to take puberty blockers for a certain amount of time before they receive hormone treatments.

In 2020, England's High Court ruled that children under 16 were unlikely to be able to give informed consent to medical treatment involving drugs that delay puberty. The decision was overturned in 2021 by the Court of Appeal, which said doctors can prescribe puberty-blocking drugs to children under 16 without a parent's consent.

Follow AP's coverage of LGBTQ+ people at <https://apnews.com/hub/lgbtq-people>

## **SEC lawsuits against cryptocurrency companies raise questions about industry's future**

By FATIMA HUSSEIN & KEN SWEET Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — First came the crypto winter, then the alleged fraud wrought by FTX founder Sam Bankman-Fried, and now the lawsuits.

The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission filed lawsuits last week against the world's biggest cryptocurrency exchanges, Binance and Coinbase, deepening tensions between the government and a volatile industry that has been marred by scandals and market meltdowns.

Binance and Coinbase are both alleged to have violated the law by operating as securities exchanges without registering their businesses with the SEC. Binance faces additional charges, along with its CEO, of diverting customer funds to a separate business, among other accusations. Most recently, the SEC asked a federal judge to freeze the assets of Binance's U.S. platform.

The lawsuits are the latest in an ongoing tussle between government officials who describe the crypto industry as the "Wild West," and creators of digital assets who seek to legitimize cryptocurrency as a currency of the future.

Industry leaders say that, with their latest actions, U.S. regulators are more clearly signaling that they seek to ensure cryptocurrency has no room in the traditional financial system.

And leading regulators are more open about their thoughts on the merits of cryptocurrency. SEC Chair Gary Gensler told Bloomberg on Tuesday: "We don't need more digital currency ... we already have digital currency — it's called the U.S. dollar."

What results from the legal battle could greatly diminish the growth of the crypto industry or, alternatively, restrict the scope of the SEC's regulatory authority.

Federica Pantana, an attorney at Davidoff Hutcher & Citron in New York who handles SEC cases, has been watching the episode unfold and is now clear with her crypto clients in the interim: "With the SEC taking a strong enforcement agenda, there is no question that firms have to take the view that crypto assets are securities and platforms that exchange these assets have to accept that."

Whether companies that trade in crypto decide it makes business sense to register with the SEC, or drop their businesses all together, will determine the landscape of the industry in the future, Pantana said. The reverberations of the litigation could put some companies out of business, she said.

The crypto industry already knew it was under a tough spotlight from Washington's regulators and politicians. The collapse of crypto prices last year as well as the demise of several notable crypto companies — including FTX — exposed investors to billions of dollars in losses. Gensler had repeatedly stated, both to Congress and in public appearances, that he believes the SEC has more than enough authority to regulate the industry.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen told CNBC Wednesday that she's "very supportive" of the SEC using the tools it has to protect consumers and investors.



# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 65 of 76

Despite the increased scrutiny from regulators, the crypto industry was expecting Congress to eventually intervene and help legitimize the industry through new laws. Several bills were introduced last year by Democrats and Republicans that would have put crypto under the authority of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission and made other products, including stable coins, more legitimate by standardizing what assets those products could hold.

Yellen said Wednesday that she sees "some holes in the system where additional regulation I think would be appropriate and we would like to work with Congress to see additional legislation passed."

Crypto lobbyists now believe that those laws are more urgently needed to stop the SEC from moving forward with its lawsuits.

The most viable piece of legislation sits in the House Financial Services Committee, spearheaded by Rep. Patrick McHenry, R-N.C., who chairs the pane. The legislation was co-authored by Glenn Thompson, R-Penn., chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture.

Their discussion draft of legislation seeks to delineate agencies' jurisdiction over certain digital assets and "strike the appropriate balance between consumer protection and encouraging responsible innovation," McHenry said in a news release.

New legislation would grant digital-asset issuers an exemption from securities laws if they meet certain conditions and would exclude digital commodities and payment stablecoins from the definition of a security under the securities laws, among many other provisions.

"Congress has no choice but to thoughtfully move forward with legislation to clear up this confusion," said Kristin Smith, CEO of the Blockchain Association.

Perianne Boring, founder of the Chamber of Digital Commerce, one of the top lobbyists for the cryptocurrency industry, said the lawsuits the SEC filed against Binance and Coinbase are "arbitrary and capricious" and "the SEC's vigorous enforcement in this space is politically motivated, opening up legal risk against SEC."

She said Gensler's public comments about the merits of cryptocurrency in the backdrop of the traditional financial system go outside the scope of his role as SEC chair to protect consumers and investors.

"They're not a merit regulator," Boring said.

Representatives from the SEC and White House did not respond to Associated Press requests for comment.

— Sweet reported from New York.

## Meet the LGBTQ activist who challenged his Caribbean country's anti-sodomy law and won

By LUIS ANDRES HENAO Associated Press

ST. JOHN'S, Antigua (AP) — For years, Orden David was persecuted in his native Antigua and Barbuda — a frequent complaint by many LGBTQ people who fear for their safety across the conservative and mostly Christian Caribbean, where anti-gay hostility is widespread.

