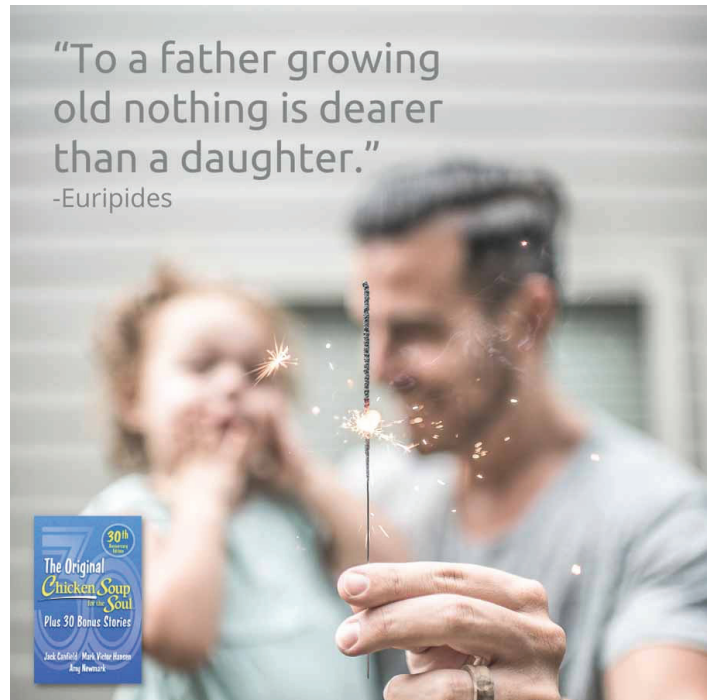


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Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 10 a.m. ago 1 p.m.

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

## Sunday, June 18

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

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

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; Worship at Avantara, 3 p.m.

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

Amateurs host Northville, 5 p.m.

Legion at Milbank, 2 p.m. (2)

## Groton Community Calendar

### Thursday, June 15

Senior Menu: Oven fried chicken, sweet potatoes, mixed vegetables, cookie, dinner roll.

Groton Transit Fundraiser, 5-7 p.m., Community Center

Emmanuel Lutheran: Movie night, 7 p.m.

U12BB at Doland, 8 p.m. (1)

U10BB at Doland, 7 p.m. (1)

U8 Blue at Doland, 6 p.m. (2)

U10SB hosts Doland, 6 p.m. (2)

T-Ball Gold at Doland, 5 p.m.

### Friday, June 16

Senior Menu: Taco salad, Mexican rice, breadstick, Lemmon tart bar.

Olive Grove: SDSU Tournament

### Saturday, June 17

Groton Triathlon

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

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

JUNE 12, 2023

### World in Brief

accusing him of using "enormous power, fame and prestige" to isolate and sexually assault each of them between 1979 and 1992.

Thunderstorms and destructive winds struck parts of the Southeast and the Gulf Coast. A tornado destroyed buildings and cars and uprooted trees in parts of Alabama.

Speedcubing legend Max Park, 21, solved the Rubik's cube in 3.13 seconds, breaking a world record previously held by China's Yusheng Du, who solved the cube in 3.47 seconds in 2018.

Florida is set to execute 62-year-old Duane Eugene Owen for the murders of a teenage girl and another woman in separate attacks in 1984. One of the longest-held inmates is scheduled to receive a lethal injection at 6 p.m.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Kyiv said it has made small advances during its weeks-long counteroffensive, which continues in at least three directions, as experts suggest it is too early to assess the effectiveness of Ukraine's push to recapture its territory..

### TALKING POINTS

"Messengers voted for conformity and uniformity rather than unity. The only way you will have unity is to love diversity. We made this effort knowing we were not going to win," Saddleback Church founder Rick Warren said following a Southern Baptist Convention vote reaffirming the church's removal.

"The right to contraception is the right to essential health care, yet extremist judges and radical Republicans continue to threaten access for millions of Americans. We cannot stand by as extremists continue to undo decades of precedent and progress," Massachusetts Sen. Ed Markey said while reintroducing the Right to Contraception Act.

"It has great uses. So when we came to make what will be the last Beatles record, it was a demo that John [Lennon] had that we worked on, and we just finished it up to be released this year, we were able to take John's voice and get it pure through this AI. So then we could mix the record, as you would normally do," musician Paul McCartney told BBC Sounds when asked about artificial intelligence..

### WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAY AHEAD

President Joe Biden is expected to discuss his administration's plans to address hidden junk fees impacting American consumers.

The U.S. Open begins today at the Los Angeles Country Club, marking the first major tournament since the PGA Tour-LIV Golf merger. NBC will provide televised coverage of the competition through Sunday.

A flurry of economic data releases is scheduled for the day, including retail sales, initial jobless claims, and industrial production, among others.

## **Groton Legion Post 39 Nabs Win Over Sisseton Post 50 Despite Early 3-Run Inning**

Despite allowing three runs in the third inning, Groton Legion Post 39 defeated Sisseton Post 50 18-3 on Wednesday. The big inning for Sisseton Post 50 came thanks to by Landyn Steichen, by Julius Cloud, and an error on a ball put in play by Konnor Sieber.

In the first inning, Groton Legion Post 39 got their offense started. Tate Larson's sac fly scored one run for Groton Legion Post 39.

Groton Legion Post 39 put up eight runs in the third inning. The offensive onslaught came from an error on a ball put in play by Colby Dunker, Cole Simon, and Larson and doubles by Korbin Kucker and Bradin Althoff.

Larson was the winning pitcher for Groton Legion Post 39. The pitcher went three innings, allowing three runs on one hit and striking out two. Dunker threw one inning in relief out of the bullpen.

Sieber took the loss for Sisseton Post 50. The righthander allowed three hits and eight runs over two innings, striking out one.

Braxton Imrie, Brevin Flihs, Kucker, Simon, Larson, Ryan Groeblichhoff, and Althoff each collected one hit to lead Groton Legion Post 39.

Carter Stickland went 1-for-2 at the plate to lead Sisseton Post 50 in hits.

## **Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion Claims Lead in Fourth Inning to Defeat Sisseton Post 50**

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion nabbed the lead late in the game in a 12-5 victory over Sisseton Post 50 on Thursday. The game was tied at five with Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion batting in the top of the fourth when Brevin Flihs doubled on the first pitch of the at bat, scoring one run.

Sisseton Post 50 scored three runs in the second inning, but Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion still managed to pull out the victory. LJ Crooks and Max Dahlen all contributed in the big inning with RBIs.

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion got things started in the first inning when Caden Mcinerney reached on a dropped third strike.

Sisseton Post 50 evened things up at five in the bottom of the third inning.

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion scored five runs in the fifth inning. Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion's offense in the inning came from a single by Jarrett Erdmann and a fielder's choice by Kellen Antonsen.

Erdmann was credited with the victory for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion. The pitcher surrendered five runs on four hits over three innings, striking out seven. Carter Simon threw two innings in relief out of the bullpen.

Bradley Hansen took the loss for Sisseton Post 50. The pitcher lasted five innings, allowing eight hits and nine runs while striking out 11 and walking one.

Hayden Hellwig started the game for Sisseton Post 50. Hellwig allowed three runs on one hit

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion had nine hits in the game. Flihs and Erdmann all managed multiple hits for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion. Flihs went 3-for-4 at the plate to lead Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion in hits. Korbin Kucker led Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion with three stolen bases, as they ran wild on the base paths with seven stolen bases.

Sisseton Post 50 saw the ball well today, racking up six hits in the game. Hansen and Dahlen each had multiple hits for Sisseton Post 50.

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Groton Legion Post 39 **18 - 3** Sisseton Post 50

📍 Away 📅 Wednesday June 14, 2023

	1	2	3	4	R	H	E
GRTN	2	6	8	2	18	7	2
SSST	0	0	3	0	3	1	10

## BATTING

Groton Legion Pos	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
B Flihs (C)	2	2	1	0	1	0
C Simon (CF)	4	3	1	2	1	0
B Althoff (1B)	3	3	1	2	1	0
T Larson (P, LF)	3	2	1	4	0	0
R Groeblichhoff (...)	5	1	1	0	0	1
C Larson (RF)	3	1	0	0	1	0
C Dunker (LF, P)	3	1	0	1	0	1
K Kucker (3B)	2	2	1	3	1	0
B Imrie (2B)	3	2	1	0	1	1
CR: C McInerney	0	1	0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>

**2B:** T Larson, B Althoff, K Kucker, R Groeblichhoff, **TB:** C Simon, B Flihs, T Larson 2, B Althoff 2, B Imrie, K Kucker 2, R Groeblichhoff 2, **SF:** T Larson, **HBP:** B Flihs 2, T Larson, B Althoff, C Dunker, K Kucker, **SB:** C Simon 3, B Flihs, B Althoff, **LOB:** 10

## PITCHING

Groton Legio	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
T Larson	3.0	1	3	0	2	2	0
C Dunker	1.0	0	0	0	1	2	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>

**W:** T Larson, **P-S:** T Larson 50-25, C Dunker 21-12, **HBP:** T Larson 2, **BF:** T Larson 15, C Dunker 4

Sisseton Post 50	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
C Kohl (SS)	2	1	0	0	1	0
M Hamm (CF)	2	1	0	0	0	0
L Steichen (1B, 3B)	0	0	0	1	0	0
K Sieber (P, 1B)	1	0	0	1	1	0
J Cloud (C)	2	0	0	0	0	0
R Steen (RF, 2B)	2	0	0	0	0	1
C Metz (3B, RF)	2	0	0	0	0	1
M Gray (LF)	1	0	0	0	1	1
C Stickland (2B, P)	2	1	1	0	0	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

**TB:** C Stickland, **HBP:** L Steichen 2, **LOB:** 4

Sisseton Pos	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
K Sieber	2.0	3	8	4	5	1	0
C Stickland	2.0	4	10	2	1	2	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>

**L:** K Sieber, **P-S:** K Sieber 75-33, C Stickland 80-47, **HBP:** K Sieber 3, C Stickland 3, **BF:** K Sieber 20, C Stickland 21

## Summer celebrates our arts attractions

By Jim Speirs, Executive Director, Arts South Dakota

Most South Dakotans are aware of the cultural destinations our state offers. We encourage friends and visiting relatives to check out our monumental sculptures from border to border, show our pride in the South Dakota Art Museum and other fine arts emporia and enthusiastically fill our summer with music, ethnic festivals and arts in the park events.

But for those who haven't got the word about our cultural attractions, the South Dakota Tourism Department has turned the spotlight on the arts for this year's marketing program. From exciting new video productions to innovative advertising to the popular State of Create passport, South Dakota Tourism is showing their pride in our state's artistic destinations.

The free, mobile-exclusive digital South Dakota State of Create Passport guides visitors to discoveries they've always wanted to see or never knew existed. With this pass, travelers can include creative culture stops across the state to earn discounts, prizes and more. No app is required, and the range of attractions is limited only by your imagination. Check out [TravelSouthDakota.com](http://TravelSouthDakota.com) for details on your passport to arts adventures!

South Dakota's scenic wonders star in a series of short films on the tourism website by musician and photographer Wes Eisenhauer, whose inspirational perspectives encourage visitors to see those sights for themselves. Eisenhauer's films are part of a visual panoply of scenes and events at [TravelSouthDakota.com](http://TravelSouthDakota.com) that reflect the color and uniqueness of our state's cultural attractions throughout the year.

The marketing materials from SD Tourism this year also highlight the arts. With headlines like "Cultivate your creative side," the campaign focuses on sculpture, music, visual art displays and our ethnic heritage in colorful display advertising.

More than ever, local, national and international travelers are being encouraged to seek out South Dakota's creative destinations as part of their summertime fun. Please visit [www.ArtsSouthDakota.org](http://www.ArtsSouthDakota.org) for more about places to go and things to experience!



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## 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!*



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### How SD counties are spending \$250 million in COVID relief money

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JUNE 14, 2023 6:07 PM

The majority of \$250 million in COVID relief money South Dakota counties received from the state and federal government during the pandemic has been spent or obligated to replace payroll for county employees or stashed into county general funds, according to tracking documents from the state and federal government.

Members of the South Dakota Legislature studying county funding models over the summer were presented that information at their first meeting Wednesday in Pierre.

The large injection of money has helped counties stay afloat as they struggle with increasing costs and unfunded mandates from the state government, said committee chairman Rep. Roger Chase, R-Huron, but those were only one-time funds.

"We realize those COVID funds absolutely helped counties sustain themselves over the last two to three years, but that money will run out," Chase said.

The committee's task is to find opportunities for cost relief, efficiency and revenue for county governments. The committee will meet at least three more times this year before presenting a report to the Legislature and Gov. Kristi Noem in November.

Counties received a total of \$77.8 million in stimulus money from the state and another \$171.8 million from the federal government between 2020 and 2022. The money came from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, of which the state allocated \$77.8 million of its \$1.25 billion in federal funds to counties, and from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which sent \$171.8 million directly to counties. The CARES Act was a \$2 trillion package of emergency assistance approved by Congress in 2020, and ARPA was a \$1.9 trillion economic stimulus bill passed in 2021.

Over 96% of the \$77.8 million in state-allocated funds were spent on payroll for county employees — the bulk of which covered payroll costs for public health and public safety employees responding to the pandemic, based on documents reviewed by the committee.

Pennington County received the most money from the state allocations at \$15.62 million, followed by Minnehaha County at \$13.56 million, Brown County at \$4.36 million and Lincoln County at \$3.32 million.

Joey Knofczynski, a fiscal analyst with the South Dakota Legislative Research Council, explained that population factored into the amounts allocated to and spent by counties. Pennington County, the second most populous county in the state, received more than Minnehaha County because Pennington chose to spend more money on COVID related expenses than Minnehaha, he explained.

Aside from payroll expenses, the second-highest category Pennington County spent money on was COVID equipment, such as air purifiers and incurred costs from public hospitals and clinics (including setting up temporary medical facilities). It also spent more money on COVID equipment than any other county. Minnehaha County spent the majority of its non-payroll expenses on preparation for county employees to return to work in the office, spending the most on the category out of all counties.

Rules prevented counties from spending the money to replace revenue lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As for the ARPA dollars, counties and local governments had broad discretion for spending money, including revenue replacement, public health and economic aid, premium pay for essential workers, and investments in water, sewer and broadband infrastructure.

Most South Dakota counties chose to use the money to replace revenues, or put the allocated money into general funds, according to the April 2022 annual report to the U.S. Treasury. April 2022 is the most

recent data available for the annual reports, though the next available data will be released by the federal government later this summer.

Local governments are required to commit to specific projects by the end of 2024 and spend the money by the end of 2026. If local governments miss either deadline, they have to return the money to the federal government.

Minnehaha County received \$37.5 million from ARPA funds, followed by \$22.1 million in funds to Pennington County. Lincoln County was awarded \$11.87 million and Brown County was awarded \$7.54 million.

Minnehaha County, as of the April 2022 report, listed expenditures including COVID sick leave, retention bonuses, COVID unit staffing costs, premium pay, upgrades for the county commission's audio and visual equipment, and lost revenue replacement. Those costs accounted for \$14.3 million of the \$37.5 million Minnehaha County has to spend.

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

## COMMENTARY

### Public Lands Rule would benefit wildlife and sporting traditions

#### Noem taking wrong position on Bureau of Land Management proposal

BRAD JOHNSON

As a sportsman who enjoys getting out on public lands and waters, I was heartened when the U.S. Bureau of Land Management recently released a proposed Public Lands Rule that elevates conservation as one of the multiple uses on federal land.

Not surprising, however, was South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem's decision to fly off to Washington, D.C., to testify Thursday against the proposal, followed quickly by an East Coast fundraiser.

Our state is a small player in this issue, which has greater importance in other western states. BLM manages about 250,000 acres in South Dakota, less than a half percent of the state's 49.5 million acres.

Noem's testimony before the Committee on Natural Resources will be in support of a House resolution requiring BLM to abandon the "Conservation and Landscape Health" rule.

In a press release, Noem said the "proposed rule will result in poorly managed federal lands, which will devastate conservation and management efforts, harm our wildlife, slow economic growth and endanger public safety."

Nothing could be further from the truth.

What the proposed rule actually does is manage the land in a balanced way, so we all benefit. BLM's mission has been to "sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations."

Unfortunately, for far too long, the BLM's emphasis has been on "productivity" instead of "health."

Over the past few years, cheatgrass increasingly has choked out native species, development has fragmented wildlife migration corridors, and our lands and communities are put at risk by wildfires.

All of this threatens the health of our state's fish and wildlife populations — as well as our economic health. Last year, hunting, fishing, trapping and wildlife-viewing contributed \$1.3 billion to South Dakota's economy. If our wildlife populations dwindle, that has a direct negative impact on our economic fortunes.

The newly-proposed BLM rule makes conservation an equal use on public lands — on par with energy development, grazing, timber harvests or recreation. Its aim is to improve and maintain the health of the lands and ecosystems so they can adapt and thrive.

It is what Congress envisioned when it passed the Federal Lands Planning and Management Act that directed the agency to develop lands in a thoughtful, responsible way to ensure that future generations could continue to work and recreate on these lands indefinitely.

The new rule directs the agency to identify and prioritize landscapes in need of restoration by working



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with tribal partners, state and local agencies, conservation groups and other stakeholders. It requires management practices to ensure that the restoration work is improving the health of public lands and waters.

The rule is not intended to stop development on public lands. It simply more broadly applies to the land health standards and objectives the grazing community has had to follow.

The rule proposes an innovative plan to offer conservation leases that leverages private investment in restoring public lands. This allows the BLM to partner with Indigenous leaders, conservation groups, energy developers and others to improve the health of wildlife habitat.

Conservation leasing could also be used as an important tool for compensatory mitigation. For example, if an energy company wanted to compensate for development in one area, it could buy conservation leases in a separate area in need of restoration.

The bureau's Public Lands Rule is a common-sense, long-overdue proposal that all of us who love public lands should embrace. This doesn't alter the BLM's "multiple use" mission and won't stop energy development, mining, grazing or timber harvests.

It encourages more responsible development so the land can thrive well into the future. It also provides more opportunity for tribal and local communities to have more input into the way their public lands are managed.

The benefits of such a policy are numerous, and unfortunately Gov. Noem is making it a partisan, political soundbite.

Not only will wildlife habitat be restored, but it will also reduce wildfire risks, help control the spread of invasive species, improve livestock forage and enhance opportunities for hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation.

South Dakotans love our wildlife and sporting heritage. We believe in restoring and safeguarding the lands and waters that are critical for future generations to enjoy hunting, fishing, camping and hiking.

*Brad Johnson is a Watertown businessman, former newspaper reporter and editor, and longtime opinion columnist. He is a South Dakota Wildlife Federation board member and is the organization's delegate to the National Wildlife Federation. He also is president of the South Dakota Lakes and Streams Association.*

## Statehouses debate who should build EV charging networks

**BY: ROBERT ZULLO - JUNE 14, 2023 6:14 PM**

Though they only make up a fraction of cars and trucks on the road now, many projections — from Wall Street firms, trade groups and automakers themselves — predict an imminent surge in electric vehicles over the next decade.

S&P Global estimates that the nearly 2 million electric vehicles on U.S. roads today will grow to more than 28 million by 2030, when they'll comprise 40% of all new cars and trucks sold.

The Edison Electric Institute, which represents investor-owned electric utilities, arrived at a similar forecast last year, even before the passage of the federal Inflation Reduction Act, which contained big incentives to spur electric vehicle adoption.

That means tens of thousands of additional public charging stations will be needed to be built across the country.

But there's a big debate taking place at state capitols across the country about who should take the lead role in building them — electric utilities or private businesses?

### 'That's what retailers are there for'

The Charge Ahead Partnership, composed of big fuel retailers, grocery chains, convenience stores, gas stations and other businesses exploring installing vehicle chargers, argues that private businesses, particularly those that have been selling fuel to motorists for years and are already located in optimal spots to serve drivers, are best suited to making the switch to electric chargers. And they say they'll have a tough time competing with monopoly electric utilities who can build charging infrastructure on the back of their ratepayers.

"The utilities are actively laying the groundwork to extend their monopoly into this new business field,"

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said Ryan McKinnon, a spokesman for the partnership. "If you're going to be driving an EV you're going to want a reliable network of charging stations. ... You really want entities to provide this that are good at selling things to people. That's what retailers are there for."

McKinnon pointed to recent legislation in Oklahoma, Georgia and Texas that imposes limits on utilities using ratepayer money for charging networks. In Georgia, for example, legislation passed this year restricts utility ownership of charging stations to a single program that allows the dominant electric utility in the state, Georgia Power, to provide chargers in remote and rural areas, with private retailers offered a right of first refusal.

"This will ensure ratepayer funds only subsidize EV charging operations in areas where private industry cannot operate," the Charge Ahead Partnership said in a news release last month.

But other states, like Minnesota and Colorado, have taken or are considering steps in the other direction. Proposed budget language that would allow utilities to bill ratepayers for electric vehicle charging infrastructure has also come under fire in Ohio.

And in Florida, the nation's largest utility, Florida Power & Light, is building hundreds of chargers over the objection of critics like former Jacksonville Mayor John Peyton, president of GATE Petroleum, which owns gas stations and convenience stores in Florida, Georgia and the Carolinas. Peyton argued in a Florida Times-Union column that "no private business would sink \$100,000 or more to install EV chargers with the knowledge that some of the state's most powerful monopolies can undercut them, using your ratepayer funds."

## An 'all-of-the-above approach'

Some proponents argue, however, that there could be a place for utility-owned charging, since electric vehicles have long posed a chicken-and-egg problem. Mass adoption isn't likely until drivers are comfortable they can always find a charger. And companies aren't likely to build chargers until there's a critical mass of electric vehicles to help them recoup their investment plus a profit.

Katherine Stainken, vice president of policy at the Electrification Coalition, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization pushing for the widespread adoption of electric vehicles, said there's too much variation across states and markets to foreclose options like utility ownership. She characterized the debate over who should own charging networks as the "growing pains" of a nascent industry.

"We support kind of an all-of-the-above approach," she said. "There's a lot of different factors here."

Stainken added that for-profit companies might not be able to meet the needs of, for example, low-income apartment complexes, or instances in which no host comes forward to site a charging station through the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) program, which is making billions of federal dollars available to states to boost charging infrastructure.

"If there are some areas where there is no site host coming forward, and the utility is the only one ... I don't think we would want to say 'Forget it,'" she said.

The Edison Electric Institute likewise said the coming surge in electric vehicles requires an "all-hands-on-deck approach."

"No one is preventing private-sector stakeholders from investing in EV charging today, and the idea that some stakeholders are trying to prevent electric companies from building EV charging infrastructure is senseless," said Kellen Scheffer, the institute's senior director of electric transportation. "Electric companies are well-positioned to make targeted and strategic investments in EV charging infrastructure that will benefit the broader community and accelerate EV adoption. America's electric companies have proven expertise and decades of experience in deploying and maintaining electric infrastructure that is safe, affordable and reliable."

## Charging on demand

Beyond who builds and owns the chargers, however, there are other thorny issues to untangle.

One of the most pressing, according to Angela Holland, president of the Georgia Association of Convenience Stores, which supported the new Georgia law limiting utility ownership of chargers, is how much private businesses who install chargers pay for electricity.

"One of the other things we've asked is for our utility friends to come up with an EV charging rate," Holland said. "You can't go to market with a product and not know whether or not you're going to make money on it."

In neighboring Alabama, Alabama Power, which, like Georgia Power, is part of Southern Company, offers a special rate for commercial and industrial customers for public electric vehicle charging stations. Electric usage for charging is metered separately from other uses at the location.

That's crucial because in many utility billing frameworks, commercial and industrial customers often pay a demand charge based on the maximum amount of electricity they use at one time, usually measured as an interval of 15 or 30 minutes. The charge is meant to compensate an electric company for maintaining the generation and transmission capacity to meet that peak demand, even though it won't be used all the time.

"Demand charges are intended to help (electric service providers) keep power systems appropriately sized, efficient and more affordable for all consumers," says a 2021 report spearheaded by the National Association of State Energy Officials that looked at demand charges and electric vehicle charging in Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming.

Electric vehicle charging infrastructure, though, "has relatively unique power demands, with high power capacity required for fast charging, but relatively small amounts of energy consumed per charge," the report said, noting that demand charges "are one element that may prevent (direct current fast-charging) station hosts from earning a profit from EV charging services."

The town of Derry, New Hampshire, pulled the plug on its four free municipal parking lot electric charging stations in 2021 after its utility instituted demand charges and caused the price to spike, officials wrote to the state utilities commission.

McKinnon, the Charge Ahead Partnership spokesman, gave the example of a business that installs a 150 kilowatt charger with four ports, the minimum standard for the federal government's NEVI program.

"You're not going to have a ton of usage immediately. But as soon as one person uses it they are probably going to set the new peak usage for the month," he said. "We're not advocating for any specific rate. ... We're just saying let's pick a fair rate." Low usage and big demand charges, he added, "kills the financial incentive" for businesses to install chargers.

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

## Democrats in Congress renew push to protect access to birth control

**South Dakota's Healy attends reproductive rights meeting at White House**

**BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - JUNE 14, 2023 2:17 PM**

WASHINGTON — Democrats in Congress reintroduced a bill Wednesday that would guarantee access to birth control regardless of any future Supreme Court rulings.

The measure would ensure people have the right to use contraception and that health care providers have a right to share information about contraception as well as provide it.

The legislation would insulate access to birth control in the event the U.S. Supreme Court decides to overturn any of the cases that have provided Americans with the privacy rights that guaranteed a right to contraception.

The bill is necessary, proponents argued, because the Supreme Court just last year overturned the constitutional right to abortion that stood for nearly 50 years.

"Millions of people use contraception and they have for decades, and the vast majority of Americans support the right to birth control," said Washington Democratic Sen. Patty Murray.

While Republicans blocked the bill from passing last Congress, Murray said, the reintroduction was a

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chance to show whether they do support access to birth control.

"My message to Republicans who claim to support the right to just get birth control: Now is your chance to prove it," Murray said. "Stand with us, don't stand against us."

## **Dobbs case**

The bill was originally introduced last Congress by a coalition of Democratic lawmakers who were concerned about a section of Justice Clarence Thomas' concurring opinion in the Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization abortion case.

Thomas wrote the high court should reconsider many of the precedent-setting cases that used the same logic applied in Roe v. Wade, specifically that justices "should reconsider all of this Court's substantive due process precedents, including Griswold, Lawrence, and Obergefell."

Those cases are the 1965 Griswold v. Connecticut ruling that recognized married couples' right to use contraception, the 2003 Lawrence v. Texas ruling that invalidated laws criminalizing adult private consensual sexual relationships and the 2015 Obergefell v. Hodges case that legalized same-sex marriages.

The U.S. House voted to approve the contraception legislation last July, but Democrats couldn't get the 60 votes needed in the Senate to move past that chamber's legislative filibuster.

North Carolina Democratic Rep. Kathy Manning sought to remind people that before 1965, several states had laws banning or restricting who could get contraceptives.

"My bill establishes a federal statutory right for individuals to access and use birth control and for health care providers to provide it," Manning said. "It protects the full range of FDA-approved contraceptive methods, including birth control pills, IUDs and emergency contraception, like Plan B."

Massachusetts Democratic Sen. Ed Markey said Thomas' opinion in the Dobbs case gave lawmakers "a window into just how far he could go to dismantle Americans' freedoms."

"He outlined a long-held Republican belief that Americans have too many privacy rights under the Constitution and the Supreme Court had erred in recognizing those privacy rights and that the court should take them away, just as it did the right to abortion," Markey said.

Rep. Sara Jacobs, a California Democrat, noted during the press conference that patients use birth control for an array of reasons, including acne and endometriosis.

She also said that ensuring access to contraception is central to the government recognizing that women have bodily autonomy.

"This is about the government seeing me as someone with human agency and recognizing my right and power to make decisions about my own body that could change the trajectory of my life," Jacobs said. "This is about the freedom to control if, when and how to grow a family, without government interference."

## **State lawmakers at the White House**

The White House on Wednesday and Thursday was hosting dozens of local and state officials from both red and blue states to discuss reproductive rights — including South Dakota state Rep. Erin Healy, D-Sioux Falls.

A White House spokesperson said that during the meetings, Biden administration officials would talk about "defending reproductive rights, key actions the Administration has taken to protect access to reproductive health care, and the importance of state partners in this fight."

On Wednesday, the state and local officials from states that have restricted access to abortion will discuss those actions as well as "strategies to oppose these efforts, and the policy agenda ahead," according to the spokesperson.

