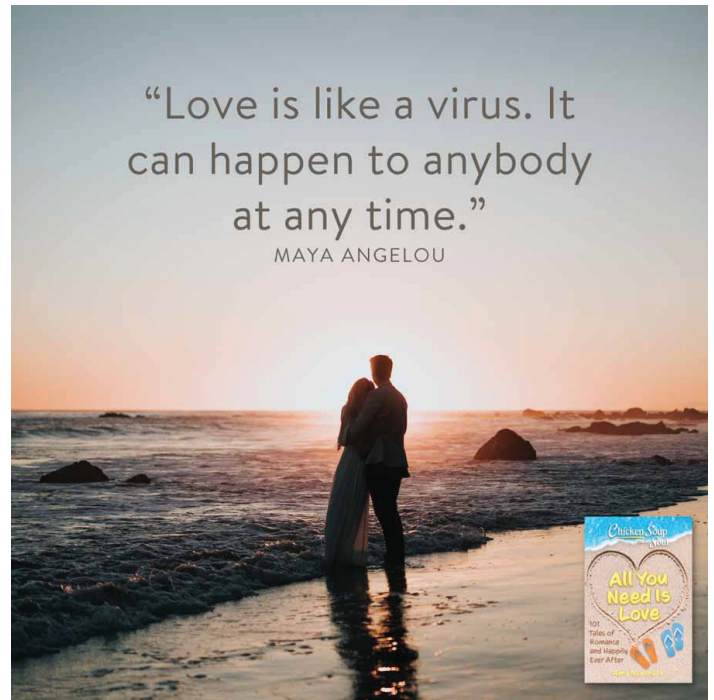


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Groton Community Calendar

Friday, June 23

Senior Menu: Tuna salad croissant, pea and cheese salad, mixed fruit.
Softball at Webster (U12 6:00 DH); T-Ball Gold hosts Andover, 6 p.m.; Jr. Legion at Lake Norden, 1 game, 7 p.m.; Legion at Lake Norden, 1 game, 5 p.m.

Farm Hand Wanted

Farm hand (Groton, Brown, South Dakota): Plant, cultivate & harvest crops. Apply fertilizers & pesticides. Operate, maintain and repair farm equipment. Repair fences and farm buildings. Follow all work and food safety protocols. Req: 6 mns rel exp. Mail resume to Shawn Gengerke Farms, 12702 406th Ave., Groton, SD 57445.

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

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

JANUARY 24, 2023

World in Brief

his testimony before Congress.

Donald Trump was triggered enough to "blow a gasket" after receiving the first batch of evidence used against him in the classified documents case, former federal prosecutor Glenn Kirschner said.

Chemical manufacturer 3M has agreed to pay a \$10.3 billion settlement with multiple U.S. cities over their claims that the company polluted their drinking water with so-called "forever chemicals."

Abortion pills will remain legal in Wyoming after a judge temporarily blocked the first state law banning their use. The ban was scheduled to take effect on July 1.

President Joe Biden and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi touted a new era in their countries' relations, calling themselves "among the closest partners in the world." Modi denied religious discrimination during a press conference, saying "democracy runs in our veins."

The San Antonio Spurs selected Victor Wembanyama as the overall No. 1 in the NBA Draft in New York. The 19-year-old Frenchman comes with a hype not seen since LeBron James was drafted in 2003.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu is lying to President Vladimir Putin about "colossal" battlefield failures in Ukraine, Wagner Group's Yevgeny Prigozhin said, ramping up his criticism of the military leadership..

WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAY AHEAD

President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris will mark one year since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade by attending a political event in Washington, D.C., with representatives from reproductive rights groups EMILYs List, NARAL Pro-Choice America and Planned Parenthood Action Fund.

GOP presidential candidate Nikki Haley is expected to deliver a foreign policy speech focused on U.S.-China relations at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C.

U.K. citizen Joseph James O'Connor is scheduled to be sentenced after pleading guilty to cyberstalking and hacking Twitter accounts belonging to several public figures. O'Connor could face up to 77 years in prison.

Christina Aguilera will headline Pride Live's Stonewall Day benefit concert at Hudson Yards in New York City. Actress Angelica Ross will host the event, which is raising money for the Stonewall National Monument Visitor Center in commemoration of 1969's Stonewall Rebellion.

The annual World's Ugliest Dog contest starts at 6 p.m. PT at the Sonoma-Marin Fair in Petaluma, California. A 17-year-old rescue named Mr. Happy Face won last year's contest.

The 2023 Glastonbury Festival kicks into gear this weekend with a headlining Friday night performance by Arctic Monkeys. Guns N' Roses will headline the festival Saturday, followed by Elton John on Sunday.