David was bullied and ridiculed. One time, a man stepped out of a car, made a comment about how a gay man was walking on the street late at night, then hit him in the head. More recently, another stranger struck him in the face in broad daylight, knocking him out. That's when he had enough.

Facing ostracism and risking his life as the public face of the LGBTQ movement, David took his government to court in 2022 to demand an end to his country's anti-sodomy law.

"I realized that with our community, we've gone through a lot and there's no justice for us," Orden told The Associated Press. "We all have rights. And we all deserve the same treatment."

Last year, a top Caribbean court ruled that the anti-sodomy provision of Antigua's sexual offenses act was unconstitutional. LGBTQ-rights activists say David's effort, with the help of local and regional advocacy groups, has set a precedent for a growing number of Caribbean islands. Since the ruling, St. Kitts & Nevis and Barbados, have struck down similar laws that often seek long prison sentences.

"It's been a legal and historic moment for Antigua and Barbuda," said Alexandrina Wong, director of the

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 66 of 76

local non-governmental organization Women Against Rape, which joined the litigation coordinated by the Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality.

"Our Caribbean governments are getting a good grip of what the world looks like and how we can re-shape our history and ... the future of the Caribbean people," Wong said.

The ruling said Antigua's 1995 Sexual Offences Act "offends the right to liberty, protection of the law, freedom of expression, protection of personal privacy and protection from discrimination on the basis of sex."

Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne told the AP that his government decided not to challenge the ruling: "We respected the fact that there should be no discrimination within society," he said. "As a government, we have a constitutional responsibility to respect the rights of all and not to discriminate."

The law stated that two consenting adults found guilty of having anal sex would face 15 years in prison. If found guilty of serious indecency, they faced five years in prison.

Such laws used to be common in former European colonies across the Caribbean but have been challenged in recent years. Courts in Belize and Trinidad and Tobago have found such laws unconstitutional; other cases in the region are pending.

Same-sex consensual intimacy is still criminalized in six Caribbean countries, according to Human Rights Watch and the London-based organization Human Dignity Trust. The countries include Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Jamaica, which some LGBTQ-rights groups consider the Caribbean nation most hostile to gay people.

"Governments in these jurisdictions should be pro-active and repeal these laws now, instead of waiting for members of the LGBT community to force legal change," said Téa Braun, chief executive of Human Dignity Trust. "With three successful judgments last year and further legal challenges in the Caribbean ongoing, it is only a matter of time before these laws fall across the region."

Jamaica's government has argued that it doesn't enforce its 1864 anti-sodomy laws, but activists say keeping these laws on the books stokes homophobia and violence against the LGBTQ community in several Caribbean countries.

LGBT people in such countries, face "a constitution that criminalizes them on one end, and a religion that says they're an abomination," said Kenita Placide, executive director for The Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality.

"It has created a culture of stigma and discrimination, which has now led to violence," she said. "And in each of those countries, including Antigua, we've seen LGBT persons who've fled because of certain levels of violence."

Growing up, Orden David was bullied in school and discriminated against outside its walls. People took photographs of him and posted them on social media, called him slurs and attacked him physically.

"What pushed me to go forward with this litigation case, to challenge the government, is that experience that I've gone through in life," David said, adding that in 2019 he was knocked out by a stranger who hit him on the face while he was working in a hospital.

Discrimination against LGBTQ people persists in the Caribbean. Some conservative lawmakers and religious leaders oppose the abolition of anti-gay laws invoking God in their arguments and calling gay relationships a sin.

"I don't think that God created man and woman to engage in that way," said Bishop Charlesworth Browne, a Christian pastor who is president of the Antigua and Barbuda Council of Church Leaders. For years, he has campaigned against easing the country's anti-gay laws.

"It's not just a religious issue. It's a health issue," Browne said. "It's for the sake of our children, the health of the nations, the preservation of our people."

Some major Christian denominations, including the Catholic Church, say all sexual activity outside of a marriage between a man and a woman is sinful. Other houses of worship, including many mainline Protestant churches and synagogues, have LGBTQ-inclusive policies.

When LGBTQ activist Rickenson Etienne also was brutally attacked in Antigua for being gay, his church community sang and prayed for him outside the hospital while he recovered from a cracked skull. "It

was traumatic," he said of the assault. "But even with that experience, I found out that there's humanity, there's the human side of people."

Although David didn't face outright intolerance at the Christian church where he grew up singing in the choir, he grew disenchanted by some parishioners who tried to introduce him to the scientifically discredited practice of so-called gay conversion therapy. He eventually stopped attending, but believes in God and prays at home.

"Christians need to realize that everybody's human at the end of the day. And if you're going to push Christianity and then think that being a homosexual is a sin ... then you should put yourself in that same category, as a sinner," he said.