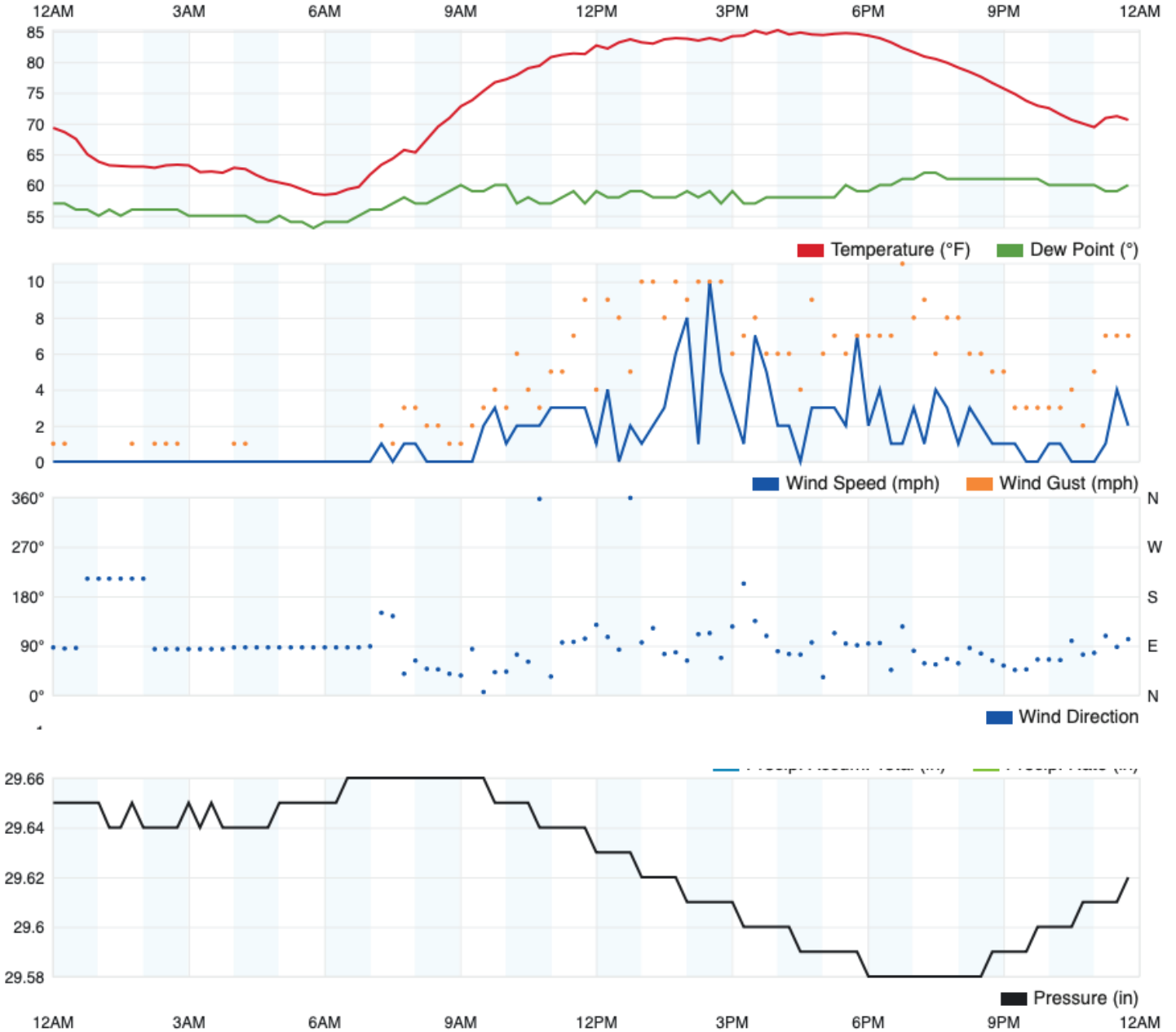
The Thursday talks, the spokesperson said, will include state and local officials from regions of the country that have protected access to abortion to talk about ways "to further safeguard and support access to reproductive health care."

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

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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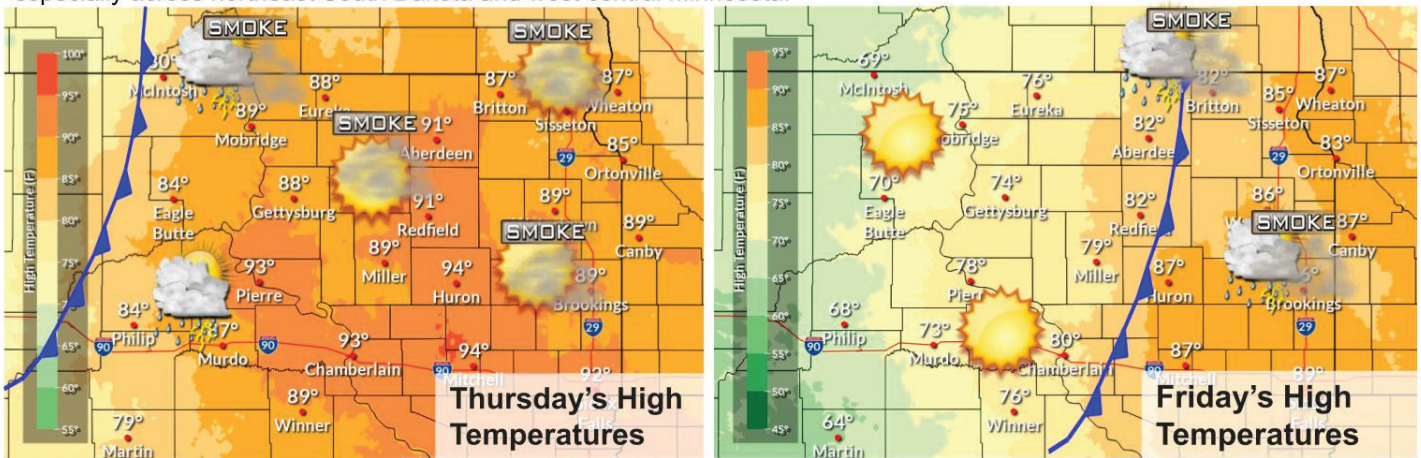
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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
						
Haze	Chance T-storms	Chance Showers then Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms then Chance Showers	Slight Chance T-storms then Chance Showers	Chance T-storms	Slight Chance T-storms
<b>High: 91 °F</b>	<b>Low: 61 °F</b>	<b>High: 83 °F</b>	<b>Low: 59 °F</b>	<b>High: 81 °F</b>	<b>Low: 59 °F</b>	<b>High: 84 °F</b>

## Hot Today, Before Cooler Air Arrives For The Weekend

Ahead of a cold front working east through the region, look for isolated to widely scattered showers and thunderstorms; first across the Missouri River valley region today and tonight and then again throughout and east of the James River valley Friday and Friday night. After another day of above normal temperatures in the 80s to low 90s today, conditions will be noticeably cooler on Friday, behind the cold front.

The smoke from Canada wildfires, both near surface and aloft, is forecast to persist for about another 24 to 36 hours, especially across northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota.



 National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD

  Updated: June 15, 2023 3:38 AM

Hot again today, then cooler this weekend. Rain chances continue today, anchored over the Missouri River valley; then anchored over the James River valley and points east Friday.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 86 °F at 4:38 PM

Low Temp: 58 °F at 5:49 AM

Wind: 13 mph at 2:05 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 42 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 105 in 1933

Record Low: 36 in 1968

Average High: 80

Average Low: 55

Average Precip in June.: 1.77

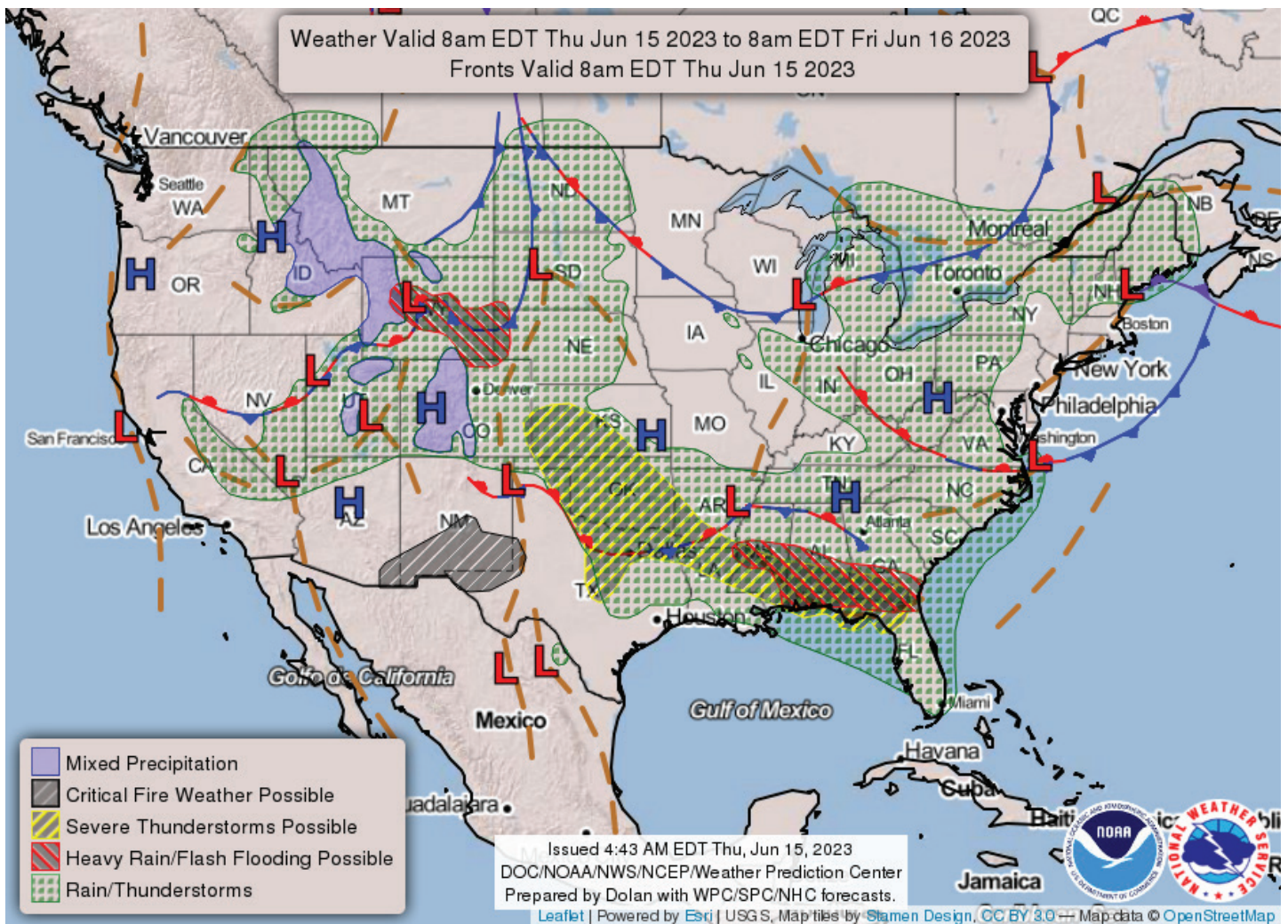
Precip to date in June.: 0.51

Average Precip to date: 9.02

Precip Year to Date: 8.42

Sunset Tonight: 9:24:24 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:41:25 AM



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## Today in Weather History

June 15, 1935: This estimated F3 tornado moved east from 17 miles southwest of Onida. There was near F4 damage to one farm about 9 miles SSW of Onida. The house was destroyed, 60 cattle were killed, and five people were injured. At another farm, the home shifted over the storm cellar, trapping a family.

June 15, 1977: There were thunderstorms with heavy rain and some hail which began on the 15th and continued into the 16th. At Watertown, almost 6.9 inches of rain fell during this two day period. In Deuel County, Gary received 6 inches, Altamont 5.5 and Brandt, 4.5 inches in Goodwin, and 3.70 inches in Clear Lake. Other amounts include; 4.85 inches at 3NE of Raymond; 4.57 inches in Clark; 4.21 at 1NE of Bryant; and 3.97 inches in Castlewood.

June 15, 1978: Numerous severe thunderstorms developed over all of central South Dakota. Tornadoes, funnel clouds, hail up to baseball size, and wind gusts to near 80 mph caused widespread destruction. Estimated loss was between 20-25 million dollars. The Governor declared some counties disaster areas. Six trailers were destroyed, and a home was unroofed northwest of Aberdeen. Fifteen people were injured from these storms.

June 15, 1978: Torrential rains began during the evening hours and continued into the morning hours on the 16th. Heavy rains were estimated between 5 to 6 inches, causing flash flooding south of Watertown. Some rainfall amounts include; 2.43 inches in Watertown; 2.07 in Castlewood; and 2.05 inches in Clear Lake. Hail caused severe crop damage in Hughes County.

1662 - A fast was held at Salem MA with prayers for rain, and the Lord gave a speedy answer. (David Ludlum)

1879 - McKinney ND received 7.7 inches of rain in 24 hours, a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1896 - The temperature at Fort Mojave, CA, soared to 127 degrees, the hottest reading of record for June for the U.S. The low that day was 97 degrees. Morning lows of 100 degrees were reported on the 12th, 14th and 16th of the month. (The Weather Channel)

1953 - Dust devils are usually rather benign weather phenomena, however, two boys were injured by one near Prescott AZ. One of the boys suffered a black eye, and the other boy had two vertebrae fractured by wind-blown debris. (The Weather Channel)

1957 - East Saint Louis was deluged with 16.54 inches of rain in 24 hours, a record for the state of Illinois. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms developing along a cold front produced severe weather in the northwestern U.S. A tornado damaged five homes and destroyed a barn near Salmon ID. It lifted a metal shed 100 feet into the air, and deposited it 100 yards away. Hail an inch and a half in diameter caused ten million dollars damage to automobiles at Nampa ID. (The National Weather Channel) (Storm Data)

1988 - Severe thunderstorms in the Central High Plains Region spawned five tornadoes around Denver, CO, in just one hour. A strong (F-3) tornado in southern Denver injured seven persons and caused ten million dollars damage. Twenty-six cities in the eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. The high of 97 degrees at Portland ME was a record for June. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather over the Southern and Middle Atlantic Coast States. The thunderstorms spawned eight tornadoes, including strong (F-3) tornadoes which injured three persons at Mountville PA and four persons at Columbia, PA. There were 111 reports of large hail and damaging winds, including wind gusts to 80 mph at Norfolk, VA, and Hogback Mountain, SC. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1991: The second largest volcanic eruption of the 20th Century began as Mt. Pinatubo injected 15 to 30 million tons of sulfur dioxide 100,000 feet into the atmosphere. 343 people were killed in the Philippines as a result of the eruptions, and 200,000 were left homeless. Material from the explosion would spread around the globe, leading to climate changes worldwide as the sun's energy was blocked out and global temperatures cooled by as much as one degree Fahrenheit. 1992 was globally one of the coldest since the 1970s.



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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### WORTHY WORDS

It has been estimated that the average person speaks about 34,000 words a day. Multiply that by 365 and that amounts to about 12,000,000 words a year. That ought to make our jaws hurt!

When he wrote Psalm 19, David said that he wanted the words coming from his mouth and the thoughts stored in his heart to be pleasing to God. David was so concerned about his words that he wondered if there was any way for him to know what sins might already be lurking in his heart. Jesus spoke of the importance of our words and said that "out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks." These "words" about "words" need our attention.

What are we to do about the "words" that come from our mouths? David asked God to "Set a guard over my mouth and to keep a watch over my lips." What a great place to begin - to ask God to watch our lips and guard our mouths at all times so what we say will please God!

Realizing that God knows every thought we think and every word we speak should cause us to ask Him to make our hearts and minds pure. Then with His power within us and His presence around us and His Spirit to guide us, our words will certainly please Him and others.

Prayer: Father, may our minds and hearts be so full of Your Word that our words will reflect Your message of love and hope. May all that we say please You! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer. Psalm 19:12-14



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

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## 2023 Community Events

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

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.13.23

8 10 19 44 47 4

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$281,000,000**

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 52  
DRAW: Mins 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.14.23

2 15 26 29 30 4

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$4,090,000**

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 7  
DRAW: Mins 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.14.23

6 16 28 34 45 18

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

NEXT 15 Hrs 22 Mins 55  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.14.23

3 7 19 24 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$101,000**

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 22  
DRAW: Mins 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.14.23

6 10 14 16 50 1

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

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 51  
DRAW: Mins 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.14.23

3 20 36 42 64 4

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$366,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 15 Hrs 51  
DRAW: Mins 55 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### **After long waits, new pilgrims prepare for return of Hajj, the first major one since COVID-19**

By FARES AKRAM, NINIEK KARMINI, ABBY SEWELL, MARIAM FAM and QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA Associated Press

This year's Hajj is a landmark: the first full pilgrimage after a daunting three-year period when the COVID-19 pandemic sharply reduced the scale of one of Islam's holiest and most beloved rites.

Millions of Muslims from around the world will start converging next week on Mecca in Saudi Arabia to begin the several days of rituals at holy sites in and around the city. For pilgrims, it is the ultimate spiritual moment of their lives, a chance to seek God's forgiveness for their sins and walk in the footsteps of revered prophets like Muhammad and Abraham.

It's a mass, communal experience, with Muslims of many races and classes performing it together as one. But it is also deeply personal; every pilgrim brings their own yearnings and experiences.

The Associated Press spoke to several pilgrims from far-flung places as they prepared for their journey.

**GAZA:**

It's been hard, raising 10 children on her own and living in the Gaza Strip, blockaded on all sides and torn by multiple wars. But Huda Zaqqout says her life feels miraculous because she is surrounded by her family, including 30 grandchildren.

And now, at 64, she is finally going on Hajj. It just so happens that now, after an easing of Saudi policy, more women pilgrims can participate without a "mahram," or a male relative to escort them. It's serendipitous timing for Zaqqout, who has waited years for this opportunity, and whose sons cannot afford to make the long, arduous trip from Gaza to Mecca.

"Gaza is like a prison. We are locked up from all directions and borders," she said.

Instead, she will travel with a group of women, all over 60.

It will be a dream come true for Zaqqout, who says her dreams are often premonitions.

There was the dream that predicted her triplets. Or another that promised something good would follow something bad. The bad turned out to be that, after serving 10 years in prison, her husband took a younger, second wife and eventually left Zaqqout. But the good, she says, was that she emerged stronger, blessed by the love of her large family.

In April, she dreamt Prophet Muhammad was standing beside her.

"After I saw the prophet, I just felt I want to be there, in his proximity," she said. She immediately signed up for an Umrah, the so-called "lesser pilgrimage" to Mecca that can happen any time.

She had registered for Hajj in 2010 but had never been selected to go. After she returned from Umrah, she nervously tuned into the radio broadcast announcing this year's Hajj pilgrims. She fell to the ground, crying with joy, when her name was announced.

For Gazans, the trip is particularly hard. The tiny Mediterranean coastal territory has been blockaded by Israel and Egypt since 2007, when the militant group Hamas took power. Though pilgrims are allowed to travel, it is a bureaucratic nightmare. Then the arduous bus ride to Cairo Airport takes at least 15 hours and sometimes twice that due to long waits at the border and Egyptian checkpoints in the Sinai.

That hasn't dampened Zaqqout's joy. Her neighbors congratulate her. She watches YouTube videos to learn the Hajj rituals and goes to physiotherapy for her feet, which often hurt, knowing she'll be doing a lot of standing and walking.

At her house in an old section of Gaza City, her grandchildren throng around her. At one point as she told her story, Zaqqout started to cry; the children hugged her and cried with her. When she went shopping for gifts, prayer mats and clothes, one grandson insisted on accompanying her, holding her hand the whole time.

Zaqqout feels Hajj is the last thing on her life's to-do list. She has no debts, her children are married

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and have families. "After that, I don't need anything from life."

On Mount Arafat, the climactic moment of the Hajj, she said she will pray for peace and love between people. And she'll pray for her family.

"I would like to see my children live a happy life and be proud of their children."

## INDONESIA:

At a rural intersection outside Jakarta, 85-year-old Husin bin Nisan stands guard, his hands nimbly signaling for vehicles to stop or proceed. It's a blind curve, and approaching traffic can't see what's coming. Now and then, a driver thanks him with a few coins that he tucks into his orange vest.

Husin is a "Pak Ogah," a type of volunteer traffic warden found across Indonesia. Nearly every day for more than 30 years, he has directed traffic in a poor village called Peusar, living off tips equivalent to a few dollars a day.

The whole time, he has put aside coins for his dream. It has been a wait of more than 15 years, but finally Husin is going on the Hajj.

Husin tearfully recounted the prayer he had repeated: "I beg you, God ... open the way for me to go to Mecca and Medina. Please give your blessing."

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, has a staggeringly long line of citizens wanting to go on Hajj; wait times can last decades. It lengthened even more when Saudi Arabia barred foreign pilgrims in 2020 and 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, when Hajj reopened but with age restrictions, less than half of Indonesia's quota could attend, said Arsyad Hidayat, director of Hajj Development at the Religious Affairs Ministry.

"The waiting period for the pilgrims was doubled," he said. "And when it returns to normal to 100% of our quota, the impact of not having the pilgrimage for two years is still there."

To catch up, Indonesia negotiated with Saudi Arabia and received an additional 8,000 spots this year, reaching an all-time high of 229,000. Authorities are giving special preference to older people. Nearly 67,000 of this year's pilgrims are above 65, including more than 8,200 above 85. The oldest is a 118-year-old woman. The elderly will get extra services, including first-class flights and special accommodations and health care.

Husin has spent much of his life awaiting this chance. After two decades working as a Pak Ogah, he managed in 2009 to save the 25 million rupiah (\$1,680) needed to register for the pilgrimage. It took four more years before authorities conveyed the date he would go — 2022, nearly a decade in the future.

When 2022 arrived, he couldn't go because he was over the age limit. It was a blow, but he kept his faith that the pandemic would end and he would make it to Mecca.

A father of four and grandfather of six, Husin still works every day. His wife helps him put on his vest in their small home. Thin, with thick white hair and white beard, he walks to his intersection. He sometimes stands directing traffic for 12 hours a day, taking breaks sitting under a tree by a nearby cemetery.

Earlier this year, he paid off the remaining 26 million rupiah (\$1,750) and was confirmed for this year's Hajj.

In early June, Husin packed his suitcase, including his "ihram," the white robe that all male pilgrims wear. Then he put on his best clothes and said goodbye to his family and friends. He began his journey.

"Now, I could die in peace at any time because God has answered my prayer," he said.

## LEBANON:

Abbas Bazzi doesn't fit most people's image of a religiously observant Muslim. With his long hair pulled back in a bun, he co-owns an organic cafe and grocery in Beirut's trendy Badaro neighborhood. He sells sugar-free smoothies and vegan shawarma sandwiches. He teaches conscious breathing classes, practices reiki healing and does yoga.

He is now preparing for what he hopes will be his fourth Hajj journey.

Bazzi was born in a Shiite Muslim community in south Lebanon; his parents were secularists who never went to mosque. He took an interest in Islam on his own, beginning to pray at age 9 and to fast at 11. Later, he studied all the major world religions — "a journey from west to east," he said. But he remained most convinced by Islam.

Bazzi attributes his early interest in religion to the circumstances surrounding his birth. He was born

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prematurely, at home, in 1981, at the height of Lebanon's civil war. The newborn was not breathing properly, so a friend of his mother's — a religiously observant woman — gave him rescue breathing until they could get him to the hospital.

In the first month of his life, Bazzi said, he was so sickly that his parents didn't name him, fearing he would die. Although not a practicing Muslim, his father made a vow: If his son lived, he would name him for Imam Abbas, one of Shiite Islam's most revered figures. The child lived; his father kept his promise.

As Bazzi grew up, he explored spiritual practices, including meditation and yoga. While others found the blend between those practices and Islam strange, he saw them as complementary.

Some people may think that a Hajj pilgrim should look different or pray more conspicuously, he said, but "I made a decision in my life that all of my life will be in service to the divine project."

In 2017, at 36, Bazzi applied for the Hajj. But up to the last minute, he hadn't received his visa. He went to the airport with his group of pilgrims and saw them off, waving goodbye. The next morning, he got a call saying his visa was ready. He scrambled to book a new ticket and followed his friends to Mecca.

"I've gotten used to surprises in my life," he said with a laugh.

In Mecca, he said, "I saw peace. I saw this is the only place where people are gathered from every country in the world, every color ... different doctrines. I saw unity, I saw love."

He returned the next year, and the years after that, feeling he had more to learn. "It's not possible to reach knowledge of all of (Islam) in a single trip or a single day."

This year could be another nail-biter. His visa is approved, but his passport has expired. Renewing it was delayed because so many Lebanese are trying to get passports to leave the country since its economy collapsed in 2019.

Time is running short.

"I am praying," Bazzi said. "God willing, if it's meant to happen, it will happen."

UNITED STATES:

A wave of emotions washed over Saadiha Khaliq as she reflected on the spiritual significance of her upcoming pilgrimage to Mecca, more than 11,000 kilometers (7,000 miles) from her home in the U.S. state of Tennessee.

"It's really this invitation and this honor," said the 41-year-old Pakistani-American engineer, who lives near Nashville. "You just hope that you're worthy of that honor and that it's accepted from you."

Her tears flowed.

Undertaking the pilgrimage has been on Khaliq's mind for several years; she would read and watch videos about Hajj rituals and ask others who had gone about their experiences.

Her religious quest gained urgency during the coronavirus pandemic.

"The pandemic really put things in perspective," she said. "Life is short, and you have limited opportunities to do things that you really want to do."

This year, she applied for places on the Hajj for herself and her parents. While they've been to Mecca before, this will be the first Hajj for all three.

"This is kind of a big, lifelong dream and achievement for them," she said. "And I'm just grateful that I get to be part of the whole experience."

Khaliq was born in the United Kingdom. In the 1990s, her family moved to the United States and eventually to Tennessee, where her father is a mathematics professor.

As part of her preparations, she's trying to go in with a clean slate, from clearing financial obligations to working to make amends and seek forgiveness from family members or friends who she might have had issues with.

"It's very hard to stand there (in Mecca), if there's negativity in your heart ... if you made space for things that are resentment or anger," she said. "And I'm still working on cleansing that part of my heart."

As the date nears, she has experienced an array of emotions, including a sense of going into the unknown.

She marvels at the sense of unity and humility that comes as Muslims of diverse backgrounds from around the world pray next to one another. All of them, she said, are on a journey to God, seeking forgiveness.

"You are now standing before him without any of your social status, your wealth, and you come before him with some good deeds and some bad deeds," she said. "All you can do, as a Muslim, is hope that at the end of the day, this is pleasing to God."

## IRAQ:

Two years ago, the pandemic wrecked Talal Mundhir's Hajj plans. So the 52-year-old Iraqi took no chances when he and his wife were confirmed for this year's pilgrimage.

He stopped playing soccer, one of his favorite pastimes, fearing he might get injured and be unable to go.

A resident of the central Iraqi city of Tikrit, Mundhir tried to go on Hajj several times over the past two decades, but never made the draw. Finally, he was accepted — in 2021, when no foreigners could go because of COVID-19.

It was a close call this year as well, since Mundhir is unemployed amid Iraq's economic crisis. But he and his siblings recently sold a property they inherited from their father. His portion of the proceeds covered the Hajj expenses.

Last week, Mundhir and his wife set off with their group for Mecca for an early arrival before the pilgrimage's official start on June 26. It was 36 grueling hours on a bus across the desert.

But he said all the exhaustion from the road vanished once he and his wife visited the Haram, the mosque in Mecca that houses the Kaaba, Islam's holiest site. Millions of pilgrims will walk seven times around the cube-shaped Kaaba to kick off their Hajj.

"I can't describe the feeling," Mundhir wrote in a text message from Mecca. "I felt such mental ease, but at the same time, tears. I don't know if they were tears of joy or of humility."

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## War disrupts education of Ukrainian kids, even those who've found safety abroad

By VANESSA GERA and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Nine-year-old Milana Minenko doesn't play piano anymore. During the day, she attends public school in Poland, where she and her mother fled from the war in March 2022. In the evenings, her mother helps her follow Ukraine's curriculum to keep up with lessons back home. There's simply no time — and no money — for anything else.

Russian forces occupied Milana's hometown in the Zaporizhzhia region of Ukraine, destroyed her house with a missile on the second day of the war, and uprooted her family. Milana and her family lost nearly everything they loved.

For Milana, that means school. The place that greeted her with balloons on her first day. Friends she can now only send text messages. The teacher who brought joy to learning.

It also means her music school, where she studied piano and singing after her other lessons. That building now lies in ruins. Milana's not sure what became of her primary school. She wonders whether it, too, was bombed by Russian forces targeting schools.

Russian forces have destroyed 262 educational institutions and damaged another 3,019 in their invasion of Ukraine, according to government figures. But the disruption to the education of Ukrainian children goes far beyond buildings turned to rubble. For those who've fled to other countries, schooling is suffering in unprecedented ways, according to families, educators, experts and advocates. The effects of war and relocation combined with the challenges of studying in a new country are compounding educational setbacks for young refugees.

At stake are the knowledge and skills of a generation needed to rebuild the nation after the war, Ukrainian officials say — a priority they've described since the war's early months. Officials report at least 500 children killed in the war, and thousands have been deported to Russia without consent. There's no telling how many of the 8 million refugees recorded across Europe will return.



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About 1.5 million live in Poland, the most of any country. Many chose it for proximity to Ukraine and plan to go home someday. In Poland, children aren't required to enroll in local schools — an option not allowed in Germany and some other countries.

Fewer than half of the child refugees in Poland — 180,000 students — are enrolled in schools, according to UNICEF. Like Milana, most spoke no Polish when they arrived. Around 30% of children from Ukraine who are enrolled and studying in person in the Polish school system are also studying the Ukrainian curriculum online, UNICEF estimates.

Enrollment numbers drop with older students; just 22% of Ukrainian teens in Poland attend the country's schools.

"It's a disaster in slow motion," said Jędrzej Witkowski, CEO of the Polish nonprofit Center for Citizenship Education.

The detrimental effects on learning and socializing will be far-reaching, said Francesco Calcagno, of Poland's UNICEF refugee response office. That includes extracurricular activities like Milana's music that are key to development and mental health, according to experts.

"Come September, it will be the third school year outside of Ukraine and it will be the fourth year online for many," Calcagno said, citing educational setbacks of the coronavirus pandemic. "Learning face to face is missing. ... We need to bring these children back into school, back into classrooms."

But Polish schools were already struggling with severe teachers shortages. And language issues exacerbate problems for the refugee students; although Ukrainian and Polish are similar, it takes three years to master the latter at a level needed for scholastic work, Witkowski said.

Following curricula in two languages creates more stress for students dealing with the trauma of war and relocation. Many refugee families have moved several times since arriving in Poland, contributing to a feeling of instability.

"I have seen students who changed schools five times," said Rita Rabinek, an intercultural assistant trained by the Polish Migration Forum and the global relief group IRC to help Ukrainian kids adjust to Polish schools.

Students who try to keep up with Ukrainian work see the effects of war still playing out at home. Polina Plochenko, a 16-year-old who left her Polish high school to focus on Ukrainian studies, is completing online lessons with her school on the frontline in Kherson. Bombs often send her teachers fleeing into shelters.