Officials with the U.S. Coast Guard confirmed that all five victims' lives on the Titan submersible were lost, with debris suggesting that a "catastrophic implosion" occurred.

The Supreme Court has ruled against the Navajo Nation in a dispute over drinking water, ruling that the 1868 treaty confining the Navajos to a reservation does not require the U.S. government to ensure they have access to water.

Hunter Biden allegedly used his father, President Joe Biden's, political power to threaten Chinese businessman Henry Zhao, IRS whistleblower Gary Shapley said during

Groton Jr. Teeners beat Webster in shortened game

The Groton Jr. Teener squad defeated Webster, 11-0. The game was called at the top of the third inning due to the rain. Groton scored five runs in the first inning and six in the second inning.

Ryder Schelle, Easton Weber and Braeden Flihs each had a double while Tristin McGannon had a triple. Stolen bases went to Schelle with three, Lincoln Krause with two and Ethan Kroll, Easton Weber and Nick Groeblichhoff with one each. Kroll was the winning pitcher with three hits, two walks and four strike-outs.

NSU Authorized by South Dakota Board of Regents to Address Critical Workforce Needs in the Region with New Nursing Program

ABERDEEN, S.D. – Northern State University has been authorized by the South Dakota Board of Regents to start a new nursing program that will address critical workforce needs for the community, region and state.

Northern plans to develop a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree program starting in fall 2024, following approval this week by the South Dakota Board of Regents.

This new program will provide students a pathway to becoming a registered nurse, with career ladder steps along the way.

“Northern’s career ladder program is designed to meet critical nursing workforce needs across our region,” said Dr. Neal Schnoor, NSU President. “We look forward to offering this unique new program, which is vital to both the future of healthcare and economic development.”

Through Northern’s program, students will receive excellent clinical experiences in various areas of healthcare, such as long-term care, mental health, obstetrics, emergency care, oncology, orthopedics and cardiology. Students will benefit from the university’s partnerships with Avera Health and Sanford Health.

The effort is driven by the Governor’s Workforce Initiative along with nursing workforce needs, which are especially crucial in rural areas. Northern estimates 25 students in the initial fall 2024 cohort, growing each year to a total of over 150 students by fall 2028.

“As rural healthcare demand continues to rise, Northern responded to the Governor’s workforce challenge,” said Schnoor. “We are excited to bring this opportunity to campus and are grateful for all the partners who made nursing education in Aberdeen a reality.”

Northern will seek approval from the South Dakota Board of Nursing and accreditation from the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education and the Higher Learning Commission to launch its new nursing program.

Flyovers to celebrate anniversary of Air Force's 100 years of mid-air refueling

RAPID CITY, S.D. – To mark the occasion of the Air Force's mid-air refueling 100th anniversary the Air Mobility Command of Sioux City, Iowa is collaborating with the South Dakota National Guard's 114th Fighter Wing. They will be conducting flyovers in South Dakota, North Dakota, and Iowa to honor the occasion on June 27, 2023.

According to the National Museum of the Air Force the first successful air refueling took place on June 27, 1923, and air refueling units from around the nation are planning to commemorate the event by performing flyovers at major landmarks, population centers and state capitols around the nation on June 27.

The Iowa Air National Guard's 185th Air Refueling Wing along with South Dakota's 114th Fighter Wing are planning flyovers with a U.S. Air Force KC-135 Stratotanker and F-16 Falcons.

Flyovers are expected at the following locations (times) around the nearby areas in South Dakota; Pierre (10:25 a.m.), the Badlands (9:40 a.m.), Mount Rushmore National Monument (9:50 a.m.), and Sioux Falls (12:20 p.m.). North Dakota locations are Bismarck (11:40 a.m.) and Teddy Roosevelt National Park (10:20 a.m.). Northern Iowa are Sioux City (9:50 a.m.). All times are local for the various locations.

The United States Air Force invites the American public to join them on June 27 to observe flyovers of the aerial refuelers above communities across the country and around the world, honoring 100 years of aerial refueling excellence.

NSU to offer Apprenticeship Programming

MADISON - Yesterday, the South Dakota Board of Regents (BOR) authorized Northern State University (NSU) to offer Composite Science as an additional core content area for Bachelor of Science Degree in Secondary Education students. The Board also approved a virtual delivery method for the BSEd Secondary Education degree to support incoming South Dakota Teacher Apprenticeship Pathway enrollees.

The new online and HyFlex BSEd in Secondary Education is part of the South Dakota Teacher Apprenticeship Pathway, launched in partnership with the South Dakota Department of Education (DOE) and BOR earlier this year. This collaborative effort aims to support and encourage paraprofessionals to become licensed teachers in the state of South Dakota.