"Christians are supposed to love, accept and encourage people, not push people away ... that's one of the things that I really don't believe in: When Christians use the word 'hate,'" said David. He has the Chinese word for "love" tattooed on his neck, and says that loving people is his "number one goal."

Working for Antigua's AIDS Secretariat, he tests people for sexually transmitted diseases, distributes condoms and counsels them on prevention, treatment and care. He's also president of Meeting Emotional and Social Needs Holistically, a group that serves the LGBTQ community. And he volunteers. On a recent night, he walked across dark alleys of downtown St. John's to hand out condoms to sex workers.

"It's important to offer the services to the LGBTQ community, and especially to sex workers," he said. "Because this population are more at risk."

--

Associated Press journalists Jessie Wardarski in St. John's, Antigua, and Danica Coto in San Juan, Puerto Rico, contributed to this report.

Associated Press religion coverage receives support through the AP's collaboration with The Conversation US, with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

## Honduras opens embassy in China after breaking off ties with Taiwan

BEIJING (AP) — Honduras opened an embassy in Beijing on Sunday, Chinese state media reported, months after the Central American nation broke off relations with Taiwan to establish diplomatic ties with China.

China's Foreign Minister Qin Gang and his Honduran counterpart Enrique Reina took part in the inauguration of the embassy on Sunday morning, China's official CCTV said. The report said Honduras still needed to determine the embassy's permanent location and would increase its number of staff.

Qin pledged that China would establish a new model with Honduras of "friendly cooperation" between countries with different sizes and systems, according to a statement from China's Foreign Ministry.

The symbol of the two sides' strengthening diplomatic ties came during Honduran President Xiomara Castro's six-day visit to China.

Honduras established formal relations with China in March, becoming the latest in a string of countries to break diplomatic ties with Taiwan. China sees self-governed Taiwan as a breakaway province, to be retaken by force if necessary, and prohibits its own diplomatic partners from having formal ties with Taipei.

The island also faces increasing military threats from Beijing. Its defense ministry on Sunday reported that 10 Chinese warplanes crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait, an unofficial boundary once tacitly accepted by both sides. In response, Taiwan deployed aircraft, naval vessels, and land-based missile systems.

Castro arrived in Shanghai on Friday on her first visit since the establishment of relations. During her stay in Shanghai, she visited the headquarters of the New Development Bank, a bank established by the BRICS nations, which includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Honduras requested admission to the bank, Castro's office tweeted Saturday.

The president also visited a research center for technology giant Huawei before arriving in Beijing on Saturday night, China's official Global Times newspaper reported.

The ties formed in March were a diplomatic victory for China amid heightened tensions between Beijing and the United States, including China's increasing assertiveness toward Taiwan. It also signaled China's growing influence in Latin America.

China and Taiwan have been locked in a battle for diplomatic recognition since they split amid civil war in 1949, with Beijing spending billions to win recognition for its "one China" policy.

## Elvis Presley's cousin lifts Democrats' hopes in Mississippi governor's race

By EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS and SARA BURNETT Associated Press

GRENADA, Miss. (AP) — Conservative Mississippi is tough territory for Democrats, but the party sees an unusual opportunity this year to unseat first-term Republican Gov. Tate Reeves. They're pinning hopes in November on a candidate with a legendary last name who has used his own compelling story to highlight the economic plight of working families in a state that has long been one of the poorest in America.

Democrat Brandon Presley is a second cousin of Elvis Presley, born a few days before the rock 'n' roll legend died. While campaigning, Brandon Presley talks frequently about government corruption, focusing on a multimillion-dollar welfare scandal that developed when Reeves was lieutenant governor.

Presley, an elected member of the Mississippi Public Service Commission, is unopposed for the Democratic nomination for governor. He is pushing for Medicaid expansion to help financially strapped hospitals while telling voters about his own difficult childhood.

"I understand what working families in this state go through," Presley told about 75 people at a restaurant in Grenada, a town on the edge of the Mississippi Delta.

The 45-year-old said he was just starting third grade when his father was murdered. Presley's mother raised him and his brother and sister in the small town of Nettleton, earning modest wages from a garment factory. In his childhood home, "you could see straight through the floors into the dirt," he said, and his mother struggled to pay for water and electricity.

"And let me say this to you clearly: When my name goes on the ballot in November, the names of families who have had their electricity cut off, who are getting up every day working for all they can to help their kids, to small business owners — your name goes on that ballot in November," he said.

Mississippi is one of just three states with a governor's race this year, joining Kentucky and Louisiana. All are places that historically have supported Republicans for statewide office, though Kentucky's Democratic governor is seeking a second term.

New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy, chairman of the Democratic Governors Association, described the three contests as "away games" but said Mississippi may be "the sleeper" — a state where the right Democrat could win. That's despite voters twice heavily backing Donald Trump for president, the GOP holding all statewide offices and a supermajority in the Legislature and a Democrat not winning a Mississippi governor's race so far this century.