"It is hard because it is my last year of school, and I needed to learn a lot of information by myself," said Polina, who's wanted since age 11 to study acting at a Kyiv university. "A lot of students who don't have motivation like that or don't know who they want to be, they have bigger problems."

Polina will soon take Ukraine's final state examination, which students must pass to enter universities there. It's being given in 47 cities in 30 countries, according to Maryna Demyanchuk, a professor helping to administer it at one of Warsaw's centers.

To prepare, Polina attends Saturday classes at one of three Ukrainian schools set up in Poland by the group Unbreakable Ukraine.

Founder Viktoriia Gnap said the schools' teachers — also refugees — consider the overall level of the students' knowledge quite low. The foundation's aim is to provide them with high-quality education, even as its funding has been cut amid global economic struggles.

"There are kids ending high school now who don't know the chemical formula for water," said Gnap, whose schools have about 1,500 students.

Olha Andrieieva, 17, attended a Polish school and followed classes online for her former school in Balakliia, in Ukraine's Kharkiv region. Shelling and power outages often interrupted lessons.

She took Ukraine's final exam this month. The rite of passage felt surreal - there was no graduation ceremony, and everything seemed unclear. She was calm about the test but shaken by the news of the dam collapse in southern Ukraine, the war's latest humanitarian and environmental disaster.

"The thing to worry about is what is happening in Ukraine, not exams," Olha said, her voice trembling. Some Ukrainian students are becoming more proficient in Polish, making plans to attend universities

here, and forming relationships. Others still feel disconnected from Poland. Gnap and others said teachers see growing tensions between Poles and newcomers in schools. Some refugees have been bullied.

Milana can now translate for her parents. She boasts of a good grade on a recent Polish assignment. But it's hard: "I have to do homework and tests in both schools," she said of keeping up with both countries' curricula.

Piano or voice lessons are at the bottom of the family's list of needs. Her father, Oleksandr, was stuck for a year in Russian-occupied territory before joining his wife and daughter recently in Poland. There's no room for him in the temporary housing where Milana and her mother live. He awaits paperwork that would allow him to get a job and earn enough for the family to live together.

Her mother, Oksana, works as a manicurist. She wishes their small home could fit a keyboard. Videos of Milana performing are a distant memory of a life before the war — and of a place they hope to someday return.

"I really want to go home, to return to familiar walls, so that my child can go to her teacher and hug her," Oksana said. "That's what she dreams of."

## Greece searches for hundreds feared missing after migrant boat sank, leaving 78 dead

By DEREK GATOPOULOS and NICHOLAS PAPHITIS Associated Press

KALAMATA, Greece (AP) — Rescue workers transferred the bodies of dead migrants to refrigerated trucks as a major search continued Thursday for possible survivors of a sea disaster in southern Greece. Hundreds of people are still feared missing.

At least 78 bodies have been recovered after a fishing boat crammed with migrants seeking to make it from Libya to Italy capsized and sank a day earlier in deep waters off the Greek coast.

Rescuers saved 104 passengers — including Egyptians, Syrians, Pakistanis, Afghans and Palestinians, mostly men and including eight minors — but authorities fear that hundreds of others may have been trapped below deck. If confirmed, that would make the tragedy one of the worst ever recorded in the central Mediterranean.

Authorities revised the confirmed death toll from 79 following an overnight count of the bodies.

"The survivors are in a very difficult situation. Right now they are in shock," Erasmia Roumana, head of a United Nations Refugee Agency delegation, told The Associated Press after meeting the rescued migrants in a storage hangar in the southern port of Kalamata.

"They want to get in touch with their families to tell them they are OK, and they keep asking about the missing. Many have friends and relatives unaccounted for."

Greece declared three days of mourning and politicians suspended campaigning for a general election on June 25. A Supreme Court prosecutor ordered an investigation into the circumstances of the deaths.

Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission president, said she was "deeply saddened" by the tragedy and promised to strengthen cooperation between the European Union and nearby countries to try to further crack down on migrant smugglers.

But human rights groups argue that the crackdown means migrants and refugees are being forced to take longer and more dangerous routes to reach safe countries.

The search operation south of Greece's Peloponnese region failed to locate any more bodies or survivors overnight or early Thursday.

"The chances of finding (more survivors) are minimal," retired Greek coast guard admiral Nikos Spanos told state-run ERT television.

"We have seen old fishing boats like this before from Libya: They are about 30 meters (100 feet) long and can carry 600-700 people when crammed full. But they are not at all seaworthy. To put it simply, they are floating coffins."

Coast guard experts believe the boat may have sunk after running out of fuel or suffering engine trouble, with movement of passengers inside the vessel causing it to list and ultimately capsize.

An aerial photograph of the vessel before it sank released by Greek authorities showed people crammed on the deck. Most were not wearing life jackets.

"We are witnessing one of the biggest tragedies in the Mediterranean, and the numbers announced by the authorities are devastating," said Gianluca Rocco, head of the Greek section of IOM, the U.N. migration agency.

The IOM has recorded more than 21,000 deaths and disappearances in the central Mediterranean since 2014.

Greece's coast guard said it was notified by Italian authorities of the trawler's presence in international waters. It said efforts by its own ships and merchant vessels to assist the boat were repeatedly rejected, with people on board insisting they wanted to continue to Italy.

Twenty-nine of the survivors in southern Greece remain hospitalized, mostly with symptoms of hypothermia, while eight have been questioned by coast guard investigators. Government officials said the survivors would be moved to a migrant shelter near Athens later Thursday or Friday.

The bodies of the dead migrants were moved to a morgue outside Athens, where DNA samples and facial photographs will be taken to start the identification process. The embassies of the countries involved will assist, health officials said.

The spot is close to the deepest part of the Mediterranean Sea, where depths of up to 17,000 feet (5,200 meters) could hamper any effort to locate a sunken vessel.

The IOM said initial reports suggested up to 400 people were aboard. A network of activists said it received a distress call from a boat in the same area whose passengers said it carried 750 people.

The Mediterranean's deadliest shipwreck in living memory occurred on April 18, 2015, when an overcrowded fishing boat carrying migrants collided off Libya with a freighter trying to come to its rescue. Only 28 people survived. Forensic experts concluded that there were originally 1,100 people on board.

Paphitis reported from Athens, Greece. Associated Press writer Renata Brito in Barcelona, Spain, contributed to this report.

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## Suspect in mass shooting at Colorado gay nightclub expected to take plea deal

By JIM MUSTIAN and JESSE BEDAYN Associated Press

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (AP) — The suspect in a mass shooting at a Colorado Springs gay nightclub is expected to strike a plea deal to state murder and hate charges that would ensure at least a life sentence for the attack that killed five people and wounded 17, several survivors told The Associated Press.

Word of a possible legal resolution of last year's Club Q massacre follows a series of jailhouse phone calls from the suspect to the AP expressing remorse and the intention to face the consequences at the next scheduled court hearing this month.

"I have to take responsibility for what happened," 23-year-old Anderson Lee Aldrich said in their first public comments about the case.

Federal and state authorities and defense attorneys declined to comment on a possible plea deal. But Colorado law requires victims to be notified of such deals, and several people who lost loved ones or were wounded in the attack told the AP that state prosecutors have given them advance word that Aldrich will plead guilty to charges that would ensure the maximum state sentence of life behind bars.

Prosecutors also recently asked survivors to prepare for the June 26 hearing by writing victim-impact statements and steeling themselves emotionally for the possible release of the Club Q surveillance video of the attack.

"Someone's gone that can never be brought back through the justice system," said Wyatt Kent, who was celebrating his 23rd birthday in Club Q when Aldrich opened fire, gunning down Kent's partner, Daniel Aston,

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who was working behind the bar. "We are all still missing a lot, a partner, a son, a daughter, a best friend."

Jonathan Pullen, the suspect's step-grandfather who plans to watch the upcoming hearing on a livestream, said Aldrich "has to realize what happened on that terrible night. It's truly beginning to dawn on him."

Aldrich faces more than 300 state counts, including murder and hate crimes. And the U.S. Justice Department is considering filing federal hate crime charges, according to a senior law enforcement official familiar with the matter who spoke to AP on condition of anonymity to discuss the ongoing case. It's unclear whether the anticipated resolution to the state prosecution will also resolve the ongoing FBI investigation.

Some survivors who listened to the suspect's recorded comments to the AP lambasted them as a calculated attempt to avoid the federal death penalty, noting they stopped short of discussing a motive, put much of the blame on drugs and characterized the crime in passive, generalities such as "I just can't believe what happened" and "I wish I could turn back time." Such language, they said, belied by the maps, diagrams, online rants and other evidence that showed months of plotting and premeditation.

"No one has sympathy for him," said Michael Anderson, who was bartending at Club Q when the shooting broke out and ducked as several patrons were gunned down around him. "This community has to live with what happened, with collective trauma, with PTSD, trying to grieve the loss of our friends, to move past emotional wounds and move past what we heard, saw and smelled."

Terror erupted just before midnight on Nov. 19 when the suspect walked into Club Q, a longtime sanctuary for the LGBTQ community in this mostly conservative city of 480,000, and fired an AR-15-style semi-automatic rifle indiscriminately. Disbelief gave way to screaming and confusion as the music continued to play. Partygoers dove across a bloody dance floor for cover. Friends frantically tried to protect each other and plugged wounds with napkins.

The killing only stopped after a Navy petty officer grabbed the barrel of the suspect's rifle, burning his hand because it was so hot. An Army veteran joined in to help subdue and beat Aldrich until police arrived, finding the shooter had emptied one high-capacity magazine and was armed with several more.

Aldrich, who since their arrest has identified as nonbinary and uses the pronouns they and them, allegedly visited Club Q at least six times in the years before the attack. District Attorney Michael Allen told a judge that the suspect's mother made Aldrich go to the club "against his will and sort of forced that culture on him."

Allen also has said the suspect administered a website that posted a "neo-Nazi white supremacist" shooting training video. Online gaming friends said Aldrich expressed hatred for the police, LGBTQ people and minorities and used anti-Black and anti-gay slurs. And a police detective testified that Aldrich sent an online message with a photo of a rifle scope trained on a gay pride parade.

Defense attorneys in previous hearings have not disputed Aldrich's role in the shooting but have pushed back against allegations it was motivated by hate, arguing the suspect was drugged up on cocaine and medication the night of the attack.

"I don't know if this is common knowledge but I was on a very large plethora of drugs," Aldrich told the AP. "I had been up for days. I was abusing steroids. ... I've finally been able to get off that crap I was on."

Aldrich didn't answer directly when asked whether the attack was motivated by hate, saying only that's "completely off base."

Even a former friend of Aldrich found their remarks to be disingenuous. "I'm really glad he's trying to take accountability but it's like the 'why' is being shoved under the rug," said Xavier Kraus, who lived across the hall from Aldrich at a Colorado Springs apartment complex.

The AP sent Aldrich a handwritten letter several months ago asking them to discuss a 2021 kidnapping arrest following a standoff with a SWAT team, a prosecution that had been dismissed and sealed despite video evidence of Aldrich's crimes. In that case, just months before the Club Q shooting, they threatened to become "the next mass killer" and stockpiled guns, ammo, body armor and a homemade bomb. The incident was livestreamed on Facebook and prompted the evacuation of 10 nearby homes as authorities discovered a tub with more than 100 pounds of explosive materials.

The alleged shooter, who lived with their grandparents at the time and was upset about their plans to move to Florida, threatened to kill the couple and "go out in a blaze," authorities said. "You guys die today

and I'm taking you with me," they quoted the suspect as saying. "I'm loaded and ready."

The charges were dismissed even after relatives wrote a judge warning that Aldrich was "certain" to commit murder if freed. District Attorney Allen, facing heavy criticism, later attributed the dismissal of the case to Aldrich's family members refusing to cooperate and repeatedly dodging out-of-state subpoenas.

In response to AP's letter, Aldrich first phoned a reporter in March and asked to be paid for an interview, a request that was declined. They called back late last month, days after prosecutors wrote in a court filing that there was "near-unanimous sentiment" among the victims for "the most expedient determination of case-related issues."

In a series of six calls, each limited by an automated jail phone system to 15 minutes, the suspect said: "Nothing's ever going to bring back their loved ones. People are going to have to live with injury that can't be repaired."

Asked why it happened, they said, "I don't know. That's why I think it's so hard to comprehend that it did happen. ... I'm either going to get the death penalty federally or I will go to prison for life, that's a given."

While the AP normally would not provide a platform to someone alleged to have committed such a crime, editors judged that the suspect's stated intent to accept responsibility and expression of remorse were newsworthy and should be reported.

Former Club Q bartender Anderson was among survivors who told prosecutors they wanted a fast resolution of the criminal case.

"My fear is that if this takes years, that prevents the processing and moving on and finding peace beyond this case," he said. "I would love this wrapped up as quickly as possible under the guarantee that justice is served."

AP Writer Colleen Slevin in Denver contributed to this report. Contact AP's global investigative team at [Investigative@ap.org](mailto:Investigative@ap.org).

## Scathing report finds Boris Johnson deliberately misled UK Parliament over 'partygate'

By DANICA KIRKA AND SYLVIA HUI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A committee of lawmakers harshly rebuked former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Thursday, saying he lied to Parliament about lockdown-flouting parties and was complicit in a campaign to intimidate those investigating his conduct.

The House of Commons Privileges Committee found Johnson's actions were such a flagrant violation of the rules that they warranted a 90-day suspension from Parliament. That sanction would have been more than enough to trigger a by-election that could have cost Johnson his seat in Parliament, but the former prime minister avoided that ignominy by resigning on Friday after the committee gave him advance notice of its findings.

Release of the committee's scathing 77-page report touched off an angry exchange of recriminations, with Johnson repeating his claims that the panel was a "kangaroo court" bent on ousting him from Parliament and the committee saying his defense was an after-the-fact justification that was "no more than an artifice."

The report is just the latest episode in the "partygate" scandal that has angered the public and distracted lawmakers since local news organizations first revealed that members of Johnson's staff held a series of parties in 2020 and 2021 when such gatherings were prohibited by pandemic restrictions.

Johnson initially denied that any parties took place, then repeatedly assured lawmakers that rules and guidance were followed at all times.

The committee, which took testimony from Johnson and senior members of his government during its 14-month investigation, concluded that those assurances were misleading and that Johnson failed to correct the record when asked to do so. This amounted to a "serious contempt" of Parliament, the panel found.

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"The contempt was all the more serious because it was committed by the Prime Minister, the most senior member of the government," the committee said. "There is no precedent for a Prime Minister having been found to have deliberately misled the House. He misled the House on an issue of the greatest importance to the House and to the public, and did so repeatedly."

The committee also said Johnson should not be granted a pass to Parliament's grounds.

Johnson, 58, fought back in a statement tinged by fury. He insisted he had done nothing wrong.

"The committee now says that I deliberately misled the House, and at the moment I spoke I was consciously concealing from the House my knowledge of illicit events," Johnson said. "This is rubbish. It is a lie. In order to reach this deranged conclusion, the Committee is obliged to say a series of things that are patently absurd, or contradicted by the facts."

Johnson angrily quit as a lawmaker on Friday after the committee informed him in advance that he would be sanctioned. In his statement Thursday, he lashed out at the committee, saying they used their prerogatives to bring about what "is intended to be the final knife-thrust in a protracted political assassination."

Johnson's move to quit Parliament means he can no longer be suspended, and his seat of Uxbridge and South Ruislip will be contested in a special election in July.

Johnson and his wife, Carrie, were fined by the Metropolitan Police last year for breaching COVID-19 laws at a birthday party for Johnson in June 2020 in his Downing Street residence and office.

Current Prime Minister Rishi Sunak was also among dozens of people issued with fixed-penalty notices for a series of office parties and "wine time Fridays" in 2020 and 2021 across government buildings.

Revelations of the booze-fueled gatherings, which took place at a time when millions were prohibited from seeing loved ones or even attending family funerals, angered many Britons and added to a string of ethics scandals that spelled Johnson's downfall. Johnson resigned as prime minister in July 2022 after a mass exodus of government officials protesting his leadership.

Johnson has acknowledged misleading lawmakers when he assured them that no rules had been broken, but he insisted he didn't do so deliberately.

In March he told the committee he "honestly believed" the five gatherings he attended, including a send-off for a staffer and his own surprise birthday party, were "lawful work gatherings" intended to boost morale among overworked staff members coping with a deadly pandemic.

Families of people who died in the pandemic flatly disagreed. The Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice UK group said the committee's report was a painful reminder that while they were saying goodbye to loved ones on Zoom, the prime minister was holding parties.

David Garfinkel, a spokesperson for the group, said Johnson should be barred from holding office again.

"Johnson has shown no remorse," Garfinkel said in a statement. "Instead he lied to our faces when he told us that he'd done 'all he could' to protect our loved ones, he lied again when he said the rules hadn't been broken in number 10, and he's lied ever since when he's denied it again and again."

## MLB teams welcome LGBTQ+ fans with Pride Nights, but wait continues for 1st out active player

By JAY COHEN AP Baseball Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — When it comes to baseball and LGBTQ+ inclusivity, Billy Bean often flashes back to his playing days.

Ending his career without telling his parents about his life as a closeted gay ballplayer. Shielding his secret from teammates like Brad Ausmus and Torey Lovullo. The regret of not sharing his "full self," he says.

It's a message Bean has delivered in clubhouses, and it resonates with today's ballplayers — hyper-focused on staying in the majors, and being a good teammate. It's also the lens through which Bean views baseball's ongoing LGBTQ+ issues.

"There's some parts of my job where I feel like some days I just, you know, I'm floating," said Bean, a senior vice president for diversity, equity and inclusion with Major League Baseball. "Then there's other days when I see some pushback, I'm reminded that we have 8,000 human beings connected to the sport

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as an athlete in one way or another, and you're not going to always have 100% of those people agree on the same thing."

That friction has been on display in recent seasons as MLB teams court the LGBTQ+ community during Pride Month, simultaneously showing how much has changed and how much remains the same within the National Pastime — a sport with a strong connection to segments of the U.S. and Latin America where many view homosexuality as a sin.

Almost 80 years after Jackie Robinson broke the majors' color barrier in a landmark moment for the American Civil Rights Movement, the dueling expressions of LGBTQ+ support and pop-up opposition recalled the question of when MLB might welcome its first active openly gay player — a barrier already cleared by the NBA and NFL.

"If somebody in here called a meeting and came out as gay, I think everybody would embrace that, have their back and literally just move on and focus on winning the games, which is really the important thing and what matters," Milwaukee Brewers outfielder Christian Yelich said. "It doesn't matter what somebody's sexuality is."

While Seattle slugger Julio Rodríguez, Chicago Cubs pitcher Marcus Stroman and Toronto pitcher Kevin Gausman are among a group of players who have publicly celebrated Pride Month, the Los Angeles Dodgers have faced criticism for including the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence in the team's upcoming 10th annual Pride Night on Friday.

Dodgers ace Clayton Kershaw disagreed with the decision but said his objection was based on the Sisters' satirical portrayal of religious figures and had nothing to do with LGBTQ+ support. Washington pitcher Trevor Williams said he was deeply troubled by the team's move, decrying what he felt was the group's mockery of his Catholic religion.

The objection to the Sisters, a group of mainly men who dress as nuns, comes a year after some Tampa Bay players cited their Christian faith in refusing to wear Pride jerseys. A couple hockey players also opted out of wearing rainbow-colored jerseys on Pride nights during the most recent NHL season.

Last month, veteran reliever Anthony Bass expressed support on social media for anti-LGBTQ+ boycotts of Target and Bud Light, and then apologized for sharing the post on his Instagram stories.

Asked if MLB's inclusivity efforts with the LGBTQ+ community had stalled, Bass referenced baseball's "many different beliefs" and "many different walks of life."

"I wouldn't say it's causing a barrier," Bass said before he was cut by the Blue Jays last week. "Everyone should be able to express their feelings and views, so I think that's what we're seeing and I don't think it's causing a barrier to the acceptance of the Pride community."

Bass was booed loudly by Toronto fans after his social media post, and others seem wary of how far their favorite teams are willing to go in terms of LGBTQ+ support. Texas is the only big league team that isn't holding a Pride Night this month.

For Mason Dunn, who grew up in a diehard Dodgers family in Southern California, it has been an emotional couple of weeks. Dunn wrote an anguished post on Facebook after the Dodgers rescinded their invitation to the Sisters, and then expressed relief when the team changed its mind.

"I really truly hope the Dodgers are using this experience to learn more about allyship," said Dunn, who identifies as nonbinary and works for the Massachusetts LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce. "It isn't just about rainbow logos. It's about showing up when things are difficult and scary."

Asked about not holding a Pride Night, the Rangers said they are committed to making everyone feel welcome and included.

"That means in our ballpark, at every game, and in all we do — for both our fans and our employees," the team said in a statement.

For Pittsburgh Pirates general manager Ben Cherington, access to the best possible employees — on the field, in the front office, everywhere in the organization — is a major reason why LGBTQ+ inclusivity is important.

"It is our belief that to win at the level we want to win at, at the major league level, means that we simply

not a Jesuit priest.

The Rupnik scandal exploded in December when Italian blogs and websites reported that consecrated women had complained for years about abuse only to have their claims discredited or covered up by Rupnik's superiors. The case had remained a problem for the Vatican and the Jesuits because of suspicions that the charismatic priest received preferential treatment by the Holy See, where a Jesuit pope reigns and Jesuit priests are in top positions at the sex abuse office.

After the allegations erupted, the Jesuits reluctantly admitted Rupnik had been declared excommunicated in 2020 for having committed one of the gravest crimes in church law — using the confessional to absolve a woman with whom he had engaged in sexual activity — but had repented and had the sanction quickly removed.

The next year, Rupnik was accused by nine women of having sexually, psychologically and spiritually abused them in the 1990s at a community he co-founded in Slovenia. Even though the Jesuits recommended a church trial, the Vatican's sex abuse office refused to waive the statute of limitations and declared the crimes too old to prosecute.

That outcome underscored how the Catholic hierarchy routinely refuses to consider spiritual and sexual abuse of adult women as a crime that must be punished, but rather a mere lapse of priestly chastity that can be forgiven, without considering the trauma it causes victims.

After the scandal, the Jesuits invited anyone with other claims against Rupnik to come forward, and 15 people did.

The Jesuits then asked Rupnik to respond, but he refused, according to the statement Thursday.

"Thus, we forced Father Marko Rupnik to change communities and accept a new mission in which we offered him one last chance as a Jesuit to come to terms with his past and to give a clear signal to the many aggrieved people who were testifying against him to enter a path of truth," the statement said. "Faced with Marko Rupnik's repeated refusal to obey this mandate, we were unfortunately left with only one solution: resignation from the Society of Jesus."

Francis' role in the Rupnik case also came into question, given the unusually quick turnaround in which he had been declared excommunicated and then had the penalty removed — a period of less than a month — as well as the Vatican's refusal to waive the statute of limitations when the second set of allegations were lodged.

In a Jan. 24 interview with The Associated Press, Francis denied he had any role in the handling of Rupnik's case, other than to intervene procedurally to keep the second set of accusations from the nine women with the same tribunal that had heard the first.

He added that he was shocked by the allegations against Rupnik, with whom he had reportedly been close.

"For me, it was a surprise, really. This, a person, an artist of this level — for me was a big surprise, and a wound."

## India, Pakistan brace for winds, flash flooding as Cyclone Biparjoy heads for evening landfall

By AJIT SOLANKI, SIBI ARASU and MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

MANDVI, India (AP) — A vast swath of western India and neighboring southern Pakistan that suffered deadly floods last year are bracing for a new deluge as fast-approaching Cyclone Biparjoy whirls toward landfall Thursday.

Rain was falling and skies were darkening in western India and southern Pakistan along the Arabian Sea, where dusty storms were hampering the evacuation and rescue work. Authorities expect conditions to worsen for two or three days after the cyclone makes landfall in India's Gujarat.

Officials from the two South Asian countries stood on high alert as the cyclone approached. It's expected to make landfall near Jakhau port in India's Kutch district and inundate the area. In Pakistan, Keti Bandar



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in the country's flood-ravaged southern Sindh province, also lies in Biparjoy's path.

The bazaars and beaches in Mandvi, India, usually a bustling coastal town known for its wooden boat-makers, were deserted Thursday under shutdown orders from the government. Heavy winds and rains uprooted some trees in the area. Local media reported that a pregnant woman was brought from Shiyalbet island in the Amreli district to shore and admitted to a hospital.

Amid dust storms and rain, visibly shocked displaced families were seen at relief camps in southern Pakistan. Among them was 82-year-old Bachai Bibi, who was evacuated from the Badin district in Sindh province. She said she has become homeless due to the cyclone.

Mohammad Ashraf, 35, said local officials helped him, his wife and three children escape from the Pakistani village of Sheikh in the storm zone to the relief center.

The World Health Organization says it is supporting Pakistan's efforts to prepare and respond to the public health impact of the cyclone, which was expected to hit parts of southern Pakistan Thursday.

Pakistan and local aid groups are delivering free food and clean drinking water to displaced people.

Thousands of people in India were evacuated, bringing the total number of people shifted to relief camps to 75,000. In Pakistan, National Disaster Management Authority chief, Lt. Gen. Inam Haider Malik, said 73,000 people have been evacuated to safer places so far, and authorities are providing them shelter and food.

The disaster management agency said Thursday that the cyclone was packing sustained winds of up to 120 kph (about 75 mph) and was projected to hit Pakistan's Sindh province, the site of one of historic deadly floods last summer. At least 1,739 people were killed and 33 million were displaced in 2022 when climate-induced floods swept the country, causing \$30 billion in damage.

Thursday morning, authorities said that the storm had lost some of its intensity and was expected to have a maximum sustained wind speed of between 115 kph and 125 kph (71 mph to 78 mph), gusting up to 140 kph (87 mph), a slight decrease in predictions a day earlier.

The Indian Meteorological Department said the cyclone was bearing down on Jakhau port, where it is likely to make landfall on Thursday evening.

Like southern Pakistan, large parts of coastal Gujarat have also been experiencing heavy rainfall and strong winds. Indian authorities warned that the cyclone, classified as a "very severe cyclonic storm," has the potential to inflict heavy damage once it makes landfall.

A storm surge of two-to-three meters (two-to-three yards) above the astronomical tide is likely to inundate low-lying areas in the storm's path. The tides could rise as high as six meters (more than six yards) in some places, the IMD has said.

"Elaborate arrangements have been made by us for post-cyclone work like restoration of electricity infrastructure, mobile networks and other infrastructure," Gujarat Health Minister Rushikesh Patel told the Press Trust of India news agency.

A government release said major religious sites in coastal Gujarat such as the Dwarkadhish temple in Devbhoomi Dwarka and Somnath temple in Gir Somnath district will remain closed on Thursday.

A statement from the Indian railways said 76 trains have been canceled on account of the cyclone.

On Thursday, Pakistani Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif was in Azerbaijan on an official visit.

In a tweet the previous day, Sharif said the government had taken all possible measures to ensure the safety of those at risk in the country's southern Sindh province.

"Preparations have been made to handle any kind of emergency as a result of rains and strong winds in Karachi, while the evacuation of fishermen from the sea and the population on the coastal areas is going on rapidly," he said.

Pakistani Climate Minister Sherry Rehman advised against panic and said Karachi, the country's largest city with 20 million people, was safe as the cyclone will not make landfall there, as was feared earlier.

A reporter for The Associated Press saw people moving to safer places in vehicles, indicating they initially ignored government warnings.

Pakistan so far has not issued any appeal for assistance from the United Nations, which said the previous day it was monitoring the situation. Local charities and aid agencies on both sides were helping the

displaced people.

Experts say climate change is leading to an increase in cyclones in the Arabian Sea region, making preparations for natural disasters all the more urgent. Pakistan is among the top 10 countries most affected by climate change, although the country's contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions is less than 1%.

A 2021 study found that the frequency, duration and intensity of cyclones in the Arabian Sea had increased significantly between 1982 and 2019.

In 1998, a cyclone that hit Gujarat state claimed more than 1,000 lives and caused excessive damage. A cyclone that hit Sindh province and the city of Karachi in 1965 killed more than 10,000 people.

Ahmed reported from Islamabad. Arasu reported from Bengaluru, India. Associated Press writer Muhammad Farooq contributed to this story from Badin, Pakistan.

Follow AP's climate change coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/climate-and-environment>

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.

## **Palestinians say Israeli forces kill man in occupied West Bank**

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli forces killed a Palestinian man Thursday in the occupied West Bank, Palestinian health officials said, the latest death in a spike of violence that has rocked the region.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said 20-year-old Khalil Yahya Anis was shot in the head in the city of Nablus, a frequent flashpoint for confrontations between the Israeli military and Palestinians.

The Israeli military said troops operating in the city came under fire and fired back. The troops were demolishing the home of a Palestinian behind the killing of an Israeli soldier last year. Israel demolishes the homes of attackers in what it says is a deterrent against future attacks. Critics say the tactic amounts to collective punishment.

Israel and the Palestinians have been gripped by months of violence, focused mainly in the West Bank, where some 120 Palestinians have been killed this year.

Israel has been staging near-nightly raids in the West Bank in response to a spasm of Palestinian violence early last year. Palestinian attacks against Israelis have surged during that time.

Israel says most of the dead were militants, but stone-throwing youths protesting the incursions and others not involved in confrontations have also been killed.

Palestinian attacks against Israelis have killed at least 20 people this year.

## **Visually impaired people in Ukraine struggle to cope during Russian missile attacks**

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Sunlight filters through shattered windows, casting a glow upon the dusty furniture and fragments of glass strewn across the floor of the office belonging to Oleksandr Vinkovskyi, director of a Kyiv business where visually impaired people worked.

Vinkovskyi is blind, and can't see the scale of damage caused by debris from one of many Russian-fired drones on the Ukrainian capital last month. But he knows that 80 people, including 54 with a disability who used to work there manufacturing circuit breakers, sockets and hangers, are now out of work.

Most of the windows have been shattered, the doors broken, equipment ruined, and a gaping hole marks the wall on the third floor. Vinkovskyi has halted the operation for now, deeming it too dangerous for his employees.