"This is an innovative way to make a real impact as higher education works with Governor Noem to find creative ways to address workforce needs in our state," said South Dakota Board of Regents President Tim Rave. "The Governor challenged state agencies and the board to develop opportunities to provide nontraditional methods to grow our workforce. This apprenticeship program allows us to educate aspiring teachers while keeping enrollees in their hometowns."

NSU and Dakota State University (DSU) will offer the necessary coursework over two years, culminating in a student-teacher experience in the para-educator's home district and a bachelor's degree in education. All coursework is virtual, so the participant can continue to work while enrolled. In addition, students enrolled in the apprenticeship program will earn their education degree at a reduced cost due to grant support from the South Dakota DOE.

"Investing in South Dakota's educator workforce is vital to our state and our students," said System Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Janice Minder. "By offering opportunities to dedicated paraprofessionals, BOR and DOE hope to turn the current teacher shortage into a well-established educator pipeline. We encourage school districts to support participation in the apprenticeship program and provide authentic on-the-job training within their community."

The BSEd in Secondary Education will provide students with a solid understanding of the discipline through theoretical and practical components of the curriculum. The approved program will include seven specializations, including social studies, history, science, chemistry, biology, math, and English. The program focuses on equipping students with expertise in their academic field and the skills to foster an effective learning environment.



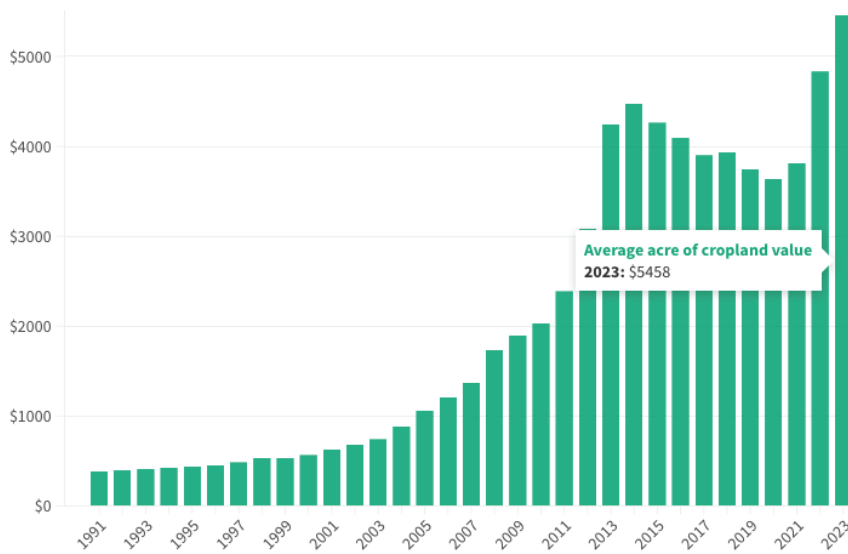
SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Rising land, input costs challenge tenant farmers' dreams of ownership

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JUNE 22, 2023 4:55 PM

Value of an average acre of cropland in S.D.
1991-2023 (in dollars)



Source: [SDSU Extension](#)

Lance Perrion is an Ipswich-area farmer in his early 30s. He toils on 1,000 acres of rented cropland but yearns to own land of his own.

Ownership is elusive for Perrion and some of his peers.

"It's definitely difficult to get going as a young farmer," he said. "And if new people can't compete to own the main asset of this industry, the land, then why compete?"

Hank Wonnenberg, a Gregory-area farmer and real estate appraiser, sees a lot of demand for acres.

"I track a lot of sales," Wonnenberg said. "There's a lot of transactions where the buyers are out of state. A lot of times, they're from way out there; Texas, Florida or wherever."

The situation is not good for the future of agriculture in South Dakota, Won-

nenberg said.

"Pretty soon, we're nearly all going to rent – tenants doing the farming," he said.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture hasn't published new data on the topic since 2014. That year, 60 percent of South Dakota agricultural land was farmed or ranched by its owner, 25 percent was rented by farmers or ranchers from a non-agricultural landlord, and 15 percent was rented by farmers or ranchers from other farmers and ranchers. Those percentages mirror national averages.

Meanwhile, South Dakota has experienced a surge in cropland value, making it harder to afford.

The average value of an acre of cropland in South Dakota jumped 19% from 2021 to 2022, according to the USDA. At this point, South Dakota State University Extension estimates that an acre of cropland in the state costs an average of \$5,458 – \$4,715 more than in 2003.

The cause is more complicated than wealthy investors buying up land, said Kevin Moe, regional credit policy officer for First National Bank of Omaha. To the extent wealthy investors are a factor, Moe said it's likely less of one now, as better alternatives and higher interest rates make farmland less appealing to buyers.

Surging land values have been fueled by increased global demand for grain, the limited availability of land for sale, federal pandemic stimulus payments that increased demand for land (because more farmers had more cash on hand), and higher corn prices that have made cropland more profitable.