Reeves, who faces two underfunded opponents in the Aug. 8 primary, has the advantage of incumbency: 31 governors of U.S. states or territories sought reelection last year, and only one lost. Reeves had about \$9.4 million in his campaign fund at the end of May, far more than the \$1.7 million Presley reported. Republicans also say national Democrats' enthusiasm for Presley's bid could be a liability.

Reeves, 49, was a banker from a Jackson suburb before winning his first statewide office 20 years ago. He is campaigning on a record of reducing the state income tax, increasing teachers' pay, restricting abortion access and banning gender-affirming medical care for people younger than age 18. He also is casting this as an "us-versus-them" election, portraying Presley as part of a national Democratic operation far removed from the realities of life in Mississippi.

"My friends, this is a different governor's campaign than we have ever seen before in our state because we are not up against a local yokel, Mississippi Democrat. We are up against a national liberal machine," Reeves told more than 200 supporters at a campaign event in the Jackson suburb of Richland. "They are extreme. They are radical and vicious."

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 69 of 76

Reeves said outsiders look at Mississippi with "scorn," but the state has momentum.

"Are we going to let them stop us?" Reeves asked, and the crowd responded: "No!"

"Are we going to let them make Mississippi conform to California values?" Reeves asked. Again, the response was "No!"

Presley was 23 when he was elected mayor of Nettleton in 2001. During his second term leading the town of 2,000, he won the northern district seat on the Mississippi Public Service Commission, a three-member group that regulates utilities. He is completing his fourth term this year.

As Presley campaigns, he combines blunt criticism of Reeves with gospel and bluegrass songs that affirm the connection to his famous cousin without leaving the impression that he has chosen the wrong line of work.

In Grenada, Presley said a \$100 million financial package that legislators and Reeves approved for hospitals this year was a "cheap, dollar store clearance-aisle Band-Aid" when Medicaid expansion could bring the state about \$1 billion a year from the federal government.

Murphy said Presley's style has been winning over donors. At an event Presley attended in New Jersey with Murphy, they exceeded their fundraising goal.

"We've got a great candidate. This guy's the real deal," Murphy said. "When you listen to what he would do on Day One as governor, you say, 'You know what? That's exactly what Mississippi needs.'"

Four years ago, Reeves won the governorship by defeating four-term Democratic Attorney General Jim Hood by 52% to 47%, with two lesser-known candidates in the race.

This year, one independent will be on the general election ballot. Republicans like their chances, given the state's politics and Reeves' history of five statewide wins: two for state treasurer, starting when he was 29; two for lieutenant governor; and one for governor.

"Democrats are desperately trying to create a mirage when it comes to Mississippi," said Republican Governors Association spokesperson Courtney Alexander. "The reality is that Brandon Presley is bought and paid for by national Democrats, while Gov. Reeves' record of historically low unemployment, historically high graduation rates, and substantial pay raises for Mississippi educators speaks for itself."

About 38% of Mississippi residents are Black — the highest percentage of any state — and Black voters are vital for Democrats to have any chance of winning statewide.

Janie Houston, a retired kindergarten teacher who attended Presley's event in Grenada, said some Black voters might not bother to show up in November because Republicans drew legislative districts specifically to protect wide majorities in the Legislature.

"That's the point of doing all that gerrymandering," Houston said.

Democrats, she added, are not putting enough support behind down-ballot candidates to offset that advantage.

"They need to come face-to-face with Black voters and any other voter," she said. "That's just the way it is. I just don't think they're putting enough money behind the candidates to get people to come out in the communities."

The most influential Black politician in Mississippi, Democratic U.S. Rep. Bennie Thompson, did not endorse Hood in the 2019 governor's race because he said Hood never asked him to. But Thompson endorsed Presley at the outset of this year's campaign, and the congressman said he will provide any support Presley requests in the coming months.

Thompson said Presley worked with him to help the tiny rural community of Schlater get safe drinking water after the pump for a water well broke, and that Presley has helped other needy areas get reliable electricity. After a tornado devastated the small town of Rolling Fork this spring, Thompson said, "one of the first calls I got was from Brandon Presley asking me what could he do?"

Thompson said Presley found generators in Louisiana to provide electricity for an armory in Rolling Fork that became a disaster relief spot.

"That's the kind of person, the Brandon Presley that I know," Thompson said in an interview. "It's easy to support somebody who demonstrates that they care about people."

The Reeves campaign event in Richland was in a large, air-conditioned warehouse for a construction

equipment dealership. One of the spectators was Terry Felder, a retired offshore oil rig worker who said he voted for Reeves in 2019 and will again this year because he believes Republicans do a better job of controlling government spending.

Felder acknowledged Mississippi has problems but said he thinks the state is in "pretty good shape." "Every survey they have, if it's a bad survey we're at the top of the list. If it's a good survey, we're at the bottom," Felder said. "But when you're here, it doesn't seem that way."

\_\_\_\_\_  
Burnett reported from Chicago.