"A visually impaired person goes to work not only to earn money, but also to communicate, interact, and be part of society in some way," said Vinkovskyi. "And I don't know how to estimate this loss."

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Losing the place of work is just one of a multitude of challenges that people with visual impairments face across Ukraine since Russia launched a full-scale invasion in February 2022. In the past month, when Russia predominantly targeted the capital during the night as people slept, the struggles multiplied, making it even more challenging for the visually impaired to orient themselves.

"A visually impaired person can't locate where the explosion happened. For them, every explosion feels like it's happening in their home," Vinkovskyi said. "They don't know the scale of what happened, and that brings additional stress."

The sounds that visually impaired people rely on as their primary means of navigating their surroundings are incredibly vivid and sensitive. As a result, the explosions evoke heightened fear and distress.

Larysa Baida, the program director of the National Assembly of People with Disabilities of Ukraine, said that many individuals experience states of panic in such situations. In response, the organization has been providing psychological assistance and rehabilitation to support visually impaired people during the war.

"I'm still confused and can't come to my senses," said Volodymyr Holubenko, 62, who is blind and is the administrator of the business where visually impaired people worked, when recalling the day of the attack.

"I heard everything. Our doors at home were shuddering," said Holubenko, who lives near the facility.

Holubenko, who has been working at the company for 47 years, described May as a very challenging month. However, he says he feels more protected this year compared to the previous one, when the war was in its early stages. He closely follows the news about the promises of Ukraine's Western allies to supply anti-aircraft defense systems and eagerly awaits their delivery.

Olesia Perepechenko, executive director of nongovernmental organization Modern Sight and herself blind, says she starts hearing the missiles flying and explosions even before her husband, mother or anyone else hears them.

"I hear these sounds slightly earlier, and the anxiety comes slightly earlier. And that's why my agitation is so acute," Perepechenko said.

She lives in the Kyiv province and said that Russia's nightly barrages in May were particularly challenging.

"When Shaheds constantly fly over you, when the noise of drones just doesn't stop, it drives me to hysteria. Why is it hovering above our house?" she said, referring to the Iranian-made drones that Russia frequently sends into Ukraine.

"I understand that it's not just one hanging there — one flies by, and then a few more follow. And that noise, it becomes this long, monotonous hum of a drone."

She finds it psychologically "very frightening" and hard to cope with in the moment that it's happening.

"I cry, I seek solace in my mother, I hug her and comfort her or run to my husband, leaning on him."

After one of the many attacks in May was over, she burst into tears, and grabbed ice cream from the freezer to "cope with the stress."

"At that moment, I longed for something comforting, pleasant. And for some reason, it seemed to me that ice cream would help, although later, of course, I turned to valerian," she said, referring to a sedative.

"People with vision impairment or blindness are vulnerable and disproportionately affected by the war," said Ariane Laplante-Lévesque, the technical specialist in Eye and Vision and Ear and Hearing Care at the World Health Organization's Regional Office for Europe. For one, it becomes more difficult for them to navigate streets or new physical environments, she said.

Perepechenko recalls Russia's extensive missile strikes during the winter, aimed at destroying Ukraine's energy infrastructure. During the frequent power outages caused by the damage to power stations, Perepechenko once found herself trapped in an elevator.

"I felt like I was going to die there, suffocating," she recalled.

Since then, she has been attending therapy sessions to overcome the constant fears for her life brought on by the war. She has found it helpful, as she plans to continue living in a country that is constantly ravaged by the ongoing war.

She also vividly recalls the challenges she faced in navigating Kyiv, where she works, and the nearby village where she lives when Russian troops withdrew from the regions last year.

"Walking was impossible. I walked with a cane, and there were constantly these anti-tank traps and pieces of burnt debris scattered on the sidewalks," she said. "It was very dangerous and scary."

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

## **Migrants bused from Texas to Los Angeles in move mayor calls 'despicable stunt'**

By CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A group of migrants who arrived by bus in downtown Los Angeles on Wednesday were sent from Texas in a move the city's mayor called a "despicable stunt" by a Republican governor.

Forty-two people, including some children, were dropped off at Union Station around 4 p.m. and were being cared for by city agencies and charitable organizations, Los Angeles City Councilmember Kevin de León's office said.

"They left yesterday and it was 23 hours on the bus and they did not have a chance to eat or to have water," said Jorge Mario Cabrera of the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights, who spoke to several migrants.

"They are being fed; they're taking shelters; they're talking to attorneys," he said. "These are migrants that have been allowed by the U.S. to enter because they have credible fears. They have not yet received asylum."

Many were from Latin American countries, including Honduras and Venezuela, and one person had an immigration appointment in New York, he said.

Mayor Karen Bass said she had instructed city departments to prepare to accept migrants from out of state, after GOP governors began sending asylum-seekers to Democratic states in recent months.

"This did not catch us off guard, nor will it intimidate us," Bass said in a statement. "Los Angeles is not a city motivated by hate or fear and we absolutely will not be swayed or moved by petty politicians playing with human lives."

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said the migrants were sent to Los Angeles because California had declared itself a "sanctuary" for immigrants, extending protections to people living in the country illegally and allowing them to apply for some state benefits.

"Our border communities are on the frontlines of President Biden's border crisis, and Texas will continue providing this much-needed relief until he steps up to do his job and secure the border," Abbott said in a statement.

Last week, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis flew groups of migrants from border states to Sacramento, California, at taxpayer expense. Last fall, Florida flew 49 Venezuelans to the upscale Massachusetts island of Martha's Vineyard.

The migrants in Los Angeles were receiving help at St. Anthony's Croatian Catholic Church near downtown.

Associated Press photographer Damian Dovarganes contributed to this story.

## **Australia creates law to stop Russia from building new embassy near Parliament for security reasons**

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Australia's Parliament passed legislation on Thursday to prevent Russia from building a new embassy near Parliament House citing threats of espionage and political interference, as tensions grow between Moscow and a major supporter of the Ukraine war effort.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the legislation would extinguish Russia's lease on the site of a second embassy based on the advice of security agencies.

"The government has received very clear security advice as to the risk presented by a new Russian pres-

can't discriminate," Cherington said. "If you're around really good teams, World Series teams, teams in other sports that achieve at the highest possible level, you will see that the only way to build a team like that is to have zero bias as it relates to where people are coming from, what they look like, what their beliefs are, how they choose to spend their time away from the field."

Dale Scott became the first out major league umpire in 2014, and there have been a handful of out players in the minor leagues. Anderson Comás, a minor league pitcher in the White Sox organization, announced that he was gay in an Instagram post in February. Phillies pitcher Taijuan Walker, Mets outfielder Mark Canha and Royals first baseman Vinnie Pasquantino responded with supportive messages on Twitter.

Speaking to reporters on June 2, the 23-year-old Comás cited the help he received from the organization as a key element of his decision to come out. He declined an interview request made this week by the AP.

Bean came out after his playing career. Glenn Burke's sexual orientation was known within baseball, but the former big league outfielder did not come out publicly until 1982.

Burke, who died in 1995 at age 42, felt he was blackballed by the sport. "A gay man in baseball? Uh, uh. No way," he told the AP.

Bean, 59, said he doesn't think the absence of an openly gay player is the right way to evaluate inclusivity in the major leagues, just like he doesn't think the sport should be evaluated by a comment that might not be supportive.

When it comes to the timing for the majors' first active openly gay competitor, Bean said he understands why a player would want to focus on his career instead of dealing with the challenges that go along with breaking that barrier.

"It's really hard to play in the big leagues and you don't get into the big leagues in 2023 unless you are front and center a baseball player first," Bean told the AP. "And that is how an athlete would be defined."

"Baseball is a really hard game," he continued. "And I think that it's more about a business decision than a cultural one at the moment. And I have respect for their personal choice there."

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AP Sports Writers Will Graves and Steve Megargee, AP Baseball Writers Janie McCauley and Stephen Hawkins, AP National Writer David Crary and AP freelance reporter Ian Harrison contributed to this report.

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## **Jesuits expel prominent priest Rupnik after allegations of abuse against adult women**

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Pope Francis' Jesuit religious order said Thursday it has expelled a prominent Slovenian priest from the congregation following allegations of sexual, spiritual and psychological abuses against adult women.

A statement from the Jesuits, obtained by The Associated Press on Thursday, said the Rev. Marko Ivan Rupnik was dismissed from the Jesuit order by decree on June 9 "due to stubborn refusal to observe the vow of obedience."

Rupnik is one of the most celebrated religious artists in the Catholic Church, whose mosaics decorate churches and basilicas around the world, including at the Vatican.

Late last year, the Jesuits acknowledged he had been accused by several women of sexual, spiritual and psychological abuses over a 30-year period. But he had largely escaped punishment, apparently thanks in part to his exalted status in the church and at the Vatican, where even Francis' role in the case came into question.

The Jesuit statement said Rupnik has 30 days to appeal the expulsion order. He remains a priest, just

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ence so close to Parliament House," Albanese told reporters. "We are acting quickly to ensure the lease site does not become a formal diplomatic presence."

Albanese said Australia's government condemns Russia's "illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine."

Australia is one of the most generous providers of military hardware, training and aid to Ukraine of any country outside NATO and has escalated sanctions against Russia since the war began in February 2022.

Australia's growing hostility toward Russia became apparent last year when Australian officials demanded Moscow be held accountable for Russian cybercriminals suspected of hacking the nation's largest health insurer, Medibank, and dumping customers' personal medical records on the dark web. It is unusual for Australia to attribute blame to a country for an unsolved cybercrime.

Albanese said opposition and other lawmakers that are not aligned with the government were briefed on the legislation on Wednesday night and had agreed to pass it through both chambers Thursday. The government holds a majority in the House but not the Senate.

Within three hours of Albanese publicly announcing the bill, it had become law, passing the House then the Senate. The law is expected to take effect later Thursday when it is rubber-stamped by Governor-General David Hurley, representing Australia's head of state, King Charles III.

Home Affairs Minister Clare O'Neil was later more specific about the Russian threat while addressing Parliament, saying the "scope for espionage and foreign interference from the site would have been a substantial risk for the nation."

"The action is direct and decisive. We do not have any interest in sugarcoating this message," O'Neil said. "We will not stand for espionage and foreign interference in our country. We will act in the face of danger to our democracy and our citizens and we will do so without any apology to anyone."

Opposition leader Peter Dutton said the Parliament was united against the Russian threat.

"We won't tolerate foreign espionage conducted in a way that is against our national interest. We won't tolerate people seeking to interfere with electoral processes in our country," Dutton told Parliament.

Albanese did not directly answer when asked if there were also security concerns about the Chinese Embassy across a street from the Russian site.

"We're dealing with this very specifically, and it's based upon very specific advice as well about the nature of the construction that's proposed for this site, about the location of this site, and about the capability that would present in terms of potential interference with activity that occurs in this Parliament House," Albanese said.

The Russian Embassy said it would comment later Thursday.

The Australian government decided to act after Russia won a Federal Court case last month that prevented its eviction from the site now under construction.

The 99-year lease was canceled by local Canberra authorities on the basis of a lack of construction activity since Russia was given the lease in the diplomatic precinct of Yarralumla in 2008 and plans for the complex of buildings were approved in 2011.

Under the lease conditions, Russia had agreed to complete construction within three years, but only a single, small perimeter building of the planned complex has been built.

Russia has said it already spent \$5.5 million on the site.

The National Capital Authority, which administers embassy leases, decided to terminate the Russian lease, citing that "ongoing unfinished works detract from the overall aesthetic, importance and dignity of the area reserved for diplomatic missions."

Russia currently occupies the former USSR embassy in the suburb of Griffith, farther from Parliament House than the new site. The Yarralumla site would provide Russia with two clusters of buildings.

The Russian Embassy would remain in Griffith and Australia's Embassy would remain in Moscow, Albanese said.

O'Neil said no embassy would be allowed on the site.

"The principal problem with the proposed second Russian Embassy in Canberra is its location. This location sits directly adjacent to Parliament House," O'Neil said.

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

## Let it bee: The women on a mission to save Mexico City's bees

By MEGAN JANETSKY Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — "Knife," Adriana Velíz says with the concentration of a brain surgeon.

Shrouded in a white bee suit, she lies stretched out on the ground in one of Mexico City's most buzzing districts. Taking the knife, she pries open the side of a light post and flashes a glowing red lantern on a humming bee hive.

Velíz is on a mission to save the approximately 20,000 bees inside.

She heads a group of mostly women who are working hive by hive to relocate bees that would be exterminated if they remained in Mexico's crowded capital city.

The group, Abeja Negra SOS, was born in 2018 when Velíz — a veterinarian working for the city government at the time — noticed that when authorities received calls about beehives, the automatic response was to exterminate the bees.

She and other colleagues began looking for an alternative.

"We do these rescues because it's a species that's in danger of extinction," said Velíz, who works for Abeja Negra SOS. "We're an alternative so that the emergency teams don't exterminate them. We give them a second chance."

Globally, bee populations have been decimated in recent decades. The United States alone is estimated to have lost around 25% of its bees in the past 40 years. Earlier this year, beekeepers in southern Mexico mourned the "mass killing" of millions of bees by pesticides.

The drop is often blamed on human causes: the use of damaging chemicals, destruction of natural habitats and climate change. Scientists and world leaders warn that bee population decline could have a wide range of detrimental ripple effects.

In 2019, the United Nations raised an alarm that bee loss "poses a serious threat" to global food security. Others like Adriana Correa Benítez, a professor researching bees at National Autonomous University of Mexico, said loss of bees could make it more difficult for Mexico to mitigate climate change.

"They don't just pollinate what we eat," she said. "They also pollinate native plants that regulate the entire ecosystem. And now, with climate change, reforestation is so important and (bee pollination) really influences that."

Over the past five years, the group has traveled across the sprawling city of 9 million, saving bee colonies from trees, street gutters and lamp posts. They have relocated around 510 hives, with an average size of about 80,000 bees.

Late on a recent Thursday night, Velíz peers into the hive the size of a small melon lodged inside the street lamp.

She gently slices a knife along the side of the hive, letting out a gentle "shhh," as if calming a child. Knife dripping with honey, she pulls the honeycomb out and places it in a wooden square frame, which she slides into a wooden box.

Tonight, they are lucky, she says. This is a small colony and it's calm, Velíz explains, referring to the hive as "hippie bees."

As they go, they search for the queen, a key element to rehabilitating the bees and assuring the colony gets relocated smoothly.

"You hear that? That means we have the queen," she says, tilting her head toward the box where the bees' chaotic buzz turns into a purr.

Because many of the bees in Mexico come from African roots, they can be more aggressive than the average honeybee. This can create problems in big cities, where residents often associate the insects more with danger than their environmental importance.

Velíz said the group's dozen or so bee handlers are mostly women.

"We tried to work with men, but they seem to love the danger," Velíz said. "We began to see that it

wasn't very viable, so we began to contract just women. We realized that we can do the exact same as them, and often even do it better."

Once a hive is safely stored inside the box, the group takes the bees to the rural outskirts of the city, where they can recover and grow strong. They later donate the bees to local bee farmers or release them into the wild.

The team has run into hurdles because they charge a bit more than \$300 for removing a hive, mainly to cover logistical costs. For many in the city, it's still easier to call firefighters to exterminate bees for free.

Yet, as the project has grown, Abeja Negra SOS has also generated a buzz, inspiring other groups to emerge and start doing the same work.

"With what we do, we may not be changing the world, but we're at least changing the situation in our city," Velíz said.

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Associated Press journalist Fernanda Pesce contributed to this report.

## 'Stand with Trump' becomes rallying cry as Republicans amplify attacks on US justice system

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Moments after Donald Trump pleaded not guilty to federal charges that he hoarded classified documents and then conspired to obstruct an investigation about it, the Republicans in Congress had his back.

Speaker Kevin McCarthy dashed off a fundraising email decrying the "witch hunt" against the former president and urging donors to sign up and "stand with Trump."

The Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell steered clear of criticizing the former president or assuring the nation justice will be impartial, refusing to engage in questions about the unprecedented indictment.

And at a public meeting in the Capitol basement, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene compared the case against Trump to the federal prosecution of people at the Jan. 6, 2021 insurrection, suggesting in both instances it was the Justice Department, not the defendants, under scrutiny.

The mounting legal jeopardy Trump finds himself in has quickly become a political rallying cry for the Republicans, many of whom acknowledged they had not fully read the 49-page federal indictment but are rushing to stand by the indicted former president, adopting his grievances against the federal justice system as their own.

It's an unparalleled example of how Trump has transformed the Republican Party that once embraced "law and order" but is now defending, justifying and explaining away the grave charges he faces with multiple counts of violating the Espionage Act involving some of the country's most sensitive national security secrets.

At the same time, Trump is rewriting the job description of what it means to lead a major American political party. Making another run for the White House, Trump is attacking the bedrock system of U.S. justice that is foundational to democracy and molding an emboldened generation of Republican members of Congress to follow along.

"Stand with Trump," tweeted Rep. Elise Stefanik of New York, the fourth-ranking House GOP leader.

"I will be standing right next to President Trump tonight in total support," tweeted Sen. Tommy Tuberville of Alabama before he dashed to join the former president at his private Bedminster golf club for a campaign event after the federal court hearing.

"I stand by him right now," said Rep. Byron Donalds, R-Fla., outside the Capitol. "Ten toes down."

Despite two impeachment trials, state charges of hush money payments to porn star, a pair of probes into Trump's efforts to undo the 2020 election and now the deepening federal case over his classified documents, Trump has shown an exaggerated ability to not just withstand legal scrutiny but to thrive off it.

As Trump's defenders in Congress see it, he will be rising politically, precisely because of all the investi-



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gations against him. Republicans in Congress are working strenuously to reframe the historic indictment of a former president as an unfair political persecution rather than stark federal charges of wrongdoing.

"I've been pretty clear on this all the way through: I think the country is very frustrated, when you don't feel like there's equal justice." McCarthy told reporters at the Capitol.

"This president hasn't even been out of office for four years, but you're holding him to a standard you've never held anybody else to."

It's an approach that echoed through the halls.

Republican Rep. Kat Cammack of Florida said the case smacks of a "two-tier" justice system, adding that constituents tell her they "never in a million years would have voted for Trump, but this is insane."

"A bogus investigation," said Donalds.

"Political hit job," said Sen. Eric Schmitt of Missouri, who said he did read the whole indictment.

Republican Sen. JD Vance of Ohio said Trump is merely the "latest victim" of the Justice Department. He announced he would be blocking all DOJ nominees unless the attorney general changes course.

"If Merrick Garland wants to use these officials to harass Joe Biden's political opponents, we will grind his department to a halt," Vance said in a statement.

Republicans also see the federal case against Trump as a winning political strategy — a way to motivate aggrieved voters to the polls in 2024 elections, when the House and one-third of the Senate will be up for another term alongside the presidential nominees.

House Republicans were fundraising off the indictment, and the chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee, Rep. Richard Hudson, joined Trump on the plane from a campaign rally in Georgia to one in North Carolina over the weekend where the congressman introduced the former president on stage.

"A lot of people are going to vote," Trump told the Bedminster crowd later Wednesday evening. "They know what we've gone through."

The details of 37 counts against Trump in indictment are vivid. The prosecutors laid out explicit evidence how they allege Trump knowingly stored highly sensitive national security documents at his Mar-a-Lago home in Florida and then schemed to provide false information to investigators who tried to retrieve the government papers.

Trump could face a potentially lengthy prison sentence, if convicted of the charges.

Some Republicans acknowledge that Trump's hoarding of the documents — in dozens of boxes in the bathroom, on a ballroom stage and spilled in a storage room — was problematic. Prosecutors said the papers included material about nuclear programs, defense and weapons capabilities, among others, some of the most secret information the U.S. government owns.

Sen. Marco Rubio, the Republican chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said Trump should have never stored the documents at his home, but said he suggested there was no real harm done since Trump didn't appear to give away the documents to China, Saudi Arabia or other countries.

Rubio was more worried the indictment of Trump will "release a fury" across a politically divided nation.

Few voices in Congress dared to publicly raise serious questions, concerns or criticism about Trump's behavior.

"The real question is, why did he do it?" said Sen. Mitt Romney, R-Utah, the only Republican senator who voted twice to convict Trump in the impeachment trials. "Why should the country go through all this angst and turmoil when all he had to do is turn in the documents when asked?"

Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, said of what she's seen in the indictment, "it looks pretty damning to me."

About the same time Trump was pleading not guilty to the charges, Rep. Matt Gaetz of Florida was leading a panel discussion with Greene and others about the Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol by a mob of pro-Trump supporters trying to challenge and overturn Biden's election.

Greene opened her remarks saying it was "heavy on my heart that we're doing this today."

She compared the two historic moments in U.S. history — "when President Trump was being arraigned all because of the weaponized government that has been weaponized against each of you."

Trump had encouraged the mob to go to the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021 and fight for his presidency as

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Congress was certifying the election won by Biden. Some 1,000 people have been charged by the Justice Department in the Capitol riot, including members of extremist groups convicted of sedition.

Many of those defendants were backing Trump's claims of a stolen election. But the states certified the results, and experts and judges said the election wasn't rigged – he just lost. Five people died in the siege of the Capitol, including Trump supporter Ashli Babbitt who was shot and killed by Capitol Police.

Greene and the others draw a through-line between the prosecutions of Jan. 6 attendees and the case against Trump as evidence of a "weaponization" of the justice system.

"It all started on the day, on Jan. 6, when we were just doing our constitutional duty to object" to Biden's election, the congresswoman said.

Asked afterward if they were trying to rewrite Jan. 6 history, Gaetz a top Trump ally said: "We're trying to correct history."

Across the Capitol at his weekly press conference, McConnell, the Republican leader of the Senate, declined to use his position to take sides.

Questioned about Trump's indictment he said: "I'm not going to start commenting on the various candidates we have for president."

Associated Press writers Mary Clare Jalonick, Stephen Groves, Kevin Freking and Farnoush Amiri contributed to this report.

## **Suicides and homicides among young Americans jumped early in pandemic, study says**

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The homicide rate for older U.S. teenagers rose to its highest point in nearly 25 years during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the suicide rate for adults in their early 20s was the worst in more than 50 years, government researchers said Thursday.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report examined the homicide and suicide rates among 10- to 24-year-olds from 2001 to 2021.

The increase is alarming and "reflects a mental health crisis among young people and a need for a number of policy changes," said Dr. Steven Woolf, a Virginia Commonwealth University researcher who studies U.S. death trends and wasn't involved in the CDC report.

Experts cited several possible reasons for the increases, including higher rates of depression, limited availability of mental health services and the number of guns in U.S. homes.

Guns were used in 54% of suicides and 93% of homicides among the age group in 2021, the most recent year for which statistics were available.

"Picture a teenager sitting in their bedroom feeling desperate and making a decision, impulsively, to take their own life," Woolf said. If they have access to a gun, "it's game over."

Suicide and homicide were the second and third leading causes of death for 10- to 24-year-olds, after a category of accidental deaths that includes motor vehicle crashes, falls, drownings and overdoses. Other researchers have grouped the data by the method of death, and concluded that guns are now the biggest killer of U.S. children.

Earlier this year, Woolf and other researchers looking at CDC data noted dramatic increases in child and adolescent death rates overall at the beginning of the pandemic, and found suicide and homicide were important factors.

The report also found:

—Suicide and homicide death rates remained far higher for older teenagers and young adults than they were for 10- to 14-year-olds.

—In 2021, there were about 2,900 suicides in youths ages 10 to 19, and 4,200 in 20- to 24-year-olds. About 3,000 homicide deaths were reported in the younger group, and nearly 3,900 in the adults in their early 20s.

—The homicide death rate jumped from 8.9 deaths per 100,000 teens aged 15 to 19 in 2019 to 12.3 in 2020. It rose to 12.8 deaths per 100,000 in 2021, the highest since 1997, according to CDC data.

—Homicide deaths became more common than suicide deaths among 15- to 19-year-olds, while suicide was more common in the younger and older age groups.

—While large increases were seen in homicide rates for young Black and Hispanic people in the U.S., there were not significant increases for their white counterparts, other CDC data shows.

—Among 20- to 24-year-olds, the homicide death rate jumped 34% from 2019 to 2020 — from 13.4 per 100,000 population to 18 per 100,000. It held stable in 2021, but the suicide rate rose enough in 2021 — to 19.4 per 100,000 — to surpass the homicide rate.

Suicide death rates in children and teens were rising before COVID-19, but they jumped up at the beginning of the pandemic. Dr. Madhukar Trivedi, a psychiatrist at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, said the reasons may be hard to pinpoint, but that isolation during COVID-19 lockdowns could be a factor.

“There is a misperception that if you talk to young people about depression, they’ll get depressed. A don’t-ask, don’t-tell policy for depression is not effective,” Trivedi said. “The earlier we can identify the ones who need help, the better chance we’ll have at saving lives.”

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## Fed Chair Powell sees progress on inflation, though not quickly enough

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Inflation may be cooling — just not yet fast enough for the Federal Reserve.

Chair Jerome Powell offered a nuanced view Wednesday of how the Fed intends to address its core challenge at a time when inflation is both way below its peak but still well above the central bank’s 2% target: Give it more time, and maybe some help from additional interest rate hikes.

Yet on a hopeful note, Powell also suggested that the trends that are needed to further slow inflation, from lower apartment rents to slower-growing wages, are starting to click into place.

As a result, the Fed decided Wednesday to forgo another increase in its benchmark interest rate, leaving it at about 5.1%. The pause followed 10 straight hikes in 15 months — the fastest series of increases in four decades.

By leaving rates alone, at least for now, Powell and other top Fed officials hope to use the extra time to more fully assess how higher borrowing rates have affected inflation and the economy. They also want to see whether the collapse of three large banks this spring will weigh on lending and growth.

In a surprisingly hawkish signal, the Fed’s policymakers issued projections Wednesday showing they envision as many as two additional quarter-point rate hikes before the year ends. (In Fed parlance, “hawks” generally favor higher rates to quell inflation, while “doves” typically advocate lower rates to aid a healthy job market.) Before this week’s policy meeting, Fed watchers had expected the policymakers to signal just one more rate increase this year.

In their new projections, the members of the Fed’s interest-rate committee were less divided than many economists had expected, with 12 of the 18 policymakers foreseeing at least two more quarter-point rate increases. Four favored one quarter-point hike. Only two envisioned keeping rates unchanged. The policymakers also predicted that their benchmark rate will stay higher for longer than they envisioned three months ago.

Powell noted that wage growth has slowed and cited some signs that the job market is cooling. Those factors, he added, should reduce inflationary pressures.

“I would almost say that the conditions that we need to see in place to get inflation down are coming into place,” Powell said. “But the process of that actually working on inflation is going to take some time.”

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Inflation dropped to 4% in May compared with a year earlier, down sharply from a 9.1% peak last June. And many economists expect it to decline further. Rental costs are falling, and used car prices, which spiked in April and May, are also likely to drop.

Yet Powell underscored that the Fed will need to feel confident that inflation is moving steadily closer to its 2% target.

"We're two and a quarter years into this, and forecasters, including Fed forecasters, have consistently thought that inflation was about to turn down ... and been wrong," he said. "We want to get inflation down to 2%, and we just don't see that yet."

At the same time, Powell stopped short of saying the Fed's policymakers have committed to resuming their hikes when they next meet in late July. At one point in the news conference, he referred to Wednesday's decision as a "skip," which would imply that the Fed planned to raise rates at the July meeting.

He then corrected himself: "I shouldn't call it a skip," he said.

But Powell emphasized that the Fed wants to move more slowly after its breakneck pace last year, when it carried out four straight three-quarter-point hikes, followed by a half-point increase and then three quarter-point hikes this year.

The Fed's aggressive streak of rate hikes, which have made mortgages, auto loans, credit cards and business borrowing costlier, have been intended to slow spending and defeat the worst bout of inflation in four decades. Average credit card rates have surpassed 20% to a record high.

"Given how far we have come, it may make sense for rates to move higher but at a more moderate pace," he said. "It's just the idea that we're trying to get this right."

Should inflation come down further, some economists think the Fed may not actually have to raise rates again.

"With inflation set to moderate noticeably, we are skeptical that the Fed will resume hiking interest rates," Ryan Sweet, chief U.S. economist of Oxford Economics, wrote in a note. "Our baseline forecast is for the Fed to remain on hold through the remainder of this year before gradually easing in early 2024."

One reason why Fed officials may be predicting additional rate hikes is that the economy has remained surprisingly resilient this year, with more persistent inflation that might require higher rates to cool. Their updated forecasts show them predicting economic growth of 1% for 2023, an upgrade from a meager 0.4% forecast in March. And they expect "core" inflation, which excludes volatile food and energy prices, of 3.9% by year's end, higher than they expected three months ago.

Powell and other top policymakers have also indicated that they want to assess how much a pullback in bank lending might be weakening the economy. Banks have been slowing their lending — and demand for loans has fallen — as interest rates have risen. Some analysts have expressed concern that the collapse of three large banks last spring could cause nervous lenders to sharply tighten their loan qualifications.

The economy has so far fared better than the central bank and most economists had expected at the beginning of the year. Companies are still hiring at a robust pace, which has helped encourage many people to keep spending, particularly on travel, dining out and entertainment.

## **Punishing winds, possible tornadoes inflict damage as storms cross US South**

ALBANY, Ga. (AP) — Damaging winds and possible tornadoes toppled trees, damaged buildings and blew cars off a highway Wednesday as powerful storms crossed the South from Texas to Georgia.

The National Weather Service issued numerous tornado warnings, mainly in southeast Alabama and southwest Georgia, and cautioned that gusts of hurricane-force winds exceeding 90 mph (145 kph) were possible in parts of northeast Louisiana and central Mississippi. Some areas also were pelted with large hail.

Witnesses posted video of tornadoes hitting Abbeville and Eufala in Alabama.

In Georgia, authorities in Troup County told WSB-TV that a person was struck by lightning Wednesday afternoon. There was no immediate word on that person's condition.

Tens of thousands of people across both Alabama and Georgia were without power Wednesday night

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amid the storms, according to each of the state's power providers. At one point, the outages were affecting close to 50,000 people in Alabama alone.