"If you were to put historical corn prices next to that," Moe said, referencing rising land prices, "you'd

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find that they follow pretty closely.”

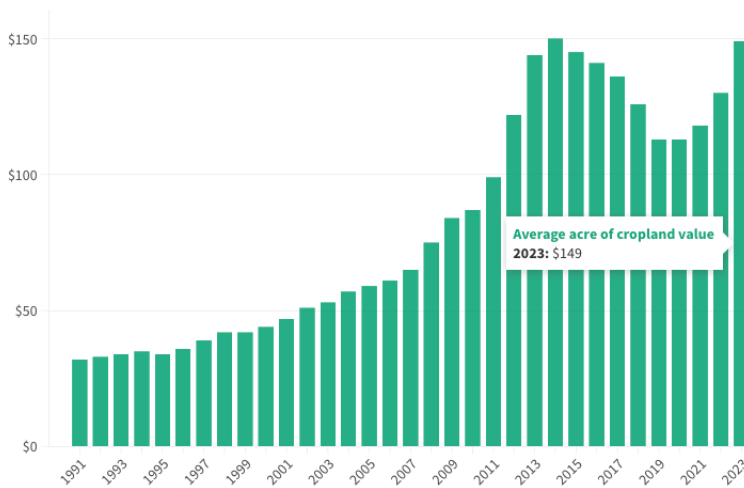
It’s not just land values putting ownership out of reach for producers with less capital and cash on hand.

Fertilizer and fuel prices jumped more than 33% in 2021, according to Farm Credit Services. Farm machinery, building materials, seed and feed costs increased, as well.

Farmers with less cash take out loans to afford those inputs, Moe said, and the interest rates on those loans more than doubled in recent years.

“It’s just so capital intensive,” Moe said. “It is a barrier to entry, there is no doubt; whether you’re trying to rent or buy, because the costs of production are so high. And I don’t have a good answer to solve that. It’s

Rental rate of an average acre of cropland in S.D.
1991-2023 (in dollars)



Source: SDSU Extension

where local farmers help participants launch a profitable operation.

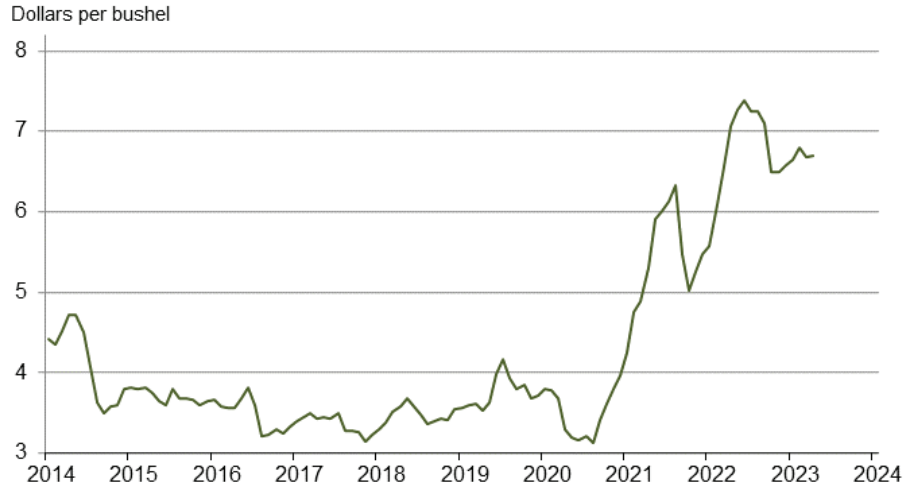
However, the program is less focused on the large-scale grain and cattle farms popular in the state.

Frank James is the director of Dakota Rural Action. He said new farmers are finding inroads with diverse, smaller-scale farms – raising things like bees and chickens, growing things like fruits and vegetables – selling to the communities in which they live.

“A lot of the problem is federal crop insurance guarantees producers get a return on that grain,” James said. “And that guarantee drives up the price of land.”

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

Prices Received for Corn by Month – United States



USDA – NASS
5/31/2023

just a reality.”

Ultimately, more tenant farmers are struggling to grow or secure land holdings.

“It’s just about impossible for a new person to enter the farming industry,” Wonnenberg said. “And because higher land prices also tend to drive up rent, some can’t even afford to rent now either.”

According to SDSU Extension, an average acre of cropland in the state costs \$149 to rent annually – \$96 more than in 2003, but \$1 less than the peak in 2014. Inflation and higher interest rates have made conditions far worse than in 2014, Wonnenberg said.