## French town gathers at playground where young children were stabbed to support victims

PARIS (AP) — Children, parents and grandparents joined a few thousand well-wishers Sunday in a park in the French Alps town of Annecy to show solidarity and support for the victims of a playground stabbing attack that left four young children and two adults hospitalized with serious wounds,

The children represent "the poetry of life," Annecy Mayor Francois Astorg told the crowd, calling on Annecy residents to "come together to build, instead of to hate."

Astorg had called for a "citizens' gathering" in the lakeside park where a man with a knife raced around stabbing people Thursday. City officials reopened the playground hours after the attack in an attempt to show the area was again safe.

People have heaped flowers, stuffed toys and messages of support on the playground's padded surface in the days since. A pink heart-shaped balloon tied to a bench read, "For the children – LOVE."

The children targeted were a 22-month-old Dutch girl, a 3-year-old British girl, and two 2-year-old French cousins, a boy and a girl. They received grave injuries and remain hospitalized, but their conditions improved to the point where their lives no longer were in danger, the regional prosecutor said Saturday.

One of the wounded adults, a Portuguese man who was knifed while trying to stop the attacker from fleeing, and then shot by police as they detained the suspect — also remains hospitalized.

Multiple bystanders sought to deter the assailant, including a French Catholic pilgrim named Henri who repeatedly swung at the attacker with his backpack, and has been dubbed "the hero with the backpack."

The suspect, a 31-year-old Syrian refugee with permanent Swedish residency, was handed preliminary charges Saturday of attempted murder and armed resistance. Witnesses told investigators that the suspect mentioned his own 3-year-old daughter, his wife and Jesus Christ during the attack, regional prosecutor Line Bonnet-Mathis said.

Preliminary charges under French law mean magistrates have strong reason to suspect wrongdoing but are allowing more time for investigation before deciding whether to send a suspect to trial.

The stabbing suspect refused to talk to investigators, and was examined by a psychiatrist and other doctors who deemed him fit to face charges, the prosecutor said. She said that the motive remained unclear, but it didn't appear to be terrorism-related.

The suspect remains in custody pending further investigation.

At Sunday's gathering, families described wanting to reclaim the site, a peaceful, shaded playground overlooking the Alpine lake. A Mexican artist duo unveiled a fresco to the victims.

Local authorities are providing psychological support to the victims and their families, as well as to traumatized witnesses. Among those in the park at the time was a group of high school students on an end-of-year field trip, some of whom reportedly helped call police and to protect younger children from the attacker.

## In a last-ditch effort, longtime Southern Baptist churches expelled for women pastors fight to stay

By PETER SMITH Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — The robed choir performed a rousing missionary chorus, the worshippers sang from the Baptist Hymnal, and the pastor preached on the need to listen to God before inviting people to come forward and profess faith in Jesus.

If there was ever a blueprint for a traditional Southern Baptist worship service, Fern Creek Baptist Church followed it to a tee on a recent Sunday.

Except for one key detail.

The pastor is a woman.

And because of that, Fern Creek is no longer a Southern Baptist church.

In February, the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee voted to oust Fern Creek for having a woman pastor — the same issue it cited for expelling four other churches, including the massive California-based Saddleback Church. All Baptist churches are independent, so the convention can't tell them what to do, but it can decide which churches are "not in friendly cooperation," the official verbiage for an expulsion.

Fern Creek and Saddleback are appealing the decision to the SBC's annual meeting being held Tuesday and Wednesday in New Orleans.

The Rev. Linda Barnes Popham has been pastor of the modest-sized Fern Creek in Louisville for the past 30 years, and involved in church work since her teen years in her native Alabama.

"When I was 8 years old, I knew that God was calling me in some sense," she recalled. She's not doubting her calling now, and neither are Fern Creek churchgoers.

"I've never seen anybody with a more dedicated heart for the Lord than Linda," said longtime attendee Rick Pryor.

The SBC's official statement of faith says the office of pastor is reserved for men, but this is believed to be the first time the convention has expelled any churches over it. Both of the congregations say Baptists should be able to agree to disagree — while making a common cause for evangelism.

"I want to worship under that same umbrella and do missions together like Southern Baptists have done all of these years," Popham said.

Plus, Popham and supportive members of Fern Creek said, it's not just about her. "We want women to rise up and be able to answer God's call, just like men do," Popham said.

Holly Blansette, a recent college graduate who grew up in the church and was baptized by Popham, said the pastor is "not just an outstanding woman role model but a role model in general."

Some members questioned whether there are other agendas at play — whether the denomination was seeking to divert attention from its struggles to address a sex abuse scandal, or if their removal was part of a wider political effort to push the conservative denomination even further to the right.

"I think that they're very much fueling this conservative political ideology in religion that is going to be harmful in the long run, especially when you do lose out on great churches like Saddleback or Fern Creek Baptist," Blansette said.

The controversy is not the only one anticipated at the SBC's annual meeting, which will also feature a contested presidential election and deliberations on how and whether to continue reforms following a sexual-abuse scandal that has drawn a U.S. Department of Justice investigation.

They're also gathering in the wake of a recent failed vote by the Executive Committee to elect its own leader.