Forecasters said severe storm threats could persist into Thursday, with the greatest risk across southern Alabama and Georgia into the Florida Panhandle as well as Oklahoma and parts of northern Texas and southern Kansas.

Felecia Bowser, meteorologist in charge for the National Weather Service in Tallahassee, Florida, called the far-reaching inland storm system unprecedented for this time of year.

"In June, we're usually gearing up more for tropical weather," Bowser said. "This type of widespread, aggressive precipitation that we're seeing today usually occurs more so in the spring."

Two people escaped unharmed from a home that was destroyed Wednesday as storms raked rural southwest Georgia, Calhoun County Sheriff Josh Hilton said. He told WALB-TV the home in Quail County Plantation, near the county line with neighboring Early County, was demolished.

Video posted on social media showed a large funnel cloud churning on the horizon near the rural city of Blakely, and officials in nearby communities reported downed trees and snapped power lines. Connie Hobbs, the elected commission chairman for neighboring Baker County, said hail stones up to golf-ball size rained down in her yard.

Tornado warnings were issued for southwest Georgia's largest city, Albany, and surrounding Dougherty County on Wednesday afternoon. County government spokeswoman Wendy Howell said there had been no reports of significant damage or injuries.

"The big concern is flooding," Howell said as rain hammered at windows Wednesday evening. "We're such a flat area, and there's already water standing" on and alongside the roads.

In Alabama, the Eufaula Police Department said confirmed tornado damage was reported in the city near the Georgia state line. Eufaula Mayor Jack Tibbs told WSFA-TV that no injuries were immediately reported, but the storm collapsed a wall of a building and downed 30 or 40 trees.

Local news outlets showed viewer-submitted video of a tornado rumbling through nearby Henry County, Alabama, and of roof damage in the area.

Sheriff Larry Rowe of Cass County in eastern Texas told KYTX-TV that some vehicles were blown off a highway Wednesday afternoon as the county was under a tornado warning. There were no immediate reports of injuries.

## **Oakland Athletics stadium deal wins final legislative approval in Nevada as MLB weighs move to Vegas**

By SCOTT SONNER and GABE STERN Associated Press/Report for America  
CARSON CITY, Nev. (AP) — The Oakland Athletics cleared a major hurdle for their planned relocation to Las Vegas after the Nevada Legislature gave final approval on Wednesday to public funding for a portion of a proposed \$1.5 billion stadium with a retractable roof.

The deal that backers said will help further establish Las Vegas as the new "entertainment and sports capital of the world" still needs the governor's signature, and MLB still must approve the A's move to the Las Vegas Strip, but both are anticipated.

The Assembly approved the final version of the bill with \$380 million in taxpayer money on a 25-15 vote after making minor changes to the measure the Senate approved on a 13-8 vote Tuesday just hours before the Vegas Golden Knights won the Stanley Cup.

The Senate accepted the changes with no debate on a voice vote Wednesday night and sent it to the governor's desk as an "emergency measure" adopted during the special legislative session that convened with Democratic majorities in both houses June 7. Republican Gov. Joe Lombardo had proposed the stadium spending plan.

The governor's office didn't immediately respond to requests for comments Wednesday night from The Associated Press. The A's said in a statement released by the team they look forward to "Lombardo's signature as our next step" as they "work to bring the Athletics to Las Vegas."

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The \$380 million in public funding would mainly come from \$180 million in transferable tax credits and \$120 million in county bonds. Backers have pledged that the creation of a special tax district around the proposed stadium — that would be the smallest in Major League Baseball — would generate enough money to pay off those bonds and interest. The plan would not directly raise taxes.

The Nevada plan had revived the national debate over public funding for private sports clubs. A's representatives and some Nevada tourism officials have said the measure could add to Las Vegas' growing sports scene and act as an economic engine. But a growing chorus of economists and some lawmakers have warned that such a project would bring minimal benefits when compared to the hefty public price tag.

Assemblywoman Selena La Rue Hatch, D-Reno, said Wednesday night she couldn't support the public financing given a lack of funding for Nevada's overcrowded classrooms, inadequate child care services and "people sleeping on the streets."

"No amount of amendments are going to change the fact we are giving millions of public dollars to a billionaire," she said.

Under the deal approved Wednesday, the A's would not owe property taxes for the publicly owned stadium. Clark County, which includes Las Vegas, would also contribute \$25 million in credit toward infrastructure costs. The final version of the bill shifted some money that had been targeted for homeless programs to funds for low-income housing.

The Legislature's vote is a victory in the A's troubled search to replace Oakland Coliseum, where the team has played since arriving from Kansas City for the 1968 season. The team previously sought to build a stadium in Fremont, California, as well as San Jose and finally the Oakland waterfront — all ideas that never materialized.

Oakland Mayor Sheng Thao said after the vote California's Legislature had passed three pieces of legislation to support construction of a new A's ballpark at Howard Terminal.

"The A's have been part of Oakland for more than half a century, and they belong in this city," she said in a statement. "There is no city that has worked harder to meet the needs of a team than Oakland."

The new 30,000-seat baseball stadium is planned along the Las Vegas Strip not far from the Knights' T-Mobile Arena and another stadium that's home to the NFL's Las Vegas Raiders, who also left Oakland for Vegas in 2020.

A last-minute bill in Nevada's 2016 special session had paved the way for \$750 million in public funding from hotel room taxes for the Raiders \$2 billion Allegiant Stadium.

No public money was spent on the arena for the expansion hockey team.

In places like Buffalo and Oakland, proponents of new stadiums have argued tax incentives prevent the departure of decades-old businesses. But the debate in Nevada differed. The state already heavily relies on entertainment and tourism to power its economy, and lawmakers or appointed boards for years have talked about diversifying the economy to justify incentives to businesses including Tesla.

Assemblywoman Shea Backus, D-Las Vegas, said in addition to creating 14,000 construction jobs and permanent jobs subject to collective bargaining, major league baseball will build on the excitement surrounding the Raiders, the Golden Knights and the WNBA's Aces in a city that had no major professional sports before 2016.

"With the Aces winning a national championship last year and the Golden Knights securing the Stanley Cup just last night, it is clear Las Vegas is clearly becoming the entertainment and sports capital of the world," she said.

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Sonner reported from Reno, Nevada

## **Drug syndicate hid meth in Canadian maple syrup, canola oil bound for Down Under, authorities say**

By NICK PERRY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — A drug syndicate that tried to smuggle tons of methamphetamine from Canada to Australia and New Zealand by hiding it in shipments of maple syrup and canola oil has had its ruse busted, authorities said Thursday.

Authorities from the three nations say they worked together for more than five months to unravel the elaborate scheme that was worth billions of dollars.

Authorities in New Zealand and Australia say they've made a dozen arrests and expect more to come, while Canadian authorities said they are still investigating the case and aren't yet providing all the details.

Australian police said they intercepted four separate hauls of meth weighing more than six tons and filed charges against six men.

They said that in January, Canadian authorities alerted them that 2,900 liters (766 gallons) of liquid meth had been hidden in 180 bottles of canola oil bound for Australia.

They said Canadian authorities swapped out the meth for a harmless substance and allowed the shipment to continue.

Australian police said that two men then moved what they believed were the drugs to storage locations around the city of Melbourne. Two more shipments came in May and June, and the syndicate was also linked to a December shipment, Australian police said.

In New Zealand, police said the syndicate tried to hide more than three-quarters of a ton of meth in a shipment of maple syrup, the largest such shipment that had been intercepted at New Zealand's border.

New Zealand police said they have arrested and charged five men at a rural property near the town of Helensville, north of Auckland, who had taken the bulk of the shipment. A sixth person that police say took the remainder of the shipment was also facing charges.

"The international drug trade and organized crime groups are creating havoc and harm in communities around the globe," New Zealand Police Commissioner Andrew Coster said.

"Our best opportunity to disrupt, intercept, and keep our communities safe is to work collaboratively with other agencies, and other nations," Coster said.

In Australia, Victoria state police assistant commissioner Bob Hill said importing such drugs on an industrial scale ruins lives, families and communities.

"Unfortunately, the insatiable appetite for illicit drugs in Australia makes us a lucrative market for organized crime," Hill said in a statement.

British Columbia Royal Canadian Mounted Police Acting Commissioner Will Ng said the operation was a perfect example of what law enforcement agencies around the globe can achieve when working together.

## **House rejects effort to censure and fine Democrat Adam Schiff over Trump-Russia investigations**

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House has rejected an effort to censure California Rep. Adam Schiff, turning aside a Republican attempt to fine the Democrat over his comments about former President Donald Trump and investigations into his ties to Russia.

Schiff, the former Democratic chairman of the House Intelligence Committee and the lead prosecutor in Trump's first impeachment trial, has long been a top Republican political target. Soon after taking back the majority this year, Republicans blocked him from sitting on the intelligence panel.

But Schiff was helped Wednesday by more than 20 Republicans who voted with Democrats to stop the censure resolution or voted "present," giving Democrats enough votes to block the measure.

The vote was a rare victory for Democrats in the Republican-led House, and they cheered and patted Schiff on the back after the vote was gavelled down.

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"I'm flattered they think I'm so effective they have to go after me in this way," Schiff, who is running for Senate in his liberal state, told reporters afterward. "It's not going to deter me."

Florida Rep. Anna Paulina Luna, a newly elected Republican who sponsored the measure, passed Schiff in the hallway after the vote and told him she would try again.

Luna later tweeted that she would remove a portion of the resolution that suggested a \$16 million fine if the House Ethics Committee determined that Schiff "lied, made misrepresentations and abused sensitive information." Some Republicans, including Kentucky Rep. Thomas Massie, had argued that the fine — which Luna had said was half the cost of the Mueller probe — was unconstitutional.

"Next week, we will be filing a motion to censure and investigate Schiff," Luna tweeted. "We are removing fine as that seems to be what made these Republicans uneasy."

She tweeted, "See you next week, Adam."

The resolution says that Schiff held positions of power during Trump's presidency and "abused this trust by saying there was evidence of collusion between Trump's campaign and Russia." Schiff was one of the most outspoken critics of the former president as both the Justice Department and the Republican-led House launched investigations into Trump's ties to Russia in 2017.

"By repeatedly telling these falsehoods, Representative Schiff purposely deceived his Committee, Congress, and the American people," the resolution said.

Special counsel Robert Mueller, who led the two-year Justice Department investigation, determined that Russia intervened on the campaign's behalf and that Trump's campaign welcomed the help. But Mueller's team did not find that the campaign conspired to sway the election, and the Justice Department did not recommend any charges.

The congressional probe, launched by Republicans who were then in the majority, similarly found that Russia intervened in the election but that there was no evidence of a conspiracy. Schiff was the top Democrat on the panel at the time.

If the House had voted to censure him, Schiff would have stood in the front of the chamber while the text of the resolution was read.

On Tuesday, Schiff told reporters that the censure resolution was "red meat" that Speaker Kevin McCarthy is throwing to his conference amid squabbles over government spending. Republicans are trying to show their fealty to Trump, Schiff said.

He said he warned the country during impeachment proceedings three years ago that Trump "would go on to do worse. And of course he did worse in the form of a violent attack on the Capitol."

After Democrats won the House majority in 2018, the House impeached Trump for abuse of power after he threatened to withhold military aid to Ukraine and urged the country's president to investigate then-candidate Joe Biden. Schiff was the lead House prosecutor making the case for conviction to the Senate — "right matters," he said repeatedly — but the Republican-led chamber ultimately acquitted him.

Trump was impeached a second time a year later, after he had left office, for his role in the January 6, 2021 insurrection at the Capitol of his supporters. The Senate again acquitted Trump.

Luna in the censure resolution against Schiff also cited a report released in May from special counsel John Durham that found that the FBI rushed into its investigation of Trump's campaign and relied too much on raw and unconfirmed intelligence.

Durham said investigators repeatedly relied on "confirmation bias," ignoring or rationalizing away evidence that undercut their premise of a Trump-Russia conspiracy as they pushed the probe forward. But he did not allege that political bias or partisanship were guiding factors for the FBI's actions.

Trump had claimed that Durham's report would reveal the "crime of the century" and expose a "deep state conspiracy" by high-ranking government officials to derail his candidacy and later his presidency. But the investigation yielded only one conviction — a guilty plea from a little-known FBI employee — and the only two other cases that were brought both ended in acquittals at trial.

The House censure resolution comes days after Trump was indicted on detailed federal charges of hoarding classified documents — several of which dealt with sensitive national security matters — and



attempting to conceal them. House Republicans, most of whom are loyal to Trump, say the indictment is evidence that the government is conspiring against the former president.

McCarthy, R-Calif., called the indictment a "grave injustice" and said that House Republicans "will hold this brazen weaponization of power accountable."

Democratic Rep. Jason Crow of Colorado, who served as an impeachment manager with Schiff, says Republicans are trying to rewrite history.

"This is clearly a handful of Republican members of the House that are trying to do Donald Trump's bidding and trying to distract from his very serious legal problems," Crow said.

## Harvard morgue manager and four others charged in theft and sale of human body parts

SCRANTON, Pa. (AP) — A former manager at the Harvard Medical School morgue, his wife and three other people have been indicted in the theft and sale of human body parts, federal prosecutors in Pennsylvania announced Wednesday.

Cedric Lodge, 55, of Goffstown, New Hampshire, stole dissected portions of cadavers that were donated to the school in the scheme that stretched from 2018 to early 2023, according to court documents. The body parts were taken without the school's knowledge or permission, authorities said, adding that the school has cooperated with the investigation.

Lodge sometimes took the body parts — which included heads, brains, skin and bones — back to his home where he lived with his wife, Denise, 63, and some remains were sent to buyers through the mail, authorities said. Lodge also allegedly allowed buyers to come to the morgue to pick what remains they wanted to buy.

Bodies donated to Harvard Medical School are used for education, teaching or research purposes. Once they are no longer needed, the cadavers are usually cremated and the ashes are returned to the donor's family or buried in a cemetery.

In a message posted on the school's website entitled "An abhorrent betrayal," deans George Daley and Edward Hundert called the matter "morally reprehensible." They said Lodge was fired May 6.

"We are appalled to learn that something so disturbing could happen on our campus — a community dedicated to healing and serving others," the deans wrote. "The reported incidents are a betrayal of HMS and, most importantly, each of the individuals who altruistically chose to will their bodies to HMS through the Anatomical Gift Program to advance medical education and research."

The indictment charges the Lodges and three others — Katrina Maclean, 44, of Salem, Massachusetts; Joshua Taylor, 46, of West Lawn, Pennsylvania; and Mathew Lampi, 52, of East Bethel, Minnesota — with conspiracy and interstate transport of stolen goods. It was not known Wednesday if any of the defendants had a lawyer who could comment on their behalf.

According to prosecutors, the defendants were part of a nationwide network of people who bought and sold remains stolen from the school and an Arkansas mortuary. The Lodges allegedly sold remains to Maclean, Taylor, and others in arrangements made through telephone calls and social media websites.

Taylor sometimes transported stolen remains back to Pennsylvania, authorities said, while other times the Lodges would mail remains to him and others. Maclean and Taylor resold the stolen remains for profit, authorities said.

Denise and Cedric Lodge both made their initial court appearances Wednesday in federal court in Concord, New Hampshire, and were each released on personal recognizance bail. They declined comment as they left the courthouse.

Two other people have been charged in the case.

Jeremy Pauley, age 41, of Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, allegedly bought some remains from Candace Chapman Scott, of Little Rock, Arkansas, who allegedly stole them from a mortuary where she worked. Authorities have said Scott stole body parts from cadavers she was supposed to have cremated, noting many of the bodies had been donated to and used for research and educational purposes by a medical

school in Arkansas.

Pauley allegedly sold many of the stolen remains to other people, including individuals, including Lampi. Pauley and Lampi bought and sold from each other over an extended period of time and exchanged more than \$100,000 in online payments, authorities said.

Scott and Pauley have both pleaded not guilty.

## **GOP presidential candidates struggle with response to Trump's unprecedented legal troubles**

By STEVE PEOPLES and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

BEDMINSTER, N.J. (AP) — Just last week, former Vice President Mike Pence said he hoped federal prosecutors would not bring charges against former President Donald Trump. On Wednesday, a day after Trump was arraigned on dozens of felony counts related to classified documents, Pence described the allegations as “a very serious matter.”

“I cannot defend what is alleged,” Pence, who is now challenging Trump for the Republican presidential nomination, said on CNBC. Later in the day, the former vice president faced pointed questions from a conservative radio host after refusing to say whether he would pardon Trump if given the chance.

Pence's evolving message highlights the high-stakes dilemma for Trump's Republican rivals, who are struggling to find a clear and consistent strategy to take on the frontrunner as Trump's unprecedented legal troubles threaten to dominate all other issues in the 2024 presidential contest.

Some Republican leaders this week have demonstrated a newfound willingness to criticize Trump over the seriousness of the allegations, which include mishandling government secrets that as commander in chief he was entrusted to protect.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, a former naval officer and Trump's top rival for the nomination, said that “if I would have taken classified (documents) to my apartment, I would have been court-martialed in a New York minute.”

But that was just a brief mention in a weekend speech at a North Carolina GOP gathering, during which he focused his censure on the Justice Department and the Biden administration. He has avoided addressing it since.

It's been much the same for other challengers. Even the most aggressive have layered their criticism of Trump with attacks against the Justice Department — for bringing charges against him — that make it difficult at times to determine exactly where they stand on the former president.

And that's precisely the point, given Trump's continued popularity among GOP voters and his rivals' desire to dent his lead without alienating his base.

Indeed, most of Trump's competitors are making a risky bet — for now — that the weight of his extraordinary baggage will eventually sink his reelection bid. They believe it will take time.

Trump's Republican opponents privately concede that his political strength is likely to grow stronger in the short term, as GOP voters, key officials and conservative media leaders rally around him.

For example, Pastor Robert Jeffress, of the First Baptist megachurch in Dallas, initially declined to endorse Trump's 2024 bid but declared Tuesday night that the GOP's presidential primary was all but over.

“I thought there would be almost a civil war in the Republican Party for the nomination, but that quickly turned into an unconditional surrender,” said Jeffress, who mingled at Trump's post-indictment gathering at Bedminster, New Jersey. “People absolutely love this president, and I believe his base is going to turn out.”

The Republican establishment has tried and failed to reject Trump and his divisive politics for much of the past decade. But this time the GOP faces the very real possibility that a man who has been indicted twice and charged with dozens of felonies could become the party's standard-bearer in 2024.

Fighting that outcome, which once seemed all but inevitable, a powerful conservative voice is being raised in the fight for the first time.

The Koch network's political arm, Americans for Prosperity, has begun running online ads across Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina — the first three states on the GOP's presidential primary calendar

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— focusing on questions about Trump's electability in next fall's general election against Biden. The new ads make no mention of his legal troubles.

"Trump did a lot of good things as president," one of the ads says. "But this time, he can't win."

Americans for Prosperity CEO Emily Seidel said her organization has talked to thousands of voters in key states to determine the most effective arguments to undermine Trump's political strength.

"Based on the data we're collecting, more than two-thirds of people who say they're supporting Trump are also receptive to arguments that he is a weak candidate, his focus on 2020 is a liability, and his lack of appeal with independent voters is a problem," Seidel said. "That tells us that many Republicans are ready to move on — they just need to see another candidate step up and show they can lead and win."

So far, Trump's rivals are still trying to find their footing as the former president commands a big lead in early Republican primary polls.

And as they test evolving messages on the campaign trail and in media appearances, none of top-tier competitors are running paid advertisements pointing to Trump's legal troubles.

In Iowa Wednesday night, GOP presidential contender Tim Scott declined to mention his recent comments that Trump's indictment represents "a serious case" involving "serious charges" when a voter asked about a "weaponized" Justice Department — a reference to Trump's insistence that federal prosecutors are targeting him to weaken his presidential campaign.

Scott, a South Carolina senator, instead pledged to root out politics within the Justice Department if elected president.

"Americans must have a justice system where the lady of justice wears a blindfold. We cannot target Republicans and protect Democrats," he said.

White House hopeful Nikki Haley, the former ambassador to the United Nations in the Trump administration, told Fox News on Monday that Trump was incredibly "reckless with our national security" if the allegations in the indictment are true. On Tuesday, she repeated the pointed criticism, but also said she'd be inclined to pardon Trump if he's convicted.

"I think it would be terrible for the country to have a former president in prison for years because of a documents case," Haley said on the Clay Travis and Buck Sexton radio show.

Pence refused to say he would pardon Trump when pressed on the same conservative radio show on Wednesday, saying it was premature to have such a conversation and that he would "follow the facts."

That sounded like he would be fine with Trump in prison and felt "pretty disrespectful," he was told.

"Look, we either believe in our judicial process in this country or we don't," Pence said. "We either stand by the rule of law or we don't."

Others have made defending Trump a central message in their early campaigns.

Speaking outside the Miami courthouse on Tuesday, White House hopeful Vivek Ramaswamy said his campaign had sent a letter to other 2024 candidates challenging them to join his pledge to pardon Trump on their first day in office "or else publicly explain why you will not."

Trump, meanwhile, is trying to take advantage of the media storm. After his appearance in federal court in Miami, he made a stop at the city's famed Versailles Restaurant in Little Havana, with news cameras in tow. He then headed home to his Bedminster summer residence, where aides had assembled hundreds of supporters, club members and reporters for a post-arraignment speech.

Trump was welcomed like a general returning home from battle. Insisting he was innocent of all charges, he vowed that, as president, he would appoint a special prosecutor to investigate Biden and his family.

As for the indictment and charges? "This is called election interference and yet another attempt to rig and steal a presidential election," Trump said.

As they reckon with the logistical complications of balancing court appearances with campaign rallies, as well as the possibility Trump could face years behind bars, his political advisers stress what they see as the political benefits. They believe the wall-to-wall coverage of his legal woes makes it difficult for his competitors to break through as the focus rests on him.

"From a campaign standpoint, I mean, what did the other candidates do today? Do we know?" asked

Trump campaign spokesperson Steven Cheung. "There's no oxygen for the other candidates."

The campaign also announced Wednesday that it had raised more than \$7 million since Trump broke news of his second indictment, including \$2.1 million raised at a Bedminster fundraiser Tuesday night. Trump's campaign had reported raising more than \$4 million in the 24 hours after news of his New York indictment broke in March, suggesting the indictments remain a strong money-raiser, but a potentially diminishing one.

Veteran Republican strategist Ari Fleischer warned that it would take time to understand the political impact of Trump's growing legal challenges.

"A short-term rally around Trump now is not the true measure," Fleischer said. "The only test is a long-term test."

Peoples reported from New York. Associated Press writers Thomas Beaumont in Pella, Iowa, and Ali Swenson in New York contributed to this report.

## **Bill Cosby sued by 9 more women in Nevada for alleged decades-old sexual assaults**

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Nine more women are accusing Bill Cosby of sexual assault in a lawsuit that alleges he used his "enormous power, fame and prestige" to victimize them.

A lawsuit filed Wednesday in federal court in Nevada alleges that the women were individually drugged and assaulted between approximately 1979 and 1992 in Las Vegas, Reno and Lake Tahoe homes, dressing rooms and hotels.

One woman alleges that Cosby, claiming to be her acting mentor, lured her from New York to Nevada, where he drugged her in a hotel room with what he had claimed to be non-alcoholic sparkling cider and then raped her.

The 85-year-old former "Cosby Show" star has now been accused of rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment by more than 60 women. He has denied all allegations involving sex crimes. He was the first celebrity tried and convicted in the #MeToo era — and spent nearly three years at a state prison near Philadelphia before a higher court threw out the conviction and released him in 2021.

Earlier this year, a Los Angeles jury awarded \$500,000 to a woman who said Cosby sexually abused her at the Playboy Mansion when she was 16 in 1975.

The Nevada lawsuit came only a few weeks after Gov. Joe Lombardo signed a bill that eliminated a two-year deadline for adults to file sexual abuse cases. Similar suits have followed other "lookback laws" in other states.

One of the plaintiffs, Lise-Lotte Lublin, a Nevada native, had advocated for the change. She had previously alleged that Cosby gave her spiked drinks and raped her at a Las Vegas hotel in 1989.

The Associated Press does not identify people who say they have been sexually assaulted unless they come forward publicly.

"For years I have fought for survivors of sexual assault and today is the first time I will be able to fight for myself," Lotte-Lublin said in a statement cited by the Las Vegas Review-Journal. "With the new law change, I now have the ability to take my assailant Bill Cosby to court. My journey has just begun, but I am grateful for this opportunity to find justice."

In California, a former Playboy model who alleges Cosby drugged and sexually assaulted her and another woman at his home in 1969 sued him on June 1 under a new California law that suspends the statute of limitations on sex abuse claims.

Cosby publicist Andrew Wyatt blasted such laws in a statement Wednesday.

"Mr. Cosby is a Citizen of these United States but these judges and lawmakers are consistently allowing these civil suits to flood their dockets—knowing that these women are not fighting for victims—but for their addiction to massive amounts of media attention and greed," Wyatt said.

"From this day forward, we will not continue to allow these women to parade various accounts of an al-

leged allegation against Mr. Cosby anymore without vetting them in the court of public opinion and inside of the courtroom," Wyatt said.

In the latest suit, the women contend that Cosby "used his enormous power, fame, and prestige, and claimed interest in helping them and/or their careers as a pretense to isolate and sexually assault them."

## **Bud Light, top US seller since 2001, loses sales crown to Modelo as beer backlash continues**

By DEE-ANN DURBIN AP Business Writer

After more than two decades as America's best-selling beer, Bud Light has slipped into second place.

Modelo Especial, a Mexican lager, overtook Bud Light in U.S. retail dollar sales in the month ending June 3, according to Nielsen data analyzed by Bump Williams Consulting. Modelo controlled 8.4% of U.S. grocery, convenience and liquor store sales; Bud Light fell to 7.3%.

It's a milestone in Bud Light's months-long sales decline since early April, when critics who were angered by the brewer sending a commemorative can to transgender influencer Dylan Mulvaney vowed to boycott the brand. Bud Light has also faced backlash from Mulvaney's fans, who think the brand didn't do enough to support her.

Dave William, Bump Williams' vice president of analytics and insights, said Bud Light has been the top-selling U.S. beer since 2001, and it could still retain that crown this year. He noted that Bud Light's year-to-date market share of 9% is still outpacing Modelo's, at 8%. And Bud Light's sales volumes are higher.

But Modelo appears to have the advantage, with its dollar sales increasing by double-digit percentages every week. The launch of a new light beer, Modelo Oro, in May is also boosting awareness of the brand.

Sales in bars and restaurants, which are harder to track, aren't included in the retail numbers, and Bud Light far outpaced Modelo in those venues prior to April. But David Steinman, the vice president and executive editor of Beer Marketer's Insights, said Modelo's bar and restaurant sales have been growing quickly, and it's believed that Bud Light took an even steeper sales hit in bars and restaurants than in groceries.

Bud Light's U.S. retail sales were down 24% the week ending June 3, while Modelo Especial sales were up 12%, according to Dave Williams.

Scott Scanlon, an executive vice president at the consulting firm Circana who follows the alcohol market, said Mexican imports like Modelo and Corona have been the biggest bright spots in the otherwise stagnant U.S. beer market for years.

When Modelo first went on sale in the U.S. in the 1990s, it was primarily marketed to Hispanic drinkers, Scanlon said. It launched English-language ads in 2015 and has broadened its consumer base significantly since then. It's especially popular among younger drinkers, who like its fuller flavor, Scanlon said.

Scanlon said Modelo is already the top seller in markets like Los Angeles and Chicago, but it could still see a lot of growth ahead on the East Coast.

"Modelo was going to become the No. 1 beer brand. It was destiny because the growth numbers we are seeing and have been seeing are astonishing," Scanlon said. "The only question was time."

Scanlon said the pandemic accelerated Modelo's U.S. sales, since it sees more of its sales from retail stores than from bars and restaurants. And Bud Light's missteps further accelerated its rise.

Grupo Modelo, the Mexican brewer, is owned by Anheuser-Busch InBev, the same parent company of Bud Light. Constellation Brands, a Rochester, New York-based company, has been licensed to sell Modelo in the U.S. since 2013 as part of an agreement with antitrust regulators after InBev bought Grupo Modelo.

Constellation said Wednesday it has nearly doubled its marketing spending on Modelo over the past five years and continues to see a "runway for growth" in the U.S. But Bud Light will try to counter that.

Last month, InBev said it will triple its marketing spending in the U.S. this summer, with a focus on sports and music festivals. Bud Light also continues to be a high-profile sponsor of LGBTQ+ Pride events.

"For the year, Bud Light remains the number one brand in the U.S. nationally in volume and dollar sales," an Anheuser-Busch spokesperson said Wednesday.

## Chasing Horse charged with more sex crimes in new Canadian case

By RIO YAMAT Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Nathan Chasing Horse has been charged in Alberta, Canada, with new sex crimes in the latest criminal case to be brought against the former “Dances With Wolves” actor, who remains jailed in Las Vegas as he awaits trial in a sweeping sexual abuse case that stunned Indian Country and has helped law enforcement in two countries corroborate long-standing allegations against him.

At a virtual news conference Wednesday, Sgt. Nancy Farmer of the Tsuut’ina Nation Police Service acknowledged that the Alberta case is largely symbolic. Chasing Horse — who faces not only decades in a Nevada prison if convicted in the Las Vegas case but criminal prosecution in five jurisdictions — might not ever return to Canada to answer to these charges.

“At the end of the day,” Farmer said, “it is important for us to have these warrants in the system so our victims know they’ve been heard. It’s extremely important that we continue to support them that way.”

Chasing Horse has declined multiple requests from The Associated Press to interview him at the county jail, and his public defender in Las Vegas, Kristy Holston, said she has no comment on the new charges. It wasn’t immediately clear whether Chasing Horse has an attorney in Canada who could comment on his behalf.

Farmer said the 47-year-old faces nine charges in Alberta, including three counts of sexual exploitation and four counts of sexual assault. The crimes in their jurisdiction date back to 2005, she said.