Programs exist in the state to help new farmers develop a sustainable business model, like the Farm Beginnings program run by Dakota Rural Action. Farm Beginnings is a training program

Sioux Falls nonprofit to help connect residents with federal internet subsidies

BY: JOHN HULT - JUNE 22, 2023 3:13 PM

A Sioux Falls nonprofit will soon hire a "digital equity navigator" to help residents secure federal high-speed internet subsidies that were made available in 2022 but have largely gone unused by those in the city who qualify for them.

The Sioux Falls Area Community Foundation announced its \$50,000 connectivity donation to South Dakota Voices for Peace on Thursday.

Foundation Vice President for Community Investment Patrick Gale called digital equity "one of our community's most pressing challenges."

Gale is also a member of Connect Sioux Falls, which works to bridge digital gaps in the city.

"Expanding the number of households who can access the internet will also help develop our workforce by offering connections to job and training opportunities, it will strengthen the health of our community by offering easier access to healthcare resources and support, and it will enhance the vitality of our city by creating connections and sparking innovation," Gale said.

The new Voices for Peace employee will work to connect residents to benefits from the Affordable Connectivity Program, which went live on Dec. 31, 2021 and offers up to \$30 a month to help eligible households pay their internet bills and also offers a one-time \$100 voucher for the purchase of a laptop, desktop or tablet computer.

Those whose incomes are at or below 200% of the federal poverty level are eligible, but there are several other criteria under which a person can qualify. Several companies offer internet service through the program, including Midco Communications, which is a financial supporter of Connect Sioux Falls and a leading provider for the city. Midco offers eligibility details and sign-up information on its website, as does provider Bluepeak.

Enrollment hurdles exist, however. A Pew Charitable Trusts analysis published in February pointed out that verifying eligibility can take 30-45 minutes online if there are no snags with documentation, and 45% of applicants are initially rejected.

Broadband connectivity is a statewide concern for South Dakota. Gov. Kristi Noem and lawmakers have pumped millions of dollars into connectivity to help bridge a broadband gap in the state's rural areas, but those efforts do not help individuals pay their broadband bills.

Rural and urban residents nationwide are eligible for the Affordable Connectivity Program, and the monthly subsidy can amount to \$75 a month for residents in qualifying tribal areas.

In the urban enclave of Sioux Falls, 25,000 people are eligible for the federal subsidy, according to Taneeza Islam, executive director of South Dakota Voices for Peace. Only 18% of them have taken advantage of the subsidies.

Minorities, people with low incomes and those with less education are seven times more likely to lack home internet access or mobile devices at home than white, educated and higher income families, Islam said at the press conference announcing the funding award.

A Connect Sioux Falls report from 2021 noted that a third of households with annual incomes below \$35,000 had no internet access. Just 3% of households with incomes of \$75,000 or more a year lacked access.

The new funding stream will allow the Voices for Peace to hire a full-time employee to "focus entirely on helping our community's most vulnerable enroll in this important program that will no doubt impact economic and social success for generations to come."

The connectivity work began before the Thursday award. More than 200 households enrolled in the federal program between January and May through the efforts of Voices for Peace and partners Connect Sioux Falls, the Sioux Falls School District, Caminando Juntos and the Teddy Bear Den. Islam said via email that her nonprofit's outreach team led those efforts. The hiring of a full-time digital equity navigator will

allow that team to continue working on other projects throughout the community, such as helping people to enroll in Medicaid as it expands in South Dakota.

According to a recent study from Connect Sioux Falls, around 15% of households are classified as "unconnected."

Information on how to connect to the program through Voices for Peace is available at this link.

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

U.S. Senate spending panel sets funding levels for annual bills

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - JUNE 22, 2023 4:42 PM

WASHINGTON — A group of U.S. Senate Democrats on Thursday approved funding levels for dozens of federal departments for the fiscal year that starts Oct. 1 — setting up a likely clash with House Republicans as a deadline approaches later this year.

The move to advance the spending plan was essential if Congress is going to avoid a partial government shutdown or a series of stopgap funding bills. But the levels agreed to by the Senate Appropriations Committee are significantly different from the ones their House Republican counterparts adopted last week. The panel approved the numbers following a party-line 15-13 vote.

The next steps will include the panel debating all 12 annual government spending bills and later moving to negotiate those with the House. If Congress doesn't pass all of the bills by Jan. 1, a provision from the debt limit bill would trigger a 1% across-the-board spending cut until Congress approves all the funding measures.

Appropriations Chair Patty Murray, a Washington Democrat, noted the panel is restricted in what it can spend by the debt limit and budget agreement that President Joe Biden and Speaker Kevin McCarthy brokered earlier this year.

That agreement set total spending for the fiscal year set to begin Oct. 1 at \$1.59 trillion, with \$886.3 billion going toward defense and \$703.7 billion for domestic spending accounts.