And the denomination is aging and experiencing long-term declines in membership and baptisms.

The issue of women in ministry has long been debated among Southern Baptists, dating back to the late 20th century controversies that led to a sharp rightward shift in its leadership. That movement culminated in a revised statement of belief in 2000, which included a declaration that while "both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture."

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 72 of 76

Much of the debate in the 1980s and 1990s had more abstract theological claims, but often the dividing lines centered on issues like who could stand in the pulpit.

"Something like, 'Do you believe the Bible?' is pretty hard to show one way or the other," said Nancy Ammerman, author of "Baptist Battles," a history of the denomination's late 20th century controversies. "They needed a concrete issue, something they could point to." Both sides backed their positions with the Bible.

Saddleback's retired founding pastor, Rick Warren, is urging SBC delegates to reinstate the megachurch, one of the largest in the nation. He said the Baptist Faith and Message represents a consensus but should not be used to enforce uniformity.

"All we're asking is that Southern Baptists ACT like Southern Baptists ... who agree to disagree on many things in order to AGREE to fulfill our mission together!" Warren said in a written statement.

Saddleback's current pastor, Andy Wood, said in a video statement the congregation believes women can be pastors — if male elders are ultimately in charge. His wife, Stacie, is a teaching pastor at Saddleback. The congregation recently appointed a woman as campus pastor of its flagship location in Lake Forest, California.

But Fern Creek's position is different — that women are empowered to serve at all levels.

"If they're called by the Holy Spirit — and you can tell when someone is — who am I to doubt that?" said Fern Creek Deacon Phil Shewmaker.

Many Southern Baptist churches that had women pastors left years ago.

But Fern Creek remained, and Popham's status was no secret. A graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, she became the church's youth and music minister in 1983, interim pastor in 1990 and pastor in 1993.

"Yes, it was a controversial issue, for some because of the whole female pastor concept, but just as many who thought I was too conservative," Popham recalled.

Popham has been active in the local association of Southern Baptist churches, and guest speakers at Fern Creek have included some who went on to SBC leadership roles.

Fern Creek has had many traditional Southern Baptist hallmarks, including specific women and youth programs. Members value the opportunity to give to Southern Baptist missions funds, some bearing the names of stalwart women missionaries in past generations.

"We are in friendlier cooperation than most of the churches I know," Popham said.

Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and the primary author of the 2000 revisions to the Baptist Faith and Message, said the issue is not something members can agree to disagree on.

"Theological commonality at the most basic level is a part of friendly cooperation," said Mohler.

"You've got some especially younger pastors who are startled to find out there are churches that have some kind of SBC connection that are clearly far outside of SBC convictions," he said.

At 67, Popham shows no signs of slowing down. The church is launching a kindergarten, and recently expanded its services to the homeless. A church-affiliated coffee shop is in the early planning stages.

And Fern Creek is also not done ordaining women. Recently it ordained a longtime member, the Rev. Renee Bryant, director of a multid denominational social-service agency.

"We are feeding the hungry," Bryant said. "We're clothing those that need clothes. We're working with the elderly, we're working with the sick, all those community ministries that Jesus told us to do."

When the deacons asked her to consider being ordained, she said, "it was reaffirming the ministry that I've been doing all along."

---

Associated Press religion coverage receives support through the AP's collaboration with The Conversation US, with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. The AP is solely responsible for this content.



## In a last-ditch effort, longtime Southern Baptist churches expelled for women pastors fight to stay

By PETER SMITH Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — The robed choir performed a rousing missionary chorus, the worshippers sang from the Baptist Hymnal, and the pastor preached on the need to listen to God before inviting people to come forward and profess faith in Jesus.

If there was ever a blueprint for a traditional Southern Baptist worship service, Fern Creek Baptist Church followed it to a tee on a recent Sunday.

Except for one key detail.

The pastor is a woman.

And because of that, Fern Creek is no longer a Southern Baptist church.

In February, the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee voted to oust Fern Creek for having a woman pastor — the same issue it cited for expelling four other churches, including the massive California-based Saddleback Church. All Baptist churches are independent, so the convention can't tell them what to do, but it can decide which churches are "not in friendly cooperation," the official verbiage for an expulsion.

Fern Creek and Saddleback are appealing the decision to the SBC's annual meeting being held Tuesday and Wednesday in New Orleans.

The Rev. Linda Barnes Popham has been pastor of the modest-sized Fern Creek in Louisville for the past 30 years, and involved in church work since her teen years in her native Alabama.

"When I was 8 years old, I knew that God was calling me in some sense," she recalled. She's not doubting her calling now, and neither are Fern Creek churchgoers.

"I've never seen anybody with a more dedicated heart for the Lord than Linda," said longtime attendee Rick Pryor.

The SBC's official statement of faith says the office of pastor is reserved for men, but this is believed to be the first time the convention has expelled any churches over it. Both of the congregations say Baptists should be able to agree to disagree — while making a common cause for evangelism.