Chasing Horse was born on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota, home to the Sicangu Sioux, one of the seven tribes of the Lakota nation. He is widely known for his portrayal of Smiles a Lot in Kevin Costner’s Oscar-winning film.

After starring in the 1990 movie, Chasing Horse had built a name for himself among tribes in the U.S. and Canada as a self-proclaimed medicine man who could communicate with higher beings. Police and prosecutors in Las Vegas have accused him of using that position to lead a cult, gain access to vulnerable Indigenous women and girls, and take underage wives starting in the early 2000s.

He is charged in the Las Vegas case with 18 felonies that include sexual assault of a minor, child abuse and kidnapping. He also faces criminal prosecution in the British Columbia village of Keremeos, the U.S. District Court in Nevada, and on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation in Montana.

Court proceedings in the Las Vegas case have been put on hold indefinitely as Chasing Horse awaits a decision on his appeal filed last month to the Nevada Supreme Court asking for his indictment to be tossed.

Chasing Horse and his public defenders have said in legal filings that his accusers wanted to have sex with him. One of the women was younger than 16 — the age of consent in Nevada — when she says Chasing Horse began abusing her.

## In affirmative action and student loan cases, some see backlash to racial progress in education

By ANNIE MA and AARON MORRISON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As a Black student who was raised by a single mother, Makia Green believes she benefited from a program that gave preference to students of color from economically disadvantaged backgrounds when she was admitted over a decade ago to the University of Rochester.

As a borrower who still owes just over \$20,000 on her undergraduate student loans, she has been counting on President Joe Biden’s promised debt relief to wipe nearly all of that away.

Now, both affirmative action and the student loan cancellation plan — policies that disproportionately help Black students — could soon be dismantled by the U.S. Supreme Court. To Green and many other people of color, the efforts to roll them back reflect a larger backlash to racial progress in higher education.

“I feel like working people have been through enough — I have been through enough,” said Green, a community organizer. “From a pandemic, an uprising, a recession, the cost of living price going up. I

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deserved some relief.”

The rulings could also have political consequences among a generation of young voters of color who took Biden at his word when he promised to cancel debt, said Wisdom Cole, director of NAACP’s youth and college program.

“Year after year, we have elected officials, we have advocates, we have different politicians coming to our communities making promises. But now it’s time to deliver on those promises,” he said.

The president’s plan forgives up to \$10,000 in federal student debt for borrowers, and doubles the debt relief to \$20,000 for borrowers who also received Pell Grants. About half of the average debt held by Black and Hispanic borrowers would be wiped out, according to the White House. Six Republican-led states filed a legal challenge questioning whether the president, a Democrat, has authority to forgive the debt.

In the affirmative action cases, the court is considering the use of race-conscious admissions policies that many selective colleges have used for decades to help build diversity on their campuses. The cases were brought by a conservative activist who argues the Constitution forbids the use of race in college admissions.

The high court is expected to rule in each of the cases by the end of June.

Both cases focus on policies that address historic racial disparities in access to higher education, as Black borrowers tend to take on disproportionately more debt to afford college, said Dominique Baker, an education policy professor at Southern Methodist University.

Backlash to racial progress tends to follow periods of social change and advancement, Baker said. In a study published in 2019, Baker and her co-authors found states were more likely to adopt bans on affirmative action when white enrollment at public flagship universities dropped.

“These are policy tools that have an explicit aim around reducing the power of white supremacy,” Baker said. The two court challenges, she said, can be seen “as linked backlash to two attempts towards racial justice.”

Green, who grew up in a low-income household in Harlem, New York, graduated from Rochester with about \$40,000 in federal loan debt. Some of that was erased under a public service forgiveness program when she completed two terms with Americorps, and she whittled it down further with monthly installments until the government paused repayment due to the pandemic.

Green said she sees both court cases as connected to conservative attacks on diversity, equity and inclusion programs. Critics say opposition to such programs is rooted in questions of fairness and in white grievances over the advancement of nonwhite people.

“This is white supremacy at work,” Green said. “This is a long tactic of conservative, white supremacist-leaning groups to use education and limit Black people’s access to education, as a way to further control and oppress us.”

In the 1960s and 1970s, many colleges developed affirmative action plans to address the fact that many predominantly white schools struggled to attract people from historically disadvantaged and underrepresented communities. Policies were also created to promote greater inclusion of women.

Since the late 1970s, the Supreme Court has three times upheld affirmative action in college admissions on grounds that institutions have a compelling interest to address past discrimination that shut nonwhite students out of higher learning. Justices have also agreed with arguments that more diverse student bodies promoted cross-racial understanding.

But with the Supreme Court skewing more ideologically conservative, some former students and advocates worry how a ruling against affirmative action might affect diversity on campuses.

Tarina Ahuja, a rising senior at Harvard College, said being part of a diverse student body has been a crucial part of her undergraduate experience. She recalled classes where students discussed their lived experiences on topics such as police violence, colonialism and labor movements — discussions that would have fallen flat without a diverse range of student perspectives.

“The decision is going to very likely be something that is scary to a lot of us,” she said.

In anticipation of a possible ruling against race-conscious admissions, some colleges are considering

adding more essays to get a better picture of an applicant's background. Others are planning to boost recruiting in racially diverse areas. But in states that have already banned affirmative action, similar efforts at selective colleges have largely failed to maintain diversity gains.

Jonathan Loc, a graduate student at Harvard who helped organize teach-ins in support of affirmative action, said that for students of color, it's impossible to speak about their lives without mentioning race, whether through hardships faced or simply their pride in their cultural heritage.

"I grew up as the son of refugees in a low-income community and a single parent family burdened with the model minority myth," he said. "But I think that that kind of narrative also helps me to be an Asian American focused on racial justice, focused on making sure that everyone who has a unique story related to their racial background or any background has that story heard."

If the court rules against affirmative action, it will be important for colleges to find ways to show they see the students as more than a number on paper, said Damon Hewitt, president and executive director of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.

"We need the schools to say, 'Look, the court says we can't consider race, but we still see you,'" said Hewitt, whose organization defended affirmative action before the Supreme Court in October.

Kristin McGuire, the executive director of Young Invincibles, said that she could not overlook the decisions looming over the upcoming Juneteenth holiday, which marks the emancipation of enslaved people in Texas two years after the Emancipation Proclamation. For two years after abolition, Black Americans were kept as laborers and denied the freedom to begin building generational wealth, McGuire said.

"If both of these are struck down, it will send a very clear signal that our court system does not support the most vulnerable populations, especially those who helped build this country," McGuire said.

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Annie Ma and Aaron Morrison are members of AP's Race and Ethnicity team. Follow Ma on Twitter: <https://www.twitter.com/anniema15>. Follow Morrison on Twitter: <https://www.twitter.com/aaronlmorrison>.

## Experts question prosecutors' strategy against weapons expert in Alec Baldwin case

By SUSAN MONTROYA BRYAN Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — More than a year and a half after Alec Baldwin shot and killed a cinematographer while rehearsing a scene on set in New Mexico, prosecutors have yet to solve the biggest mystery in the tragic case: How did live rounds get on the set?

Prosecutors said in their latest court filing that they have some evidence to support the theory that weapons expert Hannah Gutierrez-Reed may be responsible for the introduction of the rounds. But they have offered no details, and barring more evidence, they're now basing part of their case against her on the idea that a night of drinking and marijuana use left her incapable of the judgment necessary to ensure the set was safe.

Gutierrez-Reed's attorneys argue that prosecutors are resorting to character assassination, and some legal experts are doubtful it will make for a winning strategy for prosecutors.

Several lawyers who are not involved with the case but have been watching it closely said Wednesday that prosecution statements in response to a defense motion last month seeking to dismiss her involuntary manslaughter charge are vague and would be difficult to prove.

"When you think about how they've conducted this investigation since the beginning, it's almost in step with what they had done before. They need to have more specificity when it comes to that allegation, because it's kind of serious. To be throwing it out there doesn't look that good," said Miguel Custodio, a Los Angeles personal injury attorney.

Prosecutors said they have witnesses who will testify that Gutierrez-Reed drank and smoked marijuana in



the evenings during the filming of "Rust." However, the weapons expert was never tested, and it's unclear what evidence prosecutors could present to make the case that she could have been hungover when she loaded a live bullet into the revolver that the actor used.

John Day, a Santa Fe-based criminal defense attorney, noted that prosecutors did not say in the filing that Gutierrez-Reed was impaired but rather used the colloquial term "hungover," which could mean many things.

"It's one more strange development, but it still doesn't address — and they've said they don't know — how live rounds got onto the set," Day said. "And they haven't said specifically anything more about her involvement except that she was the armorer."

A preliminary hearing for Gutierrez-Reed is scheduled in August. A judge is expected to decide then if there's probable cause for the charge to move forward.

In their filing, the prosecutors said they expected to decide within the next 60 days whether to recharge Baldwin, depending on the results of an analysis of the gun.

The involuntary manslaughter charge faced by Baldwin, who also was a producer on the film, was dismissed in April, with prosecutors citing new evidence and the need for more time to investigate.

Baldwin was pointing a gun at cinematographer Halyna Hutchins during a rehearsal on the set in October 2021 when it went off, killing her and wounding director Joel Souza.

Ted Spaulding, an Atlanta attorney who also is not involved in the case, said that while it would be easier to argue that active impairment leads to negligence, prosecutors can still argue that alcohol and drug use — and being hungover — likely lead to negligence.

"This will come down to whether or not they have credible evidence that an impairment in judgment caused the injury and that the impairment is linked to drug and alcohol use," Spaulding said. "We see cases all the time where someone has marijuana particulates in their system and argue that it contributed to a wreck or injury, but because Gutierrez-Reed wasn't tested immediately after the shooting, they have no proof that marijuana was in her system, outside of witness testimony."

Custodio said the prosecution's insinuation that Gutierrez-Reed was hungover might work in the defense's favor.

"It's pretty reasonable for the defense to say 'you're just bringing this up now, which continues to show this pattern of sloppiness,'" he said. "Prosecutors saying she was 'probably hungover' sounds like a very tenuous assumption."

## **Grand jury indicts Daniel Penny in chokehold death of New York City subway rider Jordan Neely**

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A man charged with manslaughter for putting an agitated New York City subway rider in a fatal chokehold has been indicted by a grand jury, an expected procedural step that will allow the criminal case to continue.

Daniel Penny was charged by Manhattan prosecutors last month in the May 1 death of Jordan Neely, a former Michael Jackson impersonator who struggled in recent years with homelessness and mental illness.

Grand jury proceedings are secret and spokespeople for Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg declined to comment Wednesday, but the indictment was confirmed by New York City Mayor Eric Adams.

"I appreciate DA Bragg conducting a thorough investigation into the death of Jordan Neely. Like I said when the DA first brought charges, I have the utmost faith in the judicial process, and now that the Grand Jury has indicted Daniel Penny, a trial and justice can move forward," Adams said in a statement.

Neely was shouting at passengers and begging for money when Penny pinned him to the floor of the moving subway car with the help of two other riders. Penny, a former U.S. Marine, then held Neely in a chokehold that lasted more than three minutes.

Penny has said he was protecting himself and other passengers, claiming Neely shouted "I'm gonna' kill you" and that he was "ready to die" or go to jail for life.

A freelance journalist who recorded Neely struggling to free himself, then lapsing into unconsciousness,

said he was acting aggressively and frightening people but hadn't assaulted anyone. Neely was Black. Penny is white.

Penny's lawyers, Steven Raiser and Thomas Kenniff, said in a statement that Neely had not intended to kill Neely, just hold him until police arrived.

"While we respect the decision of the grand jury to move this case forward to trial, it should be noted that the standard of proof in a grand jury is very low and there has been no finding of wrongdoing. We're confident that when a trial jury is tasked with weighing the evidence, they will find Daniel Penny's actions on that train were fully justified," Raiser said.

Neely's death prompted protests by many who saw it as an example of racial injustice, but some people have rallied around Penny, including several of the Republican candidates for president. A fund set up to pay for Penny's legal defense has raised more than \$2.8 million, according to his lawyers.

Penny, 24, was released on \$100,000 bond following his May 12 arraignment. He will need to return to court to be arraigned on the new indictment.

Under New York law, prosecutors needed a grand jury indictment to move forward with the case.

If convicted, Penny could face years in prison.

## **Pennsylvania using tons of recycled glass nuggets to rebuild collapsed Interstate 95**

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

Pennsylvania will truck in 2,000 tons of lightweight glass nuggets to help quickly rebuild a collapsed section of Interstate 95 in Philadelphia and crews will work 24 hours a day until they can reopen the critical commercial artery, officials said Wednesday.

Instead of rebuilding the overpass right away, crews will use the recycled glass to fill in the collapsed area to avoid supply-chain delays for other materials, Gov. Josh Shapiro said.

But Shapiro repeatedly declined to estimate how long it will take to get traffic flowing again on the busy East Coast highway.

"We're going to get this job done as quickly as possible," Shapiro said at a news conference near the site, over the sounds of heavy machinery working to clear wreckage. He said the work would be done with union labor.

Investigators continued to look into why a truck hauling gasoline went out of control on an off-ramp and flipped on its side, igniting a fire early Sunday that caused the collapse of the northbound lanes of Interstate 95 and severely damaged the southbound lanes.

Workers will fill the gap — which is roughly 100 feet (30 meters) long and 150 feet wide — by piling recycled foam glass aggregate into the underpass area, bringing it up to surface level and then paving it over so that three lanes of traffic can reopen each way, Shapiro said.

"This approach will allow us to avoid delays due to shipping and supply chain issues and pursue a simple, quicker path," Shapiro said.

After that, a replacement bridge will be built next to it to reroute traffic while crews excavate the fill to restore the exit ramp, officials said.

The Biden administration is pledging its aid as the collapse snarls traffic in Philadelphia while the summer travel season starts. It has upended hundreds of thousands of morning commutes, disrupted countless businesses and forced trucking companies to find different routes.

Demolition of both the northbound and southbound lanes in the overpass was expected to finish Thursday. Trucks hauling glass aggregate could start arriving the same day and will have a state police escort, officials said.

The company supplying the glass aggregate, AeroAggregates of North America, has a production site just south of Philadelphia along the Delaware River. There, it mills glass bottles and jars diverted from landfills into a powder and heats it into a foam to produce small, lightweight nuggets that are gray and

look like rocks — but are as light as Styrofoam, said CEO Archie Filshill.

Each one is about an inch or inch-and-a-half wide.

Filshill estimated that it will take about 100 box-truck loads to haul about 10,000 cubic yards (7,600 cubic meters) of the glass nuggets required for the I-95 project. The total weight is around 2,000 tons, a fraction of the weight of regular sand or dirt, meaning that it will take many fewer trucks to bring it to the site, Filshill said.

PennDOT was the first to use his company's product after he began making it in 2017, and it is now approved for use by 23 state transportation departments around the country, Filshill said. AeroAggregates will divert material bound for other, less urgent projects to the I-95 project, he said.

The disruption is likely raise the cost of consumer goods because truckers must now travel longer routes, U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said.

Of the 160,000 vehicles a day that travel that section, 8% are trucks, Buttigieg said.

Police say the driver died in the accident. The Philadelphia medical examiner identified him as Nathan Moody, 53.

Authorities say Moody was headed northbound on his way to deliver fuel to a convenience store when the truck lost control on a curving off-ramp, landing on its side and rupturing the tank.

State police officials said the trucking company had contacted them and has been cooperating. On Wednesday, the National Transportation Safety Board, which is investigating the accident, said federal records showed that the trucking company was "in good operating status and has valid authority" to haul gasoline.

Follow Marc Levy on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/timelywriter>

## **Southern Baptists refuse to take back megachurch because it has women pastors**

By PETER SMITH and DEEPA BHARATH Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — The Southern Baptist Convention has refused to welcome Saddleback Church back into its fold, rejecting an appeal by the California megachurch over its February ouster for having women pastors.

Southern Baptist church representatives at their annual meeting here also rejected a similar appeal by a smaller church, Fern Creek Baptist of Louisville, Kentucky, which is led by a woman pastor.

The results of the Tuesday votes were announced Wednesday morning on the concluding day of the two-day annual meeting of the nation's largest Protestant denomination, whose statement of faith asserts that only qualified men can serve as pastors.

The convention hall packed with about 12,000 Southern Baptists was quiet after the announcement, appearing to have listened to the earlier urging by SBC President Bart Barber for them to show restraint.

"I know sometimes there are churches where people wind up in biblical divorce," he said. "But we don't throw divorce parties at church. And whatever these results are, I'm asking you, behave like Christians."

Saddleback had been the denomination's second-largest congregation and until recently was widely touted as a success story amid larger Southern Baptist membership declines.

With the 9,437-to-1,212 vote, delegates — known as messengers — rejected an appeal by Rick Warren, the retired founding pastor of Saddleback and author of the best-selling phenomenon, "The Purpose Driven Life." Warren had urged Baptists to agree to disagree "in order to share a common mission."

"Messengers voted for conformity and uniformity rather than unity. The only way you will have unity is to love diversity. We made this effort knowing we were not going to win," Warren said at a news conference after the results were announced.

Church representatives also voted 9,700-806 to deny an appeal by a smaller congregation, Fern Creek Baptist Church of Louisville, Kentucky, which has had a woman pastor for three decades.

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"I knew they would uphold the expulsion. However, I guess I am a bit naive. I did not think it would be that drastic a result. I thought there were more people left in the Southern Baptist Convention who support the autonomy of the local church, if not women in ministry," said the Rev. Linda Barnes Popham, Fern Creek's pastor.

She said some messengers came up to her to say while they disagree with her, they "appreciate our passion for the Gospel."

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. The SBC's statement of faith says the office of pastor is reserved for qualified men, but this is believed to be the first time the convention has expelled any churches over it.

In February, the SBC's Executive Committee voted to oust the two congregations, along with three others that chose not to appeal, for having women pastors.

Warren and Barnes Popham made their final appeals to Southern Baptists on Tuesday.

Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, spoke on behalf of the Executive Committee in calling for the ouster of Saddleback and Fern Creek, saying it's a matter of biblical authority.

"The issues were clear, and the messengers were clearly united. ... There was no rancor," Mohler said Wednesday after the results were announced. "This was a real defining moment, and making certain that those doctrines that must be common among us be publicly acknowledged."

For years, questions about women's ministry roles have caused turmoil in the SBC. On Wednesday, the messengers pressed to make those roles more clear by voting to amend the convention's constitution to specify that Southern Baptists churches must "affirm, appoint or employ only men as any kind of pastor or elder as qualified by Scripture." To go into effect, it needs to be approved at the next annual meeting.

Sarah Clatworthy, member of Lifepoint Baptist Church in San Angelo, Texas, advocated for the amendment, urging the SBC "to shut the door to feminism and liberalism."

"In a culture that is unclear about the role of men and women, we have to be crystal clear," she said. "We should leave no room for our daughters or granddaughters to have confusion on where the SBC stands."

Warren has been a lifelong Southern Baptist, and the church he founded being removed from the denomination was something he might have never expected even though he has pushed the boundaries for years now, said Scott Thumma, a sociology of religion professor and director of the Hartford Institute for Religion Research.

"It's pretty clear that Warren did not think the SBC was going to reinstate Saddleback," he said. "But, he's had a platform to say what being Baptist means, what the Scripture says about women in ministry. ... This is all probably more symbolic."

Following the results, Warren issued a critique of the direction of the SBC.

"There are people who want to take the SBC back to the 1950s when white men ruled supreme and when the woman's place was in the home. There are others who want to take it back 500 years to the time of the Reformation," he said. "I say we need to take the church back to the first century. The church at its birth was the church at its best."

As for Fern Creek, Barnes Popham said she doesn't know whether the church will join a new denomination or remain independent, but "I also believe God has great things for Fern Creek Baptist."

The church is now facing a possible expulsion from the Kentucky Baptist Convention, the SBC's state affiliate, based on a recommendation from its credentials committee.

Messengers also addressed sexual abuse issues on Wednesday, including upholding the expulsion of Freedom Baptist Church in Florida over its alleged mishandling of a sexual misconduct allegation.

They also voted to give a task force in charge of implementing abuse reforms more time to work. The task force launched last year.

Marshall Blalock, pastor of First Baptist Church in Charleston, South Carolina, who leads the task force, announced the creation of a new website, which contains the messenger-mandated database of pastors and church workers credibly accused of sex abuse as well as resources for congregations. He said this

tracking is necessary because sexual abuse is underreported.

Messengers approved a resolution condemning gender-affirming care and all forms of gender transition interventions, referring to them as "a futile quest to change one's sex and as a direct assault on God's created order."

The Rev. Jim Conrad, pastor of Towne View Baptist Church in Georgia, which was expelled from the SBC three years ago because of its LGBTQ-affirming stance, said the denomination's anti-transgender stance doesn't surprise him.

He said he hopes the SBC "can find their way back to a time when their mission was to cooperate on missions, service and evangelism, and not requiring uniformity of thought."

Bharath reported from Los Angeles.

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## Wisconsin governor vows budget veto if GOP cuts diversity funds from university system

By TODD RICHMOND Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers said Wednesday in a newspaper report that he won't sign the state budget if Republican lawmakers follow through on their plan to cut funding for the state university system's diversity officers, escalating a bitter fight over dollars for the state campuses.

Assembly Speaker Robin Vos told The Associated Press on Tuesday that he wants to cut \$32 million from the UW System in the state's 2023-25 budget, an amount he said is equal to what the system spends on diversity officers. He said during a news conference Wednesday that diversity efforts have become liberals' "new religion" and tax dollars shouldn't be used to help them.

"For people on the left, (efforts to promote diversity have) become their new religion," Vos said. "They no longer go to church on Sunday, but boy, are they trying to make sure everybody is evangelized on campus, that's there only one acceptable viewpoint. That's not what I think taxpayers should be funding."

Evers, a Democrat and a former UW regent, tweeted Tuesday that the cut would be "disastrous" for the UW System. He told reporters during a tour of a cheese manufacturer in Monroe on Wednesday that he wouldn't sign the budget if Republicans follow through, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported. Cutting the university system when the state has a \$7 billion surplus is "irrational" and "ridiculous," he said.

Evers' spokesperson, Britt Cudaback, didn't immediately respond to messages from the AP seeking comment.

Vos appeared unfazed at a second news conference Wednesday afternoon, saying he doesn't believe Evers would veto the entire budget over one issue. He said if Evers were to do so, Republicans would begin work on a new spending plan in October and force the governor to explain why months have gone by without new funding.

Assembly Republicans are "unanimous in saying that if the governor would make a mistake and try to pick one thing out of an \$80 billion budget, to say we have to spend money how he sees fit, that's not going to work," Vos said.

Tensions between Republicans who control the Legislature and the state's university system are nothing new. But the fight this year centers on issues of free speech and UW's work to advance diversity and racial equity.

The conflict reflects a broader cultural battle playing out across the nation over college diversity initiatives. Republican lawmakers this year have proposed more than 30 bills in 12 states to limit diversity, equity and inclusion efforts in higher education, an Associated Press analysis found in April.

UW spokesperson Mark Pitsch has said salaries for current system employees tasked with working on

diversity, equity and inclusion amount to roughly \$15.6 million annually. UW System President Jay Rothman hired a new chief diversity officer with an annual salary of \$225,000 who began work on Monday. He did not publicize the hiring at a UW Board of Regents meeting earlier this month.

Asked for comment on Evers' stance, Pitsch said in an email: "We remain hopeful that the state will be an active partner in helping the UW System develop the talent Wisconsin's workforce is counting on."

The Legislature's Republican-controlled finance committee is in the midst of rewriting Evers' executive budget before forwarding it to the full Assembly and Senate for approval. If the spending plan passes both houses it would go next to Evers, who sign it into law, use his partial veto powers to rewrite large portions of it or veto the entire thing.

UW regents requested an additional \$435.6 million over the two-year budget. Evers' proposal called for giving the system about \$305.9 million in new money. The finance committee already rejected plans this month to build a new engineering building on the system's flagship Madison campus; if the panel chops \$32 million from the system the regents would end up about \$500 million short of what they say they need.

That could lead to more tuition increases for students as the system tries to make up the shortfall. The regents in March approved hundreds of dollars in tuition, fees and room and board rate increases after Evers' budget fell \$130 million short of their \$435.6 million target request.

There was no immediate response to an email sent Wednesday morning seeking comment from the Associated Students of Madison, the student government body at UW-Madison.

It's unclear when the finance committee may consider UW System's portion of the budget. The committee was scheduled to vote on it Tuesday evening but ultimately chose to delay action indefinitely.

Sen. Howard Marklein, the Republican co-chair of the committee, did not comment when asked about UW's budget on Wednesday morning. Rep. Mark Born, the other co-chair, declined to explain why the vote was delayed during a news conference Wednesday afternoon. It was unclear when the committee would take up the matter.

"First of all, I don't accept that anything broke down," Born said. "We're working through the budget process and historically, as well as in this budget, sometimes things are delayed as discussions or work continues ... We'll take it up when we're ready to take it up."

## **Miami Mayor Francis Suarez enters crowded GOP presidential race days after Trump's indictment**

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Miami Mayor Francis Suarez filed paperwork Wednesday to launch his bid for the Republican presidential nomination, jumping into the crowded race just a day after GOP front-runner Donald Trump appeared in court on federal charges in Suarez's city.

The 45-year-old mayor, the only Hispanic candidate in the race, declared his candidacy with the Federal Election Commission. He had teased an announcement, noting that he would be making a "big speech" Thursday at the Reagan Library in California.

Before Trump arrived at the courthouse Tuesday, Suarez toured the media encampment wearing a T-shirt with a police logo, as his city's police force had jurisdiction over the downtown area.

"If I do decide to run," he told CNN, "it's starting a new chapter, a new conversation of a new kind of leader who maybe looks a little different, speaks a little different, had a little bit of a different experience, but can inspire people."

Suarez, the president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, is the son of Miami's first Cuban-born mayor. He has gained national attention in recent years for his efforts to lure companies to Miami, with an eye toward turning the city into a crypto hub and the next Silicon Valley.

Suarez, who is vying to become the first sitting mayor elected president, joins a GOP primary fight that includes Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, former Vice President Mike Pence, Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina, former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley and former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie. Despite having a candidate field in the double digits, the race is largely seen as a two-person contest between Trump

and DeSantis.

But the other competitors are hoping for an opening, which Trump has provided with his myriad legal vulnerabilities — none more serious than his federal indictment on charges of mishandling sensitive documents and refusing to give them back. He pleaded not guilty Tuesday in Miami federal court to 37 felony counts.

Suarez has said he didn't support Trump in either the 2016 or 2020 presidential elections, instead writing in the names of U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio and then-Vice President Pence. In 2018, Suarez publicly condemned Trump after reports came out that he had questioned why the United States would accept more immigrants from Haiti and "shithole countries" in Africa.

But times have changed, with Trump advisers now praising Suarez's work and helping him promote what he calls "the Miami success story." Trump's former White House counselor Kellyanne Conway has even floated Suarez's name as a possible vice presidential pick.

Suarez, who is married with two young children, is a corporate and real estate attorney who previously served as a city of Miami commissioner. He has also positioned himself as someone who can help the party further connect with Hispanics. In recent months, he has made visits to early GOP voting states as he weighed a possible 2024 campaign.

He is more moderate than DeSantis and Trump, but has threaded the needle carefully on cultural issues that have become popular among GOP politicians.

Suarez has been critical of DeSantis, dismissing some of the state laws he has signed on immigration as "headline grabbers" lacking in substance. He has said immigration is an issue that "screams for a national solution" at a time when many Republicans back hard-line policies.

The two-term mayor previously expressed support for a Florida law championed by DeSantis and dubbed "Don't Say Gay" that bans classroom instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity in kindergarten through third grade, but he has not specified whether he supported the expansion of the policy to all grades. Like other Republicans, Suarez has criticized DeSantis' feud with Disney over the same law, saying it looks like a "personal vendetta."

Further ingratiating himself with the Trump team, Suarez has echoed Trump's attacks on DeSantis' demeanor, saying the governor doesn't make eye contact and struggles with personal relationships with other politicians.

In 2020, the mayor made a play to attract tech companies to Florida after the state relaxed its COVID-19 restrictions. He met with Big Tech players and investors such as PayPal founder Peter Thiel and tech magnate Marcelo Claure, began appearing on national television and was profiled by magazines.

Suarez, who has said he takes his salary in Bitcoin, has also hosted Bitcoin conferences and started heavily promoting a cryptocurrency project named Miami Coin, created by a group called City Coins.

But the hype dissipated as virus restrictions eased elsewhere, eliminating Miami's advantage on the COVID-19 front. Suarez's vision also hit roadblocks with the collapse of the cryptocurrency exchange FTX, which was set to move its U.S. headquarters to Miami's financial district before its founder and CEO Sam Bankman-Fried was arrested in the Bahamas last December.

The only cryptocurrency exchange that traded Miami Coin suspended its trading, citing liquidity problems, not living up to its promise to generate enough money to eliminate city taxes.

Miami also ranks among the worst big U.S. cities for income inequality and has one of the least affordable housing markets.

## **Ex-Starbucks manager awarded \$25.6 million in suit over firing after 2018 arrests of 2 Black men**

CAMDEN, N.J. (AP) — Jurors in federal court have awarded \$25.6 million to a former Starbucks regional manager who alleged that she and other white employees were unfairly punished after the high-profile arrests of two Black men at a Philadelphia location in 2018.

Shannon Phillips won \$600,000 in compensatory damages and \$25 million in punitive damages on Mon-

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day after a jury in New Jersey found that race was a determinative factor in Phillips' firing, in violation of federal and state anti-discrimination.

In April 2018, a Philadelphia store manager called police on two Black men who were sitting in the coffee shop without ordering anything. Phillips, then regional manager of operations in Philadelphia, southern New Jersey, and elsewhere, was not involved with arrests. However, she said she was ordered to put a white manager who also wasn't involved on administrative leave for reasons she knew were false, according to her lawsuit.