Murray said she is concerned about those limits, and indicated the committee will take up additional government spending bills to address national disaster response, border security and to boost aid to Ukraine.

"The challenges we face under the limits imposed by the debt ceiling deal do not get any easier and they don't get any better if we start going backwards, or if we abandon our return to regular order, or we write unserious bills," Murray said.

"And as we all know, chaos only helps those who want to see our government shut down, including our adversaries — like the governments of Russia and China — who are rooting for Congress to descend into chaos," Murray added.

Collins votes against spending plan

Maine Republican Susan Collins, the ranking member, said she couldn't support the spending levels due to inadequate funding for defense and Homeland Security, though she thanked Murray for moving forward with the process.

"Due to the inadequacy of funding for Homeland Security and the need for additional defense funding, unfortunately, I cannot support the 302(b) allocations," Collins said, referring to the technical name for the dozen spending levels.

But Collins agreed with a comment from Murray that the allocations the committee approved Thursday "are not the final story."

In the coming weeks, Collins said, she hopes Democrats and Republicans will reach an agreement "to ensure that our military and the Department of Homeland Security have the resources they need to keep our country safe."

"In the meantime, I want to second Chair Murray's conclusion that we must continue to make progress in advancing the annual appropriations process in order to avoid a shutdown, a year-end omnibus, or

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damaging across-the-board funding cuts," Collins added.

U.S. House Republicans on that chamber's Appropriations Committee approved spending allocations for fiscal 2024 that are significantly lower than the spending levels included in the debt limit deal. That will make conferencing the bills later this year more challenging than had the House GOP written the bills to the numbers in the bipartisan agreement.

Here's a look at what the Senate wants to spend during fiscal 2024:

Agriculture: Senators want to spend \$25.9 billion in discretionary funds on the measure that provides for the Department of Agriculture and the Food and Drug Administration. That's an increase from the \$25.5 billion Congress approved for the current fiscal year. House Republicans proposed \$17.8 billion.

Commerce-Justice-Science: Senators proposed \$69.6 billion for the departments of Commerce and Justice, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the National Science Foundation. That's a decrease from \$83.9 billion in current funding. House Republicans proposed \$58.7 billion.

Defense: The Pentagon's funding bill would get \$823.3 billion during the upcoming fiscal year, an increase from \$797.7 billion. The House GOP proposed \$826.4 billion.

Energy-Water: The Senate panel approved \$56.7 billion in spending for the bill that funds the Energy Department as well as more than a dozen agencies, including the Appalachian Regional Commission, Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, Denali Commission, Great Lakes Authority, Nuclear Regulatory Commission and Tennessee Valley Authority.

The spending level is an increase from the current level of \$54.7 billion. The House Appropriations Committee approved \$52.4 billion.

Financial Services and General Government: Senators approved \$16.8 billion, a decrease from the current funding level of \$27.7 billion. House Republicans proposed \$11.3 billion.

The bill funds the Treasury Department, federal judiciary and several agencies, including the Executive Office of the President, Federal Communications Commission, Federal Trade Commission, National Archives and Records Administration and the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Homeland Security: Senators approved \$56.9 billion in discretionary spending for the bill that funds the Department of Homeland Security, which includes Customs and Border Protection, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and Immigration and Customs Enforcement. That's a decrease from \$60.7 billion in current funding. House Republicans proposed \$62.8 billion.

Interior-Environment: The Senate Appropriations Committee approved \$37.9 billion for the Interior Department, Environmental Protection Agency, Forest Service, Indian Health Service, Smithsonian Institution and a couple dozen other federal programs that are funded within the measure.

The proposed funding level would mark a decrease from the current spending level of \$40.5 billion. The House panel proposed \$25.4 billion.

Labor-Health and Human Services-Education: The Senate spending panel approved \$195.2 billion in funding for the departments of Education, Health and Human Services and Labor.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission, National Labor Relations Board and Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission are some of the smaller federal agencies that receive funding from the measure.

House Republicans proposed \$147.1 billion for the bill, compared to \$209.9 billion in current base discretionary spending.

Legislative Branch: Senators approved spending \$6.8 billion on the measure, which funds the U.S. Capitol Police, the Government Accountability Office and the Library of Congress and other accounts. That's roughly equal to the \$6.9 billion current funding level and the \$6.8 billion that the House panel approved.

Military Construction-VA: Senators approved spending \$154.4 billion in discretionary spending on the measure that funds the Veterans Affairs Department and military construction projects. The current funding level is \$135.2 billion in discretionary funding and House Republicans proposed \$155.7 billion.

State-Foreign Operations: The State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development, Peace Corps and several other programs would receive \$58.4 billion during the upcoming fiscal year under the Senate proposal.