"I want to worship under that same umbrella and do missions together like Southern Baptists have done all of these years," Popham said.

Plus, Popham and supportive members of Fern Creek said, it's not just about her. "We want women to rise up and be able to answer God's call, just like men do," Popham said.

Holly Blansette, a recent college graduate who grew up in the church and was baptized by Popham, said the pastor is "not just an outstanding woman role model but a role model in general."

Some members questioned whether there are other agendas at play — whether the denomination was seeking to divert attention from its struggles to address a sex abuse scandal, or if their removal was part of a wider political effort to push the conservative denomination even further to the right.

"I think that they're very much fueling this conservative political ideology in religion that is going to be harmful in the long run, especially when you do lose out on great churches like Saddleback or Fern Creek Baptist," Blansette said.

The controversy is not the only one anticipated at the SBC's annual meeting, which will also feature a contested presidential election and deliberations on how and whether to continue reforms following a sexual-abuse scandal that has drawn a U.S. Department of Justice investigation.

They're also gathering in the wake of a recent failed vote by the Executive Committee to elect its own leader.

And the denomination is aging and experiencing long-term declines in membership and baptisms.

The issue of women in ministry has long been debated among Southern Baptists, dating back to the late 20th century controversies that led to a sharp rightward shift in its leadership. That movement culminated in a revised statement of belief in 2000, which included a declaration that while "both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture."

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 74 of 76

Much of the debate in the 1980s and 1990s had more abstract theological claims, but often the dividing lines centered on issues like who could stand in the pulpit.

"Something like, 'Do you believe the Bible?' is pretty hard to show one way or the other," said Nancy Ammerman, author of "Baptist Battles," a history of the denomination's late 20th century controversies. "They needed a concrete issue, something they could point to." Both sides backed their positions with the Bible.

Saddleback's retired founding pastor, Rick Warren, is urging SBC delegates to reinstate the megachurch, one of the largest in the nation. He said the Baptist Faith and Message represents a consensus but should not be used to enforce uniformity.

"All we're asking is that Southern Baptists ACT like Southern Baptists ... who agree to disagree on many things in order to AGREE to fulfill our mission together!" Warren said in a written statement.

Saddleback's current pastor, Andy Wood, said in a video statement the congregation believes women can be pastors — if male elders are ultimately in charge. His wife, Stacie, is a teaching pastor at Saddleback. The congregation recently appointed a woman as campus pastor of its flagship location in Lake Forest, California.

But Fern Creek's position is different — that women are empowered to serve at all levels.

"If they're called by the Holy Spirit — and you can tell when someone is — who am I to doubt that?" said Fern Creek Deacon Phil Shewmaker.

Many Southern Baptist churches that had women pastors left years ago.

But Fern Creek remained, and Popham's status was no secret. A graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, she became the church's youth and music minister in 1983, interim pastor in 1990 and pastor in 1993.

"Yes, it was a controversial issue, for some because of the whole female pastor concept, but just as many who thought I was too conservative," Popham recalled.

Popham has been active in the local association of Southern Baptist churches, and guest speakers at Fern Creek have included some who went on to SBC leadership roles.

Fern Creek has had many traditional Southern Baptist hallmarks, including specific women and youth programs. Members value the opportunity to give to Southern Baptist missions funds, some bearing the names of stalwart women missionaries in past generations.

"We are in friendlier cooperation than most of the churches I know," Popham said.

Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and the primary author of the 2000 revisions to the Baptist Faith and Message, said the issue is not something members can agree to disagree on.

"Theological commonality at the most basic level is a part of friendly cooperation," said Mohler.

"You've got some especially younger pastors who are startled to find out there are churches that have some kind of SBC connection that are clearly far outside of SBC convictions," he said.

At 67, Popham shows no signs of slowing down. The church is launching a kindergarten, and recently expanded its services to the homeless. A church-affiliated coffee shop is in the early planning stages.

And Fern Creek is also not done ordaining women. Recently it ordained a longtime member, the Rev. Renee Bryant, director of a multid denominational social-service agency.

"We are feeding the hungry," Bryant said. "We're clothing those that need clothes. We're working with the elderly, we're working with the sick, all those community ministries that Jesus told us to do."

When the deacons asked her to consider being ordained, she said, "it was reaffirming the ministry that I've been doing all along."

---

Associated Press religion coverage receives support through the AP's collaboration with The Conversation US, with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

# Groton Daily Independent

Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 75 of 76

## Today in History: June 12, Pulse nightclub shooting

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, June 12, the 163rd day of 2023. There are 202 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 12, 2016, a gunman opened fire at the Pulse nightclub, a gay establishment in Orlando, Florida, leaving 49 people dead and 53 wounded; Omar Mateen pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group during a three-hour standoff before being killed in a shootout with police.

On this date:

In 1630, Englishman John Winthrop, leading a fleet carrying Puritan refugees, arrived at the Massachusetts Bay Colony, where he became its governor.

In 1776, Virginia's colonial legislature adopted a Declaration of Rights.