Phillips said she was fired less than a month later after objecting to the manager being placed on leave amid the uproar, according to her lawsuit.

The company's rationale for suspending the district manager, who was not responsible for the store where the arrests took place, was an allegation that Black store managers were being paid less than white managers, according to the lawsuit. Phillips said that argument made no sense since district managers had no input on employee salaries.

The lawsuit alleged Starbucks was instead taking steps to "punish white employees" who worked in the area "in an effort to convince the community that it had properly responded to the incident."

During closing arguments on Friday, Phillips' lawyer Laura Mattiacci told jurors that the company was looking for a "sacrificial lamb" to calm the outrage and show that it was taking action, Law360 reported. Picking a Black employee for such a purpose "would have blown up in their faces," she said.

Starbucks denied Phillips' allegations, saying the company needed someone with a track record of "strength and resolution" during a crisis and replaced her with a regional manager who had such experience, including navigating the aftermath of the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings, Law360 reported.

Phillips' attorney, however, cited earlier testimony from a Black district manager, who was responsible for the store where the arrests took place, who described Phillips as someone beloved by her peers and worked around the clock after the arrests.

In an email to The Associated Press, Mattiacci confirmed the award amount and said the judge will consider awarding back pay and future pay, as well as attorney's fees. Mattiacci told the New Jersey Law Journal that she will seek about \$3 million for lost pay, and roughly \$1 million on her fee application. Starbucks declined comment Tuesday.

In the April 2018 incident, Rashon Nelson and Donte Robinson were arrested in a Starbucks coffee shop near Tony Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia shortly after the manager called police to report that two men were refusing to either make a purchase or leave the premises. They were later released without charges.

Video of the arrest prompted national outcry and led the current CEO of Starbucks to personally apologize to the men. The company later reached a settlement with both men for an undisclosed sum and an offer of free college education. The company also changed store policies and closed locations across the country for an afternoon for racial-bias training.

The two men also reached a deal with the city of Philadelphia for a symbolic \$1 each and a promise from officials to set up a \$200,000 program for young entrepreneurs. The Philadelphia Police Department adopted a new policy on how to deal with people accused of trespassing on private property — warning businesses against misusing the authority of police officers.

## At least 79 dead after overcrowded migrant vessel sinks off Greece; hundreds may be missing

By DEREK GATOPOULOS and NICHOLAS PAPHITIS Associated Press

KALAMATA, Greece (AP) — A fishing boat crammed to the gunwales with migrants trying to reach Europe capsized and sank Wednesday off the coast of Greece, authorities said, leaving at least 79 dead and many more missing in one of the worst disasters of its kind this year.

Coast guard, navy and merchant vessels and aircraft fanned out for a vast search-and-rescue operation set to continue overnight. It was unclear how many passengers were missing, but some initial reports suggested hundreds of people may have been aboard when the boat went down far from shore.



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An aerial photograph of the battered blue vessel released by the Greek coast guard showed scores of people covering practically every inch of deck.

Greece's caretaker prime minister, Ioannis Sarvas, declared three days of national mourning, "with our thoughts on all the victims of the ruthless smugglers who exploit human unhappiness.

Coast guard spokesman Nikos Alexiou told state ERT TV that it was impossible to accurately estimate the number of passengers. He said it appeared that the 25- to 30-meter (80- to 100-foot) vessel capsized after people abruptly moved to one side.

"The outer deck was full of people, and we presume that the interior (of the vessel) would also have been full," he said. "It looks as if there was a shift among the people who were crammed on board, and it capsized."

A coast guard statement said efforts by its own ships and merchant vessels to assist the boat were repeatedly rebuffed, with people on board insisting they wanted to continue to Italy. Coast guard officials said the trawler's engines broke down around 1:40 a.m. Wednesday, and just under an hour later, the ship started to list abruptly from side to side before capsizing.

The ship sank 10 to 15 minutes later, the statement said.

Ioannis Zafiroopoulos, deputy mayor of the southern port city of Kalamata, where survivors were taken, said that his information indicated there were "more than 500 people" on board.

Authorities said 104 people were rescued after the sinking in international waters about 75 kilometers (45 miles) southwest of Greece's southern Peloponnese peninsula. The spot is close to the deepest part of the Mediterranean Sea, and depths of up to 17,000 feet (5,200 meters) could hamper any effort to locate a sunken vessel.

Twenty-five survivors ranging in age from 16 to 49 were hospitalized with hypothermia or fever.

At the port of Kalamata, around 70 exhausted survivors bedded down in sleeping bags and blankets provided by rescuers in a large warehouse, while paramedics set up tents outside for anyone who needed first aid.

Katerina Tsata, head of a Red Cross volunteer group in Kalamata, said the migrants were also given psychological support.

"They suffered a very heavy blow, both physical and mental," she said.

Rescue volunteer Constantinos Vlachonikolos said nearly all the survivors were men.

"They were very worn out. How could they not be?" he said. Rescuers said many of the people pulled from the water couldn't swim and were clutching debris. The coast guard said none had life jackets.

The Greek coast guard said 79 bodies have been recovered so far. Survivors included 30 people from Egypt, 10 from Pakistan, 35 from Syria and two Palestinians, the agency said.

The Italy-bound boat was believed to have left the Tobruk area in eastern Libya — a country plunged into chaos following a NATO-backed uprising that toppled and killed longtime autocrat Moammar Gadhafi in 2011.

Human traffickers have benefited from the instability, and made Libya one of the main departure points for people attempting to reach Europe on smuggler's boats.

The route from North Africa to Italy through the central Mediterranean is the deadliest in the world, according to the U.N. migration agency, known as IOM, which has recorded more than 21,000 deaths and disappearances there since 2014.

Smugglers use unseaworthy boats and cram as many migrants as possible inside — sometimes inside locked holds — for journeys that can take days. They head for Italy, which is directly across the Mediterranean from Libya and Tunisia, and much closer than Greece to the Western European countries that most migrants hope to eventually reach.

In February, at least 94 people died when a wooden boat from Turkey sank off Cutro, in southern Italy, in the worst Mediterranean sinking so far this year.

The Italian coast guard first alerted Greek authorities and the European Union border protection agency, Frontex, about an approaching vessel on Tuesday.

The IOM said initial reports suggested up to 400 people were on board. A network of activists said it

received a distress call from a boat in the same area whose passengers said it carried 750 people. But it wasn't clear if that was the vessel that sank.

After that first alert, Frontex aircraft and two merchant ships spotted the boat heading north at high speed, according to the Greek coast guard, and more aircraft and ships were sent to the area.

But repeated calls to the vessel offering help were declined, the coast guard said in a statement.

"In the afternoon, a merchant vessel approached the ship and provided it with food and supplies, while the (passengers) refused any further assistance," the coast guard said. A second merchant ship later offered more supplies and assistance, which were turned down, the agency added.

In the evening, a coast guard patrol boat reached the vessel "and confirmed the presence of a large number of migrants on the deck," the statement said. "But they refused any assistance and said they wanted to continue to Italy."

The coast guard boat accompanied the migrant vessel and later headed a major rescue operation by all the ships in the area.

Alarm Phone, a network of activists that provides a hotline for migrants in trouble, said it was contacted by people on a boat in distress on Tuesday afternoon. That boat was in the same general area as the one that sank, but it was not clear if it was the same vessel.

The organization notified Greek authorities and Frontex. In one communication with Alarm Phone, migrants reported the vessel was overcrowded and that the captain had abandoned the ship on a small boat, according to the group. They asked for food and water, which were provided by a merchant ship.

"We fear that hundreds of people have drowned," Alarm Phone said in a statement.

The Mediterranean's deadliest shipwreck in living memory occurred on April 18, 2015, when an overcrowded fishing boat collided off Libya with a freighter trying to come to its rescue. Only 28 people survived. Forensic experts concluded that there were originally 1,100 people on board.

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Paphitis reported from Athens, Greece. Associated Press writers Sam Magdy in Cairo and Renata Brito in Barcelona, Spain, contributed to this report.

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## **Pope expected to be released soon from hospital after abdominal surgery: Vatican**

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Pope Francis is expected to be released from the hospital "in the coming days," as he recovers well and without complications from abdominal surgery last week, the Vatican said Wednesday.

In his daily medical update, Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said Francis again rested well overnight, was at work during the day and had received the Eucharist during a moment of prayer in the chapel of his hospital suite.

The 86-year-old pope was admitted to Rome's Gemelli hospital on June 7 for surgery to repair a hernia in his abdominal wall and remove intestinal scar tissue that had caused intestinal blockages. Francis in 2021 had 33 centimeters (13 inches) of his colon removed at Gemelli because of a narrowing of the intestine, and had at least two prior abdominal surgeries in Argentina.

Citing Francis' doctors, Bruni said the pope's recovery "is proceeding regularly, without complications, and as such his discharge is planned for the coming days."

Daily Il Fatto Quotidiano quoted an email from the dean of the College of Cardinals, Cardinal Battista Re, to his colleagues saying Francis' return to the Vatican was expected Thursday or Friday.

Francis already has a full agenda scheduled for next week, including a reported audience with Cuban President Miguel Diaz Cane and one with Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. On June 23, he's due to preside over an audience in the Sistine Chapel with artists to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the contemporary art collection in the Vatican Museums.

The Vatican typically cancels papal audiences during July, a summer break that will give Francis time to recover more fully before his expected Aug. 2-6 trip to Portugal for World Youth Day. Other upcoming travel includes an Aug. 31-Sept. 4 visit to Mongolia, the first-ever by a pope, and a Sept. 23 day trip to Marseille, France.

## Mexican diver Diego Balleza opens OnlyFans account to pay for Olympics training

By CARLOS RODRÍGUEZ Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — As a prominent 10-meter diver, Diego Balleza is used to wearing small swimsuits that show off his body. Now, desperate because of a lack of financial resources ahead of next year's Paris Olympics, the Mexican is making a leap to a different platform in which he also wears few clothes: OnlyFans.

Balleza is one of several Mexican athletes who have been affected by a dispute between World Aquatics and Ana Guevara, the head of Mexico's national sports commission that, since January, has stopped providing monthly payments for aquatics athletes. World Aquatics suspended the president of the Mexican federation, Kiril Todorov, and appointed a commission to take charge while new elections were held.

Todorov was suspended for the failure of the Mexican Swimming Federation to comply with the governing body's good governance standards. But Guevara refused to recognize the commission even though the Court of Arbitration for Sport confirmed the change.

Guevara, a runner who won a silver medal in the 400-meter race at the 2004 Athens Olympics, cut the allowance to all aquatics athletes. So they are now trying to find ways to support themselves.

Balleza, who was fourth in synchronized diving on the 10-meter platform at the Tokyo Olympics, chose to join OnlyFans, a site where content creators upload images and videos, some of them explicit.

"It occurred to me to open it because you are always looking for a way to make income. I support my house and my mother, and I have bills to pay, and you can upload whatever you want in there, it's a valid content," Balleza said in an interview with The Associated Press. "I am happy that the people who are in my page have been very good and respectful, I hope they continue like this."

Balleza charges a monthly fee of \$15 to access his content but offers quarterly packages for \$40.50. As of Monday, he had uploaded 136 images, 26 videos, and had more than 14,000 interactions with fans.

With the money he gets from that website, the 28-year-old diver seeks to replace the little more than 30,000 pesos (about \$1,708) that he received as a government scholarship.

"The money I now receive (from OnlyFans) is very volatile, but it has served me well so far," he said.

Balleza said that in addition to OnlyFans, the government of the state of Nuevo León, where he lives and trains, supported him and he has also received money from the private sector, although he did not elaborate on the amounts he received.

But Balleza is not alone in his struggle for economic resources. His partner on the 10-meter platform in Tokyo, Kevin Berlin, chose another route to continue his preparations for Paris. Berlin, with help from his relatives, created a coffee brand called "Olimpiada Café," or Olympic Coffee.

"At first we thought we would only sell it to family and friends, but then it started to go viral, and it reached more people," Berlin told the AP. "You have to see the positive in things. Thanks to all the problems I had, we created a business that is doing well and perhaps it will be useful for the future. In sports you don't know if an injury ends your career quickly."

Berlin and Balleza will compete together in July at the world championships in Fukuoka, Japan, seeking to give Mexico spots for the Paris Olympics.

To travel to Japan, World Aquatics provided them with plane tickets, although apparently not all athletes got them because high diver Jonathan Paredes requested help on Twitter to get a ticket to Japan and Aeroméxico eventually provided it.

"This situation is a bit tedious because in the end you are not 100% focused on what you have to do. But nothing is impossible, we already have flights and logistics for the world championships. Now we have to train hard and go and get those Olympic spots," Balleza said.

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In addition to Balleza and Berlin, the artistic swimming team was forced to sell swimsuits and towels on social media.

"There are 14 of us in the team so we need a lot of money to travel, but it all adds up. The swimsuits gave us an opportunity, but our parents still support us, there are donations, and, in the end, everything adds up in the fight for us to go to the Olympic Games," said Jessica Sobrino, a member of the team who came up with the idea of sell those items.

The artistic team recently won a legal battle and a judge ordered Guevara to restore the scholarships. But the director of the national commission said that is not a permanent measure.

The issue has even been discussed by Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who said he would try to see how to help the competitors.

While that happens, aquatics athletes in Mexico will have to keep looking for ways to make money, even if that means selling clothes or taking them off.

AP Olympics: <https://apnews.com/hub/2024-paris-olympic-games> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Sports](https://twitter.com/AP_Sports)

## Captured Ukrainian soldiers face trial in Russia

MOSCOW (AP) — More than 20 Ukrainian soldiers who were taken prisoner during fighting in Ukraine went on trial in southern Russia on Wednesday.

The captured soldiers were members of the Azov battalion, an elite Ukrainian armed forces unit that fought Russian troops in the Sea of Azov port of Mariupol. Russia captured Mariupol last year after a three-month battle that reduced most of the city to smoldering ruins.

The last remaining Ukrainian defenders who holed up at a giant steel mill in Mariupol surrendered to Russian forces in May 2022.

Russian authorities have designated the Azov battalion as a terrorist group. The defendants are facing charges of involvement in a terrorist organization and taking part in action to overthrow the Russia-backed authorities in the Donetsk region.

They face sentences ranging from 15 years to life in prison if convicted.

Of the 24 people who have faced the charges, two have been swapped for Russian prisoners of war as part of a prisoner exchange. Of the remaining 22 defendants facing the trial, eight are women, who reportedly worked as cooks for the Azov battalion.

## Fox News says it 'addressed' onscreen message that called Biden a 'wannabe dictator'

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Fox News appeared to express regret Wednesday for showing an onscreen message that called President Joe Biden a "wannabe dictator" who had his political rival arrested.

On the day he was arraigned on federal charges for hoarding classified documents, former President Donald Trump illustrated his continued role as a lightning rod for the media. PBS second-guessed one of its own messages about Trump, and his primetime speech showed a policy change at CNN following the ouster of its former leader.

The Fox News Channel chyron appeared beneath split-screen video boxes that showed Trump addressing supporters live in New Jersey, and Biden speaking at the White House earlier in the day.

The message read, "Wannabe dictator speaks at the White House after having his political rival arrested."

Fox said in a statement Wednesday that "the chyron was taken down immediately and was addressed." The website Mediaite reported that the message was onscreen for 27 seconds. It was also not removed when the telecast was rerun late at night.

Fox did not explain how the message made it onto the screen and how the matter was addressed.

The White House has said Biden has had no contact with Attorney General Merrick Garland about the

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indictment by special counsel Jack Smith, which accuses Trump of illegally hoarding classified documents. Biden has not commented on the case.

Two months ago, Fox News agreed to pay Dominion Voting Systems \$787 million to settle a lawsuit accusing the news organization of telling lies about the 2020 presidential election.

"There are probably about 787 million things that I can say about this," White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said when asked Wednesday about the chyron. "That was wrong — about what we saw last night — but I don't think I'm going to get into it."

It's not hard to find Republican politicians or commentators on Fox to suggest the indictment was politically motivated — Trump attorney Joe Tacopina made the same charges on Sean Hannity's show within a half-hour after Trump's speech.

Yet some on Fox have spoken to the seriousness of the case against Trump, most notably his former attorney general, William Barr, during an appearance over the weekend, and legal analyst Jonathan Turley.

Fox has seen its primetime ratings tumble sharply since it fired Tucker Carlson shortly after the Dominion case was settled. Carlson posted another video commentary on Twitter Tuesday night, despite Fox's lawyers demanding that he stop doing that because it violated the terms of a contract that runs until early 2025.

Meanwhile, PBS used the lower third of its screen to post fact-checks when it streamed Trump's New Jersey speech on its YouTube channel Tuesday night.

The final one was eye-catching: "Experts warn that inflammatory rhetoric from elected officials or people in power can prompt individual actors to commit acts of violence."

While the statement is true, PBS officials are questioning whether or not that was the right forum, said Sara Just, senior executive producer at "NewsHour." Other messages PBS used onscreen mentioned how federal officials have attested to the security of the 2020 presidential election, and how prosecutors say that some documents discovered at Trump's home pertained to U.S. nuclear programs and defense capabilities.

"We are discussing whether or not we might phrase that better," Just said.

While Fox News aired Trump's speech live, MSNBC did not. Neither did CNN. That's in contrast to when Trump was indicted on separate charges in New York in April, when CNN aired most of a similar Trump address the night of his arraignment. That was before former CNN chief executive Chris Licht, who had been making efforts to appeal to GOP viewers, was ousted.

"We're not carrying his remarks live because, frankly, he says a lot of things that are untrue and, frankly, potentially dangerous," CNN's Jake Tapper said.

After the speech was over, CNN aired a nearly two-minute clip of Trump that Tapper followed with several fact-checks.

"In terms of trying to destroy American democracy, we all know who tried to actually undo an election," he said. "It's not Joe Biden. It's Mr. Trump."

MSNBC's Rachel Maddow made a similar pronouncement before that network chose not to air Trump's speech live. Clips from the remarks were shown later.

"There is a cost to us as a news organization to knowingly broadcast untrue things," Maddow said.

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Associated Press writer Aamer Madhani in Washington contributed to this report.

## **Wolves that nearly died out from inbreeding recovered, now helping a remote island's ecosystem**

By JOHN FLESHER AP Environmental Writer

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. (AP) — Gray wolves are thriving at Isle Royale National Park five years after authorities began a last-ditch attempt to prevent the species from dying out on the Lake Superior island chain, scientists said Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the park's moose population continues a sharp but needed decline. Overpopulation of the lumbering mammals were causing their own starvation as they outstripped available balsam fir trees — their primary food during long, snowbound winters, Michigan Technological University biologists said.

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The trends appear to justify federal officials' 2018 decision to airlift mainland wolves to Isle Royale, the researchers said, arguing that the predators' return is helping rebalance an ecosystem knocked off-kilter as their number dropped to just two.

The scientists' annual report, based largely on aerial observations last winter, estimated the rebuilt population at 31 wolves— up from 28 last year. It said the wolves appeared to be forming three packs, with others wandering alone or in smaller groups. The moose total was roughly 967, down from 1,346 last year and 54% decline from about 2,000 in 2019. Ecologists are celebrating what they hope will be a healthier herd.

"It's been hugely successful," said study co-leader Sarah Hoy, a research assistant professor and animal ecologist. "That's what everyone was hoping for."

But the early results haven't settled a debate over whether people should rescue struggling species at Isle Royale or other designated wilderness areas, where federal law calls for letting nature take its course.

"We have felt and still believe that the National Park Service should not have intervened and set up this artificial population of wolves," said Kevin Proescholdt, conservation director for the advocacy group Wilderness Watch.

Scientists believe the island's first moose swam to Isle Royale around the turn of the 20th century. Wolves arrived in the late 1940s, apparently crossing the frozen lake surface from Minnesota or the Canadian province of Ontario. Though technically part of Michigan, that state's shores are farther away.

Moose provided an ample food supply for the wolves, which in turn helped keep moose numbers in check. Both populations rose and fell over the years, influenced by disease, weather, parasites and other factors. But inbreeding finally took its toll on the wolves, whose numbers plummeted between 2011 and 2018.

Some experts said they should be allowed to die out, as have other species that once occupied the island, including Canada lynx and woodland caribou, which had the same predator-prey relationship as today's wolves and moose.

"Species come and species go," Proescholdt said, arguing that the federal Wilderness Act "directs us to let nature call the shots and not impose our human desires."

Park officials and Michigan Tech scientists contend the absence of a top-of-the-food-chain predator of moose and beaver would have been ruinous for the island's forest. Even now, its balsam firs continue to deteriorate from moose browsing and an attack of tree-killing spruce budworm, the report said.

Experts acknowledge the same factors that nearly wiped out the wolves — primarily inbreeding — eventually could return. Global warming is causing fewer ice bridges to form on Lake Superior, reducing the likelihood of wolves trekking from the mainland to the park and diversifying the gene pool. The sprawling archipelago's closest point to the mainland is about 15 miles (25 kilometers) away.

That could mean park managers will need to import a few wolves every decade or so, Hoy said.

They brought in 19 wolves from Minnesota, Ontario's Michipicoten Island and Michigan's Upper Peninsula in 2018-19. Only a few are believed still alive — hardly surprising as wild wolves seldom live longer than five years, Hoy said. But their descendants are believed to have produced at least seven litters of pups.

This year's field study detected an 11-member pack on the main island's eastern side and a five-member pack on the western side. There were three groups of at least three wolves each, and a few loners or pairs. A new pack also appears to be forming, the report said.

The moose population's 28% drop from 2022 is one of the biggest one-year collapses ever seen at the park, it said. While wolf predation is partly responsible, necropsies indicate the biggest cause was starvation from overpopulation.

Even though relatively few moose calves appear to be surviving to adulthood, there's no reason to worry about the moose's immediate future, Michigan Tech biologist Rolf Peterson said. They've fallen to 400-500 before and bounced back. But the warming climate, tick infestations and other long-term challenges will remain.

For now, the park's ecosystem is getting healthier thanks to the wolves' return, he said, suggesting the decision to intervene was correct.

"The old hands-off approach to managing national parks, figuring everything will turn out OK, is prob-

ably not sufficient," Peterson said. "Our footprint is all over the entire globe."

## **Synagogue massacre survivor cried 'Mommy' as her 97-year-old mother was shot and killed by her side**

PITTSBURGH (AP) — A survivor of the Pittsburgh synagogue massacre said Wednesday that she saw her right arm "get blown open in two places" by a gunman and cried "Mommy" after realizing her 97-year-old mother had been shot and killed by her side in the nation's deadliest attack on Jewish people.

Andrea Wedner was the government's last witness as prosecutors wrapped up their case against Robert Bowers, who burst into the Tree of Life synagogue building with a military-style rifle and other weaponry and opened fire, shooting anyone he could find.

Bowers killed 11 worshippers and injured seven other people, including five police officers, in the 2018 attack. The 50-year-old truck driver is charged with 63 criminal counts, including hate crimes resulting in death and the obstruction of the free exercise of religion resulting in death.

Bowers' attorneys did not put on a defense after the prosecution rested, setting the stage for closing arguments and jury deliberations on Thursday.

Assuming the jury returns a conviction, the trial would enter what's expected to be a lengthy penalty phase, with the same jurors deciding Bowers' sentence: life in prison or the death penalty. Bowers' attorneys, who have acknowledged he was the gunman, have focused their efforts on trying to save his life.

Federal prosecutors ended their case against Bowers on Wednesday with some of the most harrowing and heartbreaking testimony of the trial so far.

Wedner told jurors that Sabbath services had started five or 10 minutes earlier when she heard a crashing sound in the building's lobby, followed by gunfire. She said her mother, Rose Mallinger, asked her, "What do we do?"

Wedner said she had a "clear memory" of the gunman and his rifle.

"We were filled with terror — it was indescribable. We thought we were going to die," she said.

Wedner called 911 and was on the line when she and her mother were shot. She testified that she checked her mother's pulse and realized, "I knew she wouldn't survive." As SWAT officers entered the chapel, Wedner said, she kissed her fingers and touched them to her dead mother, cried "Mommy," and stepped over another victim on her way out. She said she was the sole survivor in that section of the synagogue.

Her account capped a prosecution case in which other survivors also testified about the terror they felt that day, police officers recounted how they exchanged gunfire with Bowers and finally neutralized him, and jurors heard about Bowers' toxic online presence in which he praised Hitler, espoused white supremacy and ranted incessantly against Jews.

The defense has suggested Bowers acted not out of religious hatred but rather a delusional belief that Jews were enabling genocide by helping immigrants settle in the United States.

Also testifying Wednesday was Pittsburgh SWAT Officer Timothy Matson, who was critically wounded while responding to the rampage.

He told jurors that he and another officer broke down the door to the darkened room where Bowers had holed up and was immediately knocked off his feet by blasts from Bowers' gun. Matson, who stands 6 foot 4 and weighed 310 pounds at the time of the shooting, said he made his way to the stairs and was placed on a stretcher, and remembers thinking, "I must be in bad shape."

Matson was shot seven times, including in the head, knee, shin and elbow, and has endured 25 surgeries to repair the damage, but he testified he would go through the door again.

## It's almost time to resume student loan payments. Not doing so could cost you

By CORA LEWIS and ADRIANA MORGA Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — After three years, the pandemic-era freeze on student loan payments will end soon. Student loan interest will start accruing on September 1 and payments are starting in October.

It might seem tempting to just keep not making payments, but the consequences can be severe, including a hit to your credit score and exclusion from future aid and benefits.

More than 40 million Americans will have to start making federal student loan payments again at the end of the summer under the terms of a debt ceiling deal approved by Congress.

Millions are also waiting to find out whether the Supreme Court will allow President Joe Biden's student loan forgiveness plan to go ahead. But payments will resume regardless of what justices decide.

That means tough decisions for many borrowers, especially those in already-difficult financial situations.

Experts say that delinquency and bankruptcy should be options of last resort, and that deferment and forbearance — which pause payments, though interest may continue to accrue — are often better in the short term.

### WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T MAKE STUDENT LOAN PAYMENTS?

Once the moratorium ends, borrowers who can't or don't pay risk delinquency and eventually default. That can badly hurt your credit rating and make you ineligible for additional aid and government benefits.

If you're struggling to pay, advisers first encourage you to check if you qualify for an income-driven repayment plan, which determines your payments by looking at your expenses. You can determine this by visiting the Federal Student Aid website. If you've worked for a government agency or a non-profit organization, you could also be eligible for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, which forgives student debt after 10 years.

Carolina Rodriguez, Director of the Education Debt Consumer Assistance Program at the Community Service Society of New York, emphasizes that anyone temporarily unemployed should be able to qualify for a \$0 payment plan. And many others qualify based on income and family size.

"The repercussions of falling into delinquency can be pretty severe," Rodriguez said. "The federal government can administratively intercept tax refunds and garnish wages. And it can affect Social Security, retirement, and disability benefits. Does it make financial sense at that point? Probably not."

Rodriguez says her organization always advises against deferment or forbearance except once a borrower has exhausted all other options. In the long term, those financial choices offer little benefit, as some loans will continue to accrue interest while deferred.

Abby Shafroth, senior attorney and director of the Student Loan Borrower Assistance Project at the National Consumer Law Center, said that, of the two, deferment is generally a better option.

That's because interest generally does not accrue on Direct Subsidized Loans, the subsidized portion of Direct Consolidation Loans, Subsidized Federal Stafford Loans, the subsidized portion of FFEL Consolidation Loans, and Federal Perkins Loans. All other federal student loans that are deferred will continue to accrue interest.

"Forbearance allows you to postpone payments without it being held against you, but interest does accrue. So you're going to see your balance increase every month."

### WHAT ABOUT DECLARING BANKRUPTCY?

For most student loan borrowers, it's still very difficult to have your loans discharged, or canceled, through bankruptcy. Borrowers must prove a very hard standard of financial circumstances, called "undue hardship."

"That doesn't mean people shouldn't look into it," Rodriguez said. "But they may not be successful at discharging their loans."

For borrowers who show that level of financial strain, chances are they have other options, Rodriguez said.

She advises that borrowers make sure they are speaking to a bankruptcy attorney who understands student loan bankruptcy, which requires a different proceeding than other types of bankruptcy.

Shafroth, of the NCLC, says that new guidance on student loan bankruptcy has been coming out in



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recent years.

"Though it is difficult to get your loans discharged through the bankruptcy process, an increasing number of borrowers are eligible to get their loans discharged that way," she said. "A lot of people write that off as 'there's no way,' it's impossible.' But it's increasingly possible."

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A LOAN GOES INTO DEFAULT?

When you fall behind on a loan by 270 days — roughly 9 months — the loan appears on your credit report as being in default.

"At that point, it's not just behind, it's in collections," Shafroth said. "That's when you become ineligible to take out new federal student aid. A lot of people go into default because they weren't able to complete their degree the first time. This prevents them from going back to school."

Once a loan is in default, it's subject to the collection processes mentioned above. That means the government can garnish wages (without a court order) to go towards paying back the loan, intercept tax refunds, and seize portions of Social Security checks and other benefit payments.

## WHAT ARE OTHER OPTIONS IF I CAN'T MAKE PAYMENTS?

Shafroth said that many borrowers may still be eligible to have loans canceled via a patchwork of programs outside of the Biden administration's proposed debt relief program.

"If your school closed before you could complete your program, you're eligible for relief. If your school lied to you or misrepresented the outcome of what your enrolling would be, you can file a borrower defense application, and request your loan be canceled on that basis," she said. "If you have a disability, you can sometimes have your loans canceled on that basis."

Shafroth encourages borrowers to look at the Student Aid website to see what their options might be before missing payments.

## WHAT IF MY LOANS WERE IN DEFAULT BEFORE MARCH 2020?

Under the Biden administration's Fresh Start program, borrowers with federal student loans who were in default before the pause have a chance to become current.

Borrowers who were in default will not be subject to collection processes or have wages garnished through about August 2024, or roughly one year after the payment freeze ends. These borrowers have also been granted permission to apply for federal student loans again, to complete degrees. Lastly, these defaulted loans are now being reported to credit bureaus as current.

That said, borrowers must take action if they want to stay out of default after this year-long leniency period ends.