That's a decrease from the current funding level of \$61.8 billion. House Republicans approved \$41.4 billion. Transportation-HUD: Senators approved \$88.1 billion for the Housing and Urban Development and Transportation departments. That would be a decrease from the current funding level of \$90.96 billion. The House GOP allocated \$65.2 billion.

The bill also funds the Federal Maritime Commission, National Transportation Safety Board and United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, among other smaller agencies.

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.

'QAnon Shaman' looks to overturn sentence, says he never renounced QAnon

BY: CAITLIN SIEVERS - JUNE 22, 2023 11:04 AM

Jacob Angeli Chansley, who rose to prominence as the self-described "QAnon Shaman" and became, for many, the face of the Jan. 6 insurrection, is trying to get his sentence overturned and says he never renounced QAnon or felt duped by Donald Trump.

At the same time, he's trying to make money on his newfound fame.

Chansley, 35, is out of prison and back in his home state of Arizona. He's living in north Phoenix, and is attempting to rebrand himself as "America's Shaman." He's making podcasts rife with conspiracy theories, selling shaman-branded merchandise and is pitching hour-long coaching sessions for \$500 a pop in the wide ranging subjects of spirituality, politics, the environment, astrology, history, philosophy and sociology. As of June 19, Chansley told the Mirror he had booked several sessions.

Chansley in September 2021 pleaded guilty to a felony charge of obstructing an official proceeding after he entered the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6. He entered so bare-chested, with his face painted and wearing his signature furry horn hat, wielding a pole tipped with a spear and leaving a message on Vice President Mike Pence's desk that read "It's only a matter of time, justice is coming."

Chansley was sentenced to 41 months in prison. He was released to a halfway house March 29, then put on house arrest around a week later, he told the Arizona Mirror during a June 1 interview, until being released on three years' probation May 25.

Leading up to Chansley's plea and sentencing, his lawyer at the time, Al Watkins, said publicly that Chansley felt duped by former President Donald Trump and that he renounced QAnon. But Chansley told the Mirror that neither of those things were true.

Watkins did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Chansley was sentenced to 41 months in prison. He was released to a halfway house March 29, then put on house arrest around a week later, he told the Arizona Mirror during a June 1 interview, until being released on three years' probation May 25.

Leading up to Chansley's plea and sentencing, his lawyer at the time, Al Watkins, said publicly that Chansley felt duped by former President Donald Trump and that he renounced QAnon. But Chansley told the Mirror that neither of those things were true.

Watkins did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Chansley and his current lawyer, William Shipley, are asking that his sentence for his part in the Jan. 6 insurrection be set aside after new U.S. Capitol security video footage was released to then-Fox News host Tucker Carlson. They claim the footage, which federal prosecutors say was cherry-picked and omits key portions, proves Capitol Police did not block Chansley's path or attempt to take him into custody for 38 minutes before he entered the U.S. Senate chamber.

Shipley, a Hawaii criminal defense attorney who has represented other Jan. 6 defendants, argued in court filings that the government should have provided the video to Chansley and his lawyer prior to his guilty plea and sentencing. Shipley also argued that Watkins was ineffective in doing his job, alleging that he knew the government hadn't provided all the video evidence available when Chansley signed his plea agreement.

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At the time of his sentencing, Chansley told the court he was truly repentant and accepted responsibility for his actions. But now, Chansley won't talk about whether he believes his sentence was justified, citing advice from Shipley not to.

Mike Rothschild, an author, journalist and conspiracy theory expert, told the Mirror that he believes Chansley's backing away from taking responsibility for his actions on Jan. 6 sends a message to his fans and followers.

"I think it shows to this community that, if you say the right things, you can get away with stuff," Rothschild said. "If you act contrite in the moment, you'll get a lesser sentence and the media will do a lot of profiles on you, and then you come out and go immediately right back to hawking t-shirts and talking about the Great Awakening."

According to the Capitol Police and the plea agreement that Chansley signed, he ignored multiple requests from officers to leave the building on Jan. 6 and shouted obscenities in the Senate gallery. Capitol Police Chief Tom Manger pointed out in a previous statement that his force was vastly outnumbered by protesters that day — some of whom were violent — and was initially focused on de-escalating the situation.

And prosecutors countered Chansley's claims in a June 6 filing, saying he waived his right to challenge his conviction when he signed a plea deal. They also noted that Carlson only showed about four minutes of Chansley's approximately one hour inside the U.S. Capitol. Among the things the right-wing television host didn't show his audience were Chansley breaching a police line outside the building as part of the crowd, or facing off with members of the Capitol Police for more than 30 minutes outside the Senate chamber.

"Chansley's claims are not just belied by the record — they are completely at odds with the remorse he professed at the time of his sentencing: supposed remorse that he and his then-counsel used to great success in seeking a lower sentence," U.S. Attorney Matthew Graves wrote in the filing.