In 1942, Anne Frank, a German-born Jewish girl living in Amsterdam, received a diary for her 13th birthday, less than a month before she and her family went into hiding from the Nazis.

In 1963, civil rights leader Medgar Evers, 37, was shot and killed outside his home in Jackson, Mississippi. (In 1994, Byron De La Beckwith was convicted of murdering Evers and sentenced to life in prison; he died in 2001.)

In 1964, South African Black nationalist Nelson Mandela was sentenced to life in prison along with seven other people, including Walter Sisulu, for committing sabotage against the apartheid regime (all were eventually released, Mandela in 1990).

In 1967, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Loving v. Virginia*, unanimously struck down state laws prohibiting interracial marriages.

In 1978, David Berkowitz was sentenced to 25 years to life in prison for each of the six "Son of Sam" .44-caliber killings that terrified New Yorkers.

In 1987, President Ronald Reagan, during a visit to the divided German city of Berlin, exhorted Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev to "tear down this wall."

In 1991, Russians went to the polls to elect Boris N. Yeltsin president of their republic.

In 1994, Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman were slashed to death outside her Los Angeles home. (O.J. Simpson was later acquitted of the killings in a criminal trial but was eventually held liable in a civil action.)

In 2004, former President Ronald Reagan's body was sealed inside a tomb at his presidential library in Simi Valley, California, following a week of mourning and remembrance by world leaders and regular Americans.

In 2020, Rayshard Brooks, a 27-year-old Black man, was shot and killed by one of the two white officers who responded after he was found asleep in his car in the drive-thru lane of a Wendy's restaurant in Atlanta; police body camera video showed Brooks struggling with the officers and grabbing a Taser from one of them, firing it as he fled.

Ten years ago: The director of the National Security Agency, Gen. Keith Alexander, vigorously defended once-secret surveillance programs before the Senate Intelligence Committee, saying that collecting Americans' phone records and tapping into their Internet activity had disrupted dozens of terrorist attacks. Ariel Castro, 52, accused of holding three women captive in his Cleveland home for about a decade, pleaded not guilty to hundreds of rape and kidnapping charges. (Castro was later sentenced to life plus 1,000 years and soon after committed suicide in prison.) NASCAR driver Jason Leffler, 37, died after an accident during a dirt car event at Bridgeport Speedway in New Jersey.

Five years ago: After a five-hour summit in Singapore, President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un signed a joint statement agreeing to work toward a denuclearized Korean Peninsula, although the timeline and tactics were left unclear; Trump declared that he and Kim had developed "a very special bond." Republican Rep. Mark Sanford, a vocal critic of Donald Trump, lost his South Carolina congressional seat in a primary, hours after Trump tweeted that Sanford was "very unhelpful" and "nothing but trouble."

# Groton Daily Independent

**Monday, June 12, 2023 ~ Vol. 31 - No. 326 ~ 76 of 76**

Throngs of Golden State Warriors fans turned out for a second straight year to honor the NBA champions in a parade in downtown Oakland, California; in Washington, DC, the Stanley Cup champion Capitals were cheered by fans along Constitution Ave.

One year ago: Senate bargainers announced a bipartisan framework responding to a series of mass shootings, a modest breakthrough offering measured gun curbs and bolstered efforts to improve school safety and mental health programs. The proposal fell far short of tougher steps sought by President Joe Biden. Members of the House committee investigating the Capitol riot said they had uncovered enough evidence for the Justice Department to consider a criminal indictment against former President Donald Trump for seeking to overturn the results of the 2020 election. J. Joseph "Joe" Grandmaison, a larger-than-life Democratic operative who ran numerous campaigns and served as an appointee under three presidents, died at age 79.

Today's Birthdays: Songwriter Richard M. Sherman is 95. Sportscaster Marv Albert is 82. Singer Roy Harper is 82. Actor Roger Aaron Brown is 74. Actor Sonia Manzano is 73. Rock musician Bun E. Carlos (Cheap Trick) is 72. Country singer-musician Junior Brown is 71. Singer-songwriter Rocky Burnette is 70. Actor Timothy Busfield is 66. Singer Meredith Brooks is 65. Actor Jenilee Harrison is 65. Rock musician John Linnell (They Might Be Giants) is 64. Actor John Enos is 61. Rapper Grandmaster Dee (Whodini) is 61. Actor Paul Schulze is 61. Actor Eamonn Walker is 61. Actor Paula Marshall is 59. Actor Frances O'Connor is 56. Actor Rick Hoffman is 53. Actor-comedian Finesse Mitchell is 51. Actor Mel Rodriguez is 50. Actor Jason Mewes is 49. Actor Michael Muhney is 48. Blues musician Kenny Wayne Shepherd is 46. Actor Timothy Simons is 45. Actor Wil Horneff is 44. Singer Robyn is 44. Rock singer-musician John Gourley (Portugal. The Man) is 42. Actor Dave Franco is 38. Country singer Chris Young is 38. Actor Luke Youngblood is 37. Actor Ryan Malgarini is 31.