To eliminate your record of default, you should contact the Education Department's Default Resolution Group online, by phone, or by mail, and ask the group to take the loans out of default via the Fresh Start policy. In four to six weeks, any record of default will be removed from your credit report, and the loans will be placed with a loan servicer. This will also give you access to income-driven repayment plans and Public Service Loan Forgiveness, if applicable.

## WHAT IF I WAS BEHIND ON PAYMENTS OR DELINQUENT BEFORE MARCH 2020?

The Fresh Start program also applies to borrowers who were delinquent prior to the payment pause. Those accounts will be considered current, and borrowers will have the option to enroll in income-driven repayment plans that can lower bills to as little as \$0, or to apply for deferment, forbearance or bankruptcy.

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## Kylian Mbappe, Harry Kane could be soccer's biggest transfer stories this summer

By JAMES ROBSON AP Soccer Writer

MANCHESTER, England (AP) — Kylian Mbappe's decision not to take up the option of a 12-month extension on his Paris Saint-Germain contract could spark a bidding war for the French superstar this summer.

PSG is adamant he will not be allowed to leave as a free agent when his current deal runs out at the end of next season, meaning he could be put up for sale during this transfer window if a resolution over his future is not agreed.

Real Madrid has coveted Mbappe for a number of years and in 2021 unsuccessfully launched a bid of \$190 million to take him to the Bernabeu. The Spanish giant would appear to be the likeliest destination for the World Cup-winning forward — especially at a time when it needs to find a replacement for Karim Benzema, who has joined Saudi Arabian team Al-Ittihad.

But Mbappe has this week described reports claiming he wants to move to Madrid this summer as "lies."

"I have already said that I will continue next season at PSG where I am very happy," he tweeted.

PSG will be put in a difficult position if Mbappe sticks to his current stance that he will not leave this summer and also will not sign a new contract.

The Qatari-backed French club has already seen Lionel Messi walk away as a free agent, after the Argentine great agreed to join MLS team Inter Miami, and would likely miss out on one of the biggest transfer fees in the history of soccer if Mbappe leaves for nothing as well.

Madrid is unlikely to be the only major European club interested in Mbappe, but his price tag means only a select few could afford to fund the deal.

Here's a look at other star players who could be on the move.

**HARRY KANE (TOTTENHAM)**

England's all-time leading goal-scorer is entering the final year of his contract and continues to be linked with moves to Manchester United and Madrid.

Tottenham has resisted all previous attempts to lure its iconic striker away but faces the risk of losing him for nothing if he refuses to extend his current deal.

Kane has never won a major trophy and turns 30 before the start of next season.

Spurs also know this summer may be the last chance to command a big fee for Kane, and reportedly value him at \$123 million.

It remains to be seen whether Madrid's reported interest cools in light of Mbappe's potential availability.

In addition, that could also mean PSG is in the market for a new striker this summer.

**ILKAY GUNDOGAN (MANCHESTER CITY)**

Fresh from lifting the Champions League trophy in Istanbul, City's inspirational captain is set to become a free agent, unless a new contract can be agreed soon.

Gundogan has repeatedly been linked with a move to Barcelona, but City manager Pep Guardiola has made it clear that he wants the 32-year-old midfielder to stay.

Having completed the treble — including the Premier League title and FA Cup — this season, it might be the perfect time for the Germany international to say farewell.

**DECLAN RICE (WEST HAM)**

After seeing his England midfield partner Jude Bellingham sign for Madrid, Rice is also expected to be on the move this summer.

Arsenal appears to be leading the race for his signature, despite the midfielder also being linked with Manchester United, Chelsea and Bayern Munich.

An all-action midfielder, Rice would be a statement signing for Arsenal after the London club's Premier League title challenge collapsed in the final weeks of the season.

**VICTOR OSIMHEN (NAPOLI)**

The free-scoring forward has established himself as one of the most exciting strikers in the world and has picked up many admirers as a result.

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Manchester United has been linked most heavily, given Erik ten Hag's need to bring in a top-class replacement for Cristiano Ronaldo, who left in November.

Osimhen might not be the only member of Napoli's league title-winning team who gets attention this summer — especially following the departure of inspirational coach Luciano Spalletti.

Khvicha Kvaratskhelia was outstanding last season, while defender Kim Min-jae is another player who has been linked with United.

## JOSKO Gvardiol (RB Leipzig)

One of the stars of the World Cup, the Croatia defender has been linked with a move to Manchester City. However, Leipzig is expected to demand a world-record fee for a defender if it is to sell Gvardiol.

United paid 80 million pounds (then \$97 million) for Harry Maguire in 2019.

Guardiola has already spoken of the need to build on City's Champions League success. Chelsea's Mateo Kovacic is another player City has been linked with.

Maguire, meanwhile, faces an uncertain future at United after losing his place under Ten Hag. He has been linked with a move to Tottenham.

## Mason Mount (Chelsea)

Chelsea has rejected a bid of around \$51 million from United for the England midfielder, a person with knowledge of the offer told The Associated Press.

The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not permitted to comment publicly.

Ten Hag has identified Mount as one of his top targets this summer as he looks to add more depth to a squad that won the League Cup and finished third in the Premier League last season.

But, with a top striker his priority, he is limited to how much he will be able to spend elsewhere and it remains to be seen if United will go as high as Chelsea's reported valuation of around \$89 million.

Along with Tottenham, United has also been linked with Brentford goalkeeper David Raya.

Mount has previously been linked with Liverpool and Arsenal.

## Randal Kolo Muani (Eintracht Frankfurt)

The France striker impressed at the World Cup but was only in the squad as a late injury replacement before seizing his chance to shine.

He's long been seen as a target for Bayern Munich as the German champion has looked short of a center-forward since Robert Lewandowski left last year, but PSG and Manchester United have also been reported to be interested.

Kolo Muani scored 23 goals and set up 17 more in his single season with Frankfurt, which only qualified for the Europa Conference League next season.

## Moises Caicedo (Brighton)

Perhaps if Arsenal had been successful in its attempts to land Caicedo in January, it would not have fallen away so dramatically late in the season.

The midfielder has established himself as a stellar talent and looks certain to leave Brighton this summer. Arsenal continues to be linked, along with Chelsea, while many more are likely to monitor his situation.

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James Ellingworth contributed to this report from Duesseldorf, Germany.

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## In blow to Russian LGBTQ+ community, lawmakers weigh a bill banning gender transitioning procedures

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — Russian lawmakers gave initial approval Wednesday to a bill that would outlaw gender transitioning procedures in yet another blow to the country's beleaguered LGBTQ+ community.

Senior lawmaker Pyotr Tolstoy, who is among the bill's sponsors, has said it is intended to "protect Russia with its cultural and family values and traditions and to stop the infiltration of the Western anti-family ideology."

Russia's LGBTQ+ community has been under growing pressure for a decade as President Vladimir Putin and the Russian Orthodox Church embarked on a campaign to preserve what they deem the country's "traditional values."

The bill bans any "medical interventions aimed at changing the sex of a person," as well as changing one's gender in official documents and public records.

Russian transgender people and LGBTQ+ rights advocates contacted by The Associated Press described the measure as a grim development.

"We knew that they didn't like us here, but to go absolutely against human rights, against the existing laws even," said Maxim, a 29-year-old transgender activist who spoke on condition of anonymity because of safety concerns.

The only option for those seeking to transition through medical care or changing their gender in documents would be to leave the country, according to human rights lawyer Max Olenichev, who works with the Russian LGBTQ+ community. "Neither medical, nor legal transitioning will be possible without changing the country of residence."

The bill must receive three readings by Russia's lower house of parliament, the State Duma, but there is little doubt it will pass because about 400 members of the 450-seat house signed it, including the house speaker and the leaders of all political factions.

The independent Russian news outlet Meduza reported that such a massive show of unity has happened only three times before under Putin, most recently when 385 Duma members signed on to a bill last year to ban "propaganda of nontraditional sexual relations" among adults.

That initiative was quickly rubber-stamped, and by December 2022, any positive or even neutral representation of LGBTQ+ people in movies, literature, or media was outlawed. The bill severely restricting trans rights came just a few months after that.

The crackdown on the LGBTQ+ community started well before last year, however. Maria Sjödin, executive director of the Outright international LGBTQ+ rights group, told AP in an interview that the situation in Russia has been deteriorating "over quite a long period of time, coming up on at least 10 years."

In 2013, the Kremlin adopted the first legislation restricting LGBTQ+ rights, known as the "gay propaganda" law that banned any public endorsement of "nontraditional sexual relations" among minors. In 2020, Putin pushed through a constitutional reform that outlawed same-sex marriage.

But the Kremlin has ramped up its rhetoric about protecting "traditional values" from what it called the West's "degrading" influence after sending its troops into Ukraine last year, in what rights advocates saw as an attempt to legitimize the war.

"Do we really want to have here, in our country, in Russia, 'Parent No. 1, No. 2, No. 3' instead of 'mom' and 'dad?'" Putin said in September at a ceremony during which four Ukrainian regions were formally annexed by Moscow. "Do we really want perversions that lead to degradation and extinction to be imposed in our schools from the primary grades?"

Vyacheslav Volodin, the speaker of the State Duma, called gender transitioning "pure satanism" as he opened voting on the measure Wednesday.

"We do not want this to happen in our country. Let the diabolical policy be carried out in the U.S.," Volodin said.

But the clampdown on trans rights is actually a global trend that's happening in the U.S., too, Sjödin

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said, adding: "We know there have been over 500 state-level bills introduced in the U.S. attacking LGBTQ rights in different ways with specific focus on trans rights."

The move targeting transgender people in Russia was not unexpected. Yana Kirey-Sitnikova, a transgender studies researcher, told AP that when anti-Western sentiments emerged last year, she realized that "the authorities would now take us on." That's when she changed her gender marker in her documents, even though she wanted to postpone the process for some time.

Kirey-Sitnikova said the procedure under existing Russian law is simple. A person has to obtain a medical certificate stating that they have been diagnosed with "transsexualism." Such certificates are issued by a panel of medical specialists, Kirey-Sitnikova said, and unlike in some other countries, hormonal therapy or gender-affirming surgery is not required to get this diagnosis.

With this medical certificate in hand, the next step is to go to a state registry office and get a new birth certificate, allowing for the issuance of a new passport and other documents. The whole process could take from several weeks to over two years, depending on the panel's availability and procedures they do to issue a diagnosis.

Maxim, the activist with the Center T trans rights group who changed his gender marker three years ago, echoed Kirey-Sitnikova's sentiment that Russia currently "is unique in a good way when it comes to gender transitioning." He also praised the quality and availability of gender-affirming medical care in Russia, saying there are many good surgeons and endocrinologists advising on hormone therapy.

The new bill will take all of that away, according to Olenichev, the lawyer.

Doctors won't be allowed to diagnose those seeking to transition, hormonal therapy and surgery will be outlawed for those who haven't yet managed to change their gender in the documents. Those who have should be able to access necessary medical care, Olenichev said, because the bill outlaws "changing the sex of a person," but not medical care in accordance with the person's official gender.

There's no official data on how many people in Russia have changed gender in official documents, Olenichev said, but the number apparently has grown in recent years.

Independent news outlet Mediazona reported in February that the number of passports issued due to "gender change" has more than doubled in 2022 compared with two years earlier -- from 428 in 2020 to 936 last year, according to Russia's Interior Ministry.

In justifying the new bill, lawmakers cited concerns that men are using the relatively simple procedure of changing gender in official documents to dodge the military draft.

Maxim said that isn't true. The process "is lengthy, costly, and for transphobic people it is humiliating," he said, adding that the spike in numbers could be linked to fears about the bill and people rushing to complete the procedures before it takes effect.

Among those hoping to have enough time to transition are transgender teenagers who are under 18 and can't act on their aspirations even under existing legislation.

Lyubov, a therapist who works with such teenagers, told AP that "the vast majority of them lived on hope and anticipation of their 18th birthday," and now they have a lot of anxiety. "I view the future as rather sad," said Lyubov, the mother of a trans 17-year-old who asked that her last name not be used for safety reasons.

"Our children are between a rock and a hard place: On one hand, there's social pressure, and on the other, lack of hope that when they turn 18, something will change," she said.

"It is an impossible situation," Lyubov said, because trans people will be hit with the ban on "changing your life in accordance with your gender identity," while also having to deal with a society that paints them as "not healthy, not normal, not having the right to live."

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## Everyone's got something to say about Trump -- except world leaders who might have to deal with him

By RAF CASERT Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — In the final days of the 2016 U.S. election campaign, European Union leader Donald Tusk could no longer contain himself: "One Donald is more than enough!" he wrote on Twitter. When Trump was elected less than a week later, it made for an awkward start to what proved to be four difficult years of trans-Atlantic relations.

As Trump becomes the first former president to face federal charges that could put him in jail, many Europeans are watching the case closely. But hardly a single world leader has said a thing recently about the man leading the race for the Republican party nomination.

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg, who Foreign Policy Magazine named its "Diplomat of the Year" in 2019 for helping the alliance navigate an "uncertain future" during the Trump years, demonstrated his chops when asked about a second term: It took him less than three sentences to change the topic to the television series "The Crown."

It's not that the global public isn't interested. Trump's court appearance grabbed headlines and figured prominently on evening newscasts across much of Europe.

As far away as New Zealand, most "are watching the Trump circus with the same sense of horror and fascination that marked his last days in office" in early 2021 when the U.S. Capitol was attacked, said David Capie, a professor of international relations at Victoria University of Wellington.

Few European leaders would welcome Trump's reelection. His policies on climate, trade and security clashed with European interests and sensibilities, and many fear that he would withdraw robust U.S. support for the war in Ukraine.

"The whole world has the same concern. We hope that the U.S. election restores a bit of rationality," said José Pio Borges, president of the Brazilian Center for International Relations think tank said Tuesday. "Not that we have great appreciation for Biden, but there is no comparison."

In other parts of the world where the U.S. feels farther away, like China and India, the trial passed by with much less notice.

And then, a minority of world leaders is openly cheering for Trump to make a comeback. In Hungary, Prime Minister Viktor Orban backed Trump in 2016, and said the war in Ukraine wouldn't be happening if Trump was still president. In a speech last month, he cried: "Come back, Mr. President! Make America great again, and bring us peace!"

The nature of the allegations against Trump being tried now also matter to allied leaders. Prosecutors allege he was reckless with classified information, including secrets shared by or about intelligence partners.

"Were Donald Trump to be elected President, then absolutely, there will be certain governments that are going to be concerned," said Leslie Vinjamuri, director of the U.S. and Americas Program at the London-based think tank Chatham House. She added that the current case was "very clear evidence, you know, of his willingness to play fast and loose with secret and top secret documents."

With NATO allies and as far as Australia and New Zealand, the United States has a dense network of military security cooperation deals where secrecy, due diligence and trust in exchanging sensitive information are essential.

The indictment alleges Trump intentionally retained hundreds of classified documents after leaving office in January 2021, and then stored them in cardboard boxes in locations including a bathroom, a ballroom and a bedroom. The documents contained information on nuclear programs, defense and weapons capabilities of the U.S. and foreign governments, and a Pentagon "attack plan," prosecutors wrote.

"It's so far beyond the pale of the imagination of most people who work in intelligence that it really, you know, you do have to sort of laugh. But it's obviously very grave, very serious," Vinjamuri told the AP.

Governments themselves have shied away from addressing such sensitive issues on the record, but it's clear that most U.S. allies, especially in Europe, have embraced Biden as their best hope to rekindle old alliances and build cooperation to contain climate change.

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Russia's invasion of Ukraine has created Europe's biggest crisis in decades, and many European nations have stood shoulder to shoulder with Biden in facing Putin and slapping sanction after sanction on the Kremlin.

The war has even driven reassessments in some countries that were once inclined toward Trump's view of the world.

In Poland, the nationalist conservative government did not hide its admiration for Trump when he was elected, and agreed with him on issues including opposition to large-scale migration, especially by Muslims. In 2017, Poland's conservative President Andrzej Duda said that if the U.S. set up a base in Poland it would be called Fort Trump, and later Duda was one of the last world leaders to congratulate Biden after his election victory.

But Duda and others are grateful for Biden's assurances to Poland and his two visits to Warsaw since Russia launched its full-scale invasion.

Ukraine itself has received vital aid from the Biden administration, but has shown no interest in commenting on Biden's political rival. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy tried not to take sides during Trump's first impeachment saga despite playing a central role in it, much as he's welcomed China's peace plan for the conflict despite widespread perceptions that it favors Moscow.

But this time, European leaders are keeping their opinions about Trump to themselves.

"One of the most interesting questions here in the United Kingdom, across Europe and elsewhere, is: what are Europeans doing to prepare for the possibility that Donald Trump could return to the White House? And I think the reality is, not a lot right now," Vinjamuri said.

Donald Tusk is now running to lead Poland after elections in the fall. As a prime minister, the last thing he would want is to pick another fight with a Donald.

AP Writers from across the globe contributed.

## How Europe is leading the world in the push to regulate AI

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — Lawmakers in Europe signed off Wednesday on the world's first set of comprehensive rules for artificial intelligence, clearing a key hurdle as authorities across the globe race to rein in AI.

The European Parliament vote is one of the last steps before the rules become law, which could act as a model for other places working on similar regulations.

A yearslong effort by Brussels to draw up guardrails for AI has taken on more urgency as rapid advances in chatbots like ChatGPT show the benefits the emerging technology can bring — and the new perils it poses.

Here's a look at the EU's Artificial Intelligence Act:

### HOW DO THE RULES WORK?

The measure, first proposed in 2021, will govern any product or service that uses an artificial intelligence system. The act will classify AI systems according to four levels of risk, from minimal to unacceptable.

Riskier applications, such as for hiring or tech targeted to children, will face tougher requirements, including being more transparent and using accurate data.

It will be up to the EU's 27 member states to enforce the rules. Regulators could force companies to withdraw their apps from the market.

In extreme cases, violations could draw fines of up to 40 million euros (\$43 million) or 7% of a company's annual global revenue, which in the case of tech companies like Google and Microsoft could amount to billions.

### WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

One of the EU's main goals is to guard against any AI threats to health and safety and protect fundamental rights and values.

That means some AI uses are an absolute no-no, such as "social scoring" systems that judge people

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based on their behavior.

Also forbidden is AI that exploits vulnerable people, including children, or uses subliminal manipulation that can result in harm, for example, an interactive talking toy that encourages dangerous behavior.

Predictive policing tools, which crunch data to forecast who will commit crimes, is also out.

Lawmakers beefed up the original proposal from the European Commission, the EU's executive branch, by widening the ban on real-time remote facial recognition and biometric identification in public. The technology scans passers-by and uses AI to match their faces or other physical traits to a database.

A contentious amendment to allow law enforcement exceptions such as finding missing children or preventing terrorist threats did not pass.

AI systems used in categories like employment and education, which would affect the course of a person's life, face tough requirements such as being transparent with users and taking steps to assess and reduce risks of bias from algorithms.

Most AI systems, such as video games or spam filters, fall into the low- or no-risk category, the commission says.

## WHAT ABOUT CHATGPT?

The original measure barely mentioned chatbots, mainly by requiring them to be labeled so users know they're interacting with a machine. Negotiators later added provisions to cover general purpose AI like ChatGPT after it exploded in popularity, subjecting that technology to some of the same requirements as high-risk systems.

One key addition is a requirement to thoroughly document any copyright material used to teach AI systems how to generate text, images, video and music that resemble human work.

That would let content creators know if their blog posts, digital books, scientific articles or songs have been used to train algorithms that power systems like ChatGPT. Then they could decide whether their work has been copied and seek redress.

## WHY ARE THE EU RULES SO IMPORTANT?

The European Union isn't a big player in cutting-edge AI development. That role is taken by the U.S. and China. But Brussels often plays a trend-setting role with regulations that tend to become de facto global standards and has become a pioneer in efforts to target the power of large tech companies.

The sheer size of the EU's single market, with 450 million consumers, makes it easier for companies to comply than develop different products for different regions, experts say.

But it's not just a crackdown. By laying down common rules for AI, Brussels is also trying to develop the market by instilling confidence among users.

"The fact this is regulation that can be enforced and companies will be held liable is significant" because other places like the United States, Singapore and Britain have merely offered "guidance and recommendations," said Kris Shrishak, a technologist and senior fellow at the Irish Council for Civil Liberties.

"Other countries might want to adapt and copy" the EU rules, he said.

Businesses and industry groups warn that Europe needs to strike the right balance.

"The EU is set to become a leader in regulating artificial intelligence, but whether it will lead on AI innovation still remains to be seen," said Boniface de Champris, a policy manager for the Computer and Communications Industry Association, a lobbying group for tech companies.

"Europe's new AI rules need to effectively address clearly defined risks, while leaving enough flexibility for developers to deliver useful AI applications to the benefit of all Europeans," he said.

Sam Altman, CEO of ChatGPT maker OpenAI, has voiced support for some guardrails on AI and signed on with other tech executives to a warning about the risks it poses to humankind. But he also has said it's "a mistake to go put heavy regulation on the field right now."

Others are playing catch up on AI rules. Britain, which left the EU in 2020, is jockeying for a position in AI leadership. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak plans to host a world summit on AI safety this fall.

"I want to make the U.K. not just the intellectual home but the geographical home of global AI safety regulation," Sunak said at a tech conference this week.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

It could be years before the rules fully take effect. The next step is three-way negotiations involving member countries, the Parliament and the European Commission, possibly facing more changes as they try to agree on the wording.

Final approval is expected by the end of this year, followed by a grace period for companies and organizations to adapt, often around two years.

Brando Benifei, an Italian member of the European Parliament who is co-leading its work on the AI Act, said they would push for quicker adoption of the rules for fast-evolving technologies like generative AI.

To fill the gap before the legislation takes effect, Europe and the U.S. are drawing up a voluntary code of conduct that officials promised at the end of May would be drafted within weeks and could be expanded to other "like-minded countries."

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This story has been corrected to show that Kris Shrishak's last name was misspelled.

## **Benito the giraffe is alone and struggling at small Mexican zoo, climate activists say**

By MARK STEVENSON Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Benito the giraffe arrived in Mexico's arid northern border city of Ciudad Juarez just last month, and already the climate appears to be a problem — and he's only had to deal with the scorching heat of summer.

The snow and freezing temperatures of winter are still to come, and animal activists are up in arms and pushing a campaign under the hashtag "Save Benito" seeking to have the animal moved somewhere more hospitable.

On a recent day, the 3-year-old male giraffe could be seen crouching with only its head under a small, circular canopy for shade. The structure did little to protect him from a pelting rain and a hail storm later.

There is also a small shed for winter, but activists say it is cruel for the city-run Central Park to keep the giraffe in a small fenced enclosure, by himself, with only about a half acre to wander and few trees to nibble, in a climate he's not used to.

"We have been fighting for a month, a group of animal activists, to demand that he be taken to an animal sanctuary, a zoo, somewhere where there are appropriate facilities and qualified personnel to care for this type of animal," said Ana Félix, a Ciudad Juarez animal rights activist. "We are in the desert here and the climate here is extreme in winter and in summer."

Blue Hills, a sanctuary ranch in Texas that rescues animals and books private tours to help offset the cost, has offered to buy or adopt Benito.

"We can offer him a brand new heated barn, so in the winter he doesn't stand in the snow and freeze," ranch operator Matt Lieberman wrote in response to The Associated Press. "We have an on-staff vet that cares for our animals and we have 24-hour staff for him."

He added that the giraffe would have 320 acres (130 hectares) to roam in. "He doesn't have any trees to browse from" at the park in Mexico, Lieberman said. "He needs trees to eat from and keep stimulated."

Benito appears to have just about finished off the only small trees within his reach at Central Park and can do little more than walk in circles.

Officials at the park reject the criticism, though they acknowledge they can't provide more trees. They say they are working to improve Benito's compound, saying his presence has been important in boosting the park's popularity among visitors, largely children. Monthly visits rose from about 140,000 before Benito arrived to 200,000.

Park visitor Derek Reyes, 11, had mixed feelings about Benito.

"He could be fine here," Reyes said, "but it would also be good if they could take him to a place where they belong, with a herd."

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Park director Rogelio Muñoz said authorities are planning to build Benito a new, heated winter house by September.

The park is also building a larger sun canopy for the giraffe and dredging out garbage and fetid water from a pool that takes up much of the enclosure. Benito will have fresh water in a trough.

"The conditions, attention and care in the habitat of the park's new resident are optimal for his stay," the park wrote in a social media message.

Benito was donated by a zoo in the much more temperate climate of Sinaloa, a state on Mexico's northern Pacific coast. Benito couldn't stay with two other giraffes at the Sinaloa zoo because they were a couple, and the male could become territorial and attack the younger Benito.

The giraffe's arrival was a point of pride for Ciudad Juarez, a tough, dusty city across from El Paso, Texas, that is best known for its hundreds of maquiladora assembly factories and its endemic gang violence. El Paso has giraffes at its zoo, the thinking goes, so why can't Ciudad Juarez?

"We want to be like El Paso," Muñoz said.

Central Park, which also holds a few other animal species like ducks and donkeys, invited kids from across the city to come visit the new giraffe; the government of the border state of Chihuahua sponsored a contest among grade schoolers to name him.

The first prize — about \$500 — went to a little girl who proposed the name "Benito." One critic, Alfredo Casas, commented on Facebook, "They would have done better spending that money on better shade for the giraffe."

The park had a giraffe for 21 years named Modesto. He died last year, and activists say they don't want his experience — being alone and sometimes caught in the snow and frost — to be repeated for Benito.

"When Modesto died, we thought that was the end of it," said Félix. "But then they bring us a new animal, and that really isn't fair. It isn't fair to repeat the story of Modesto."

Muñoz acknowledged that Modesto's life was far from the best — children who used to visit the giraffe would feed him potato chips and snack foods. But park officials have launched a campaign to teach kids to bring Benito only lettuce and carrots.

Muñoz said he also doesn't want Benito to live out his life alone.

"When his quarters are fixed up, his house, with heating ... then we want to bring in a female, because he cannot be alone," Muñoz said.

## The weapons expert in the Alec Baldwin case was hungover on set, prosecutors say

By SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — The weapons supervisor on the film set where Alec Baldwin shot and killed a cinematographer was drinking and smoking marijuana in the evenings during the filming of "Rust," prosecutors are alleging, saying she was likely hungover when she loaded a live bullet into the revolver that the actor used.

They leveled the accusations Friday in response to a motion filed last month by Hannah Gutierrez-Reed's attorneys that seeks to dismiss her involuntary manslaughter charge. The prosecutors accused her of having a history of reckless conduct and argued that it would be in the public interest for her to "finally be held accountable."

Jason Bowles, Gutierrez-Reed's attorney, said Tuesday that the prosecution has mishandled the case.

"The case is so weak that they now have chosen to resort to character assassination claims about Hannah," Bowles told The Associated Press. "The prosecution has abandoned the idea of doing justice and getting to the actual truth apparently."

A preliminary hearing for Gutierrez-Reed is scheduled in August. A judge is expected to decide then if there's probable cause for Gutierrez-Reed's charge to move forward.

In the response, the prosecutors also noted that they expected to decide within the next 60 days whether

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to recharge Baldwin, depending on the results of an analysis of the gun and its broken sear. The items were sent to the state's independent expert for further testing.

The involuntary manslaughter charge faced by Baldwin, who also was a producer on the film, was dismissed in April, with prosecutors citing new evidence and the need for more time to investigate.

Baldwin was pointing a gun at cinematographer Halyna Hutchins during a rehearsal on the New Mexico film set in October 2021 when it went off, killing her and wounding the film's director, Joel Souza.

Gutierrez-Reed's attorneys had argued in their motion that the prosecution was "tainted by improper political motives" and that Santa Fe District Attorney Mary Carmack-Altwies and the initial special prosecutor she appointed, Andrea Reeb, "both used the tragic film set accident that resulted in the death of Halyna Hutchins as an opportunity to advance their personal interests."

The defense lawyers contend that the permanent damage done to the gun by FBI testing before the defense could examine it amounted to destruction of evidence and a violation of the court's rules of discovery. They also argued that the "selective prosecution" of Gutierrez-Reed was a violation of the equal protection clause of the U.S. Constitution's 14th Amendment.

New special prosecutors who were appointed after Reeb stepped down disputed those claims in their response, saying "nothing about this prosecution has or will be selective."

The prosecutors also acknowledged the unanswered question of where the live rounds found on set came from, saying they were trying to find out and that the investigation was ongoing. They also suggested there was evidence to support the theory that Gutierrez-Reed herself may be responsible and if so, more charges may follow.

They offered no specifics in the filing as to what that evidence might be.

## Today In History: June 15, Washington appointed to lead Continental Army

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, June 15, the 166th day of 2023. There are 199 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 15, 1775, the Second Continental Congress voted unanimously to appoint George Washington head of the Continental Army.

On this date:

In 1215, England's King John put his seal to Magna Carta ("the Great Charter") at Runnymede.

In 1864, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton signed an order establishing a military burial ground which became Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

In 1904, more than 1,000 people died when fire erupted aboard the steamboat General Slocum in New York's East River.

In 1934, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed an act making the National Guard part of the U.S. Army in the event of war or national emergency.

In 1938, Johnny Vander Meer pitched his second consecutive no-hitter, leading the Cincinnati Reds to a 6-0 victory over the Brooklyn Dodgers in the first night game at Ebbets Field, four days after leaving the Boston Bees hitless by a score of 3-0.

In 1944, American forces began their successful invasion of Saipan (sy-PAN') during World War II. B-29 Superfortresses carried out their first raids on Japan.

In 1960, the Billy Wilder movie "The Apartment," starring Jack Lemmon and Shirley MaLaine, premiered in New York.

In 1985, the Shiite Muslim hijackers of a TWA Boeing 727 beat and shot one of their hostages, U.S. Navy diver Robert Stethem (STEE'-them), 23, throwing him out of the plane to die on the tarmac at Beirut airport.

In 1991, Mount Pinatubo in the northern Philippines exploded in one of the biggest volcanic eruptions of