The prosecutors also claim that they made all video evidence shown on the "Tucker Carlson Show" available to Jan. 6 defendants and their attorneys in the fall of 2021.

Chadwick, however, told the Mirror he does not believe Chansley's punishment was warranted. Chadwick, who met Chansley during protests at the Arizona Capitol grounds around five years ago, hosts a podcast called "The Liberty Report" which has featured guests like election deniers Mike Lindell, and works with Chansley on his "Forbidden Truth" podcast.

Chadwick said he and Chansley traveled together to Washington, D.C., for Jan. 6, but got separated before Chansley entered the Capitol.

"I commend how he handled the situation, but I don't think he deserved any of that," Chadwick said. In his view, because the Capitol is a public building, and Chansley didn't do any harm or cause damage, prison time wasn't justified.

"We have the right to peacefully assemble," Chadwick said. "That's not right."

When asked if it made a difference that people died in the riot and the immediate aftermath, Chadwick said it was a tragedy that a police officer shot and killed Ashli Babbitt as she tried to break into the Speaker's Lobby of the Capitol. He did not mention the four other people who lost their lives that day until he was asked about them.

"Anyone who was violent on that day, that's no good anywhere," Chadwick said. "I think any type of assembly, it should always be peaceful."

He claimed, citing a popular conspiracy theory, that most of those at the Capitol that day were peaceful and that only small "pockets of violence" were staged by leftist provocateurs dressed up as Trump supporters. The broad investigation of the events of Jan. 6, 2021 has found there is no basis to that idea.

Prior to being sentenced, Chansley was sent to Colorado for a psychological evaluation and determined to be mentally competent, but was diagnosed with schizotypal personality disorder.

According to the Cleveland Clinic, people with schizotypal personality disorder often feel intense discomfort with close relationships and social interactions and have "distorted views of reality, superstitions and unusual behaviors."

"By that rationale, there's all types of people in this country that have schizotypal personality disorder," Chansley said. "I think that being well adjusted in an extremely sick society is no measure of good health."

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He said he believes his diagnosis is at least in part because of his "shamanic beliefs," including that he's a medium between the spiritual and physical world.

Chansley said he did not receive mental health treatment while in prison, but that he's required to receive a mental health evaluation to determine if he needs counseling as a stipulation of his probation. The evaluation is set to happen in August.

"Fact of the matter is I don't have mental health issues," Chansley said in a text. "Anyone who converses with me can tell that my mental health is sound."

Chansley said he still believes some QAnon conspiracy theories (he did not describe them as such), including a version of the main QAnon theory that intelligence agencies use evidence of pedophilia to blackmail billionaires, CEOs and entertainers to maintain control of the world.

"It's so they will be subservient to a global new world order and one world government," Chansley said.

But he doesn't buy into others popular in segments of the QAnon movement, like the claim that John F. Kennedy Jr., who died in a 1999 plane crash, is still alive and plans to be Donald Trump's running mate in the 2024 presidential election, or that the Earth is flat.

"Give me a break," Chansley said, of the flat Earth theory.

Chansley is also still a Trump fan, though he said he doesn't agree with what he called "Trump worship."

"Trump is a man," Chansley said. "He's a fallible man. I don't agree with everything he does."

Now that he's out of prison, Chansley is focused on spreading his beliefs through his website, Twitter, podcasts and coaching sessions and continuing the practice of his own version of shamanism. The beliefs, which seem to be his own creation, are loosely based on various faith traditions around the world, including some rooted in Native American traditions.

"I'm not what some people would call a grifter," he said. "I'm not trying to make money here. I'm trying to get a message out. It's never been about me. The message is unity. The message is love, truth, forgiveness, freedom."

When asked if he embodied those ideals on Jan. 6, 2021, Chansley deflected.

"The media ensured that my image was the antithesis of those things when the truth is just the opposite," he said. "The media used my image to create a straw man as a means of creating a divisive propaganda campaign to further their political, social and psychological agenda. It is my intention to be an agent of unity, love, peace and forgiveness and truth as a means to save the planet and humanity from extinction."

But Rothschild, who authored a book about the rise of QAnon, does not believe that Chansley is being entirely honest about his motives.

"I think, despite Jacob's protestations that it's not about the money, it's definitely about the money," Rothschild said. "There is a well-established industry for people who do this. And it's very easy if you're a well known figure in that world to kind of slide right into that, and it beats working."

Chansley clearly seems to be trying to capitalize on his notoriety, selling coffee cups and shirts emblazoned with his mugshot, in addition to framed prints of it, on his website.

And he's selling those one-on-one coaching sessions for \$500 an hour.

Rothschild said he thinks Chansley serves as a role model for some in the QAnon community and that he might have a real future as a celebrity for the conservative fringe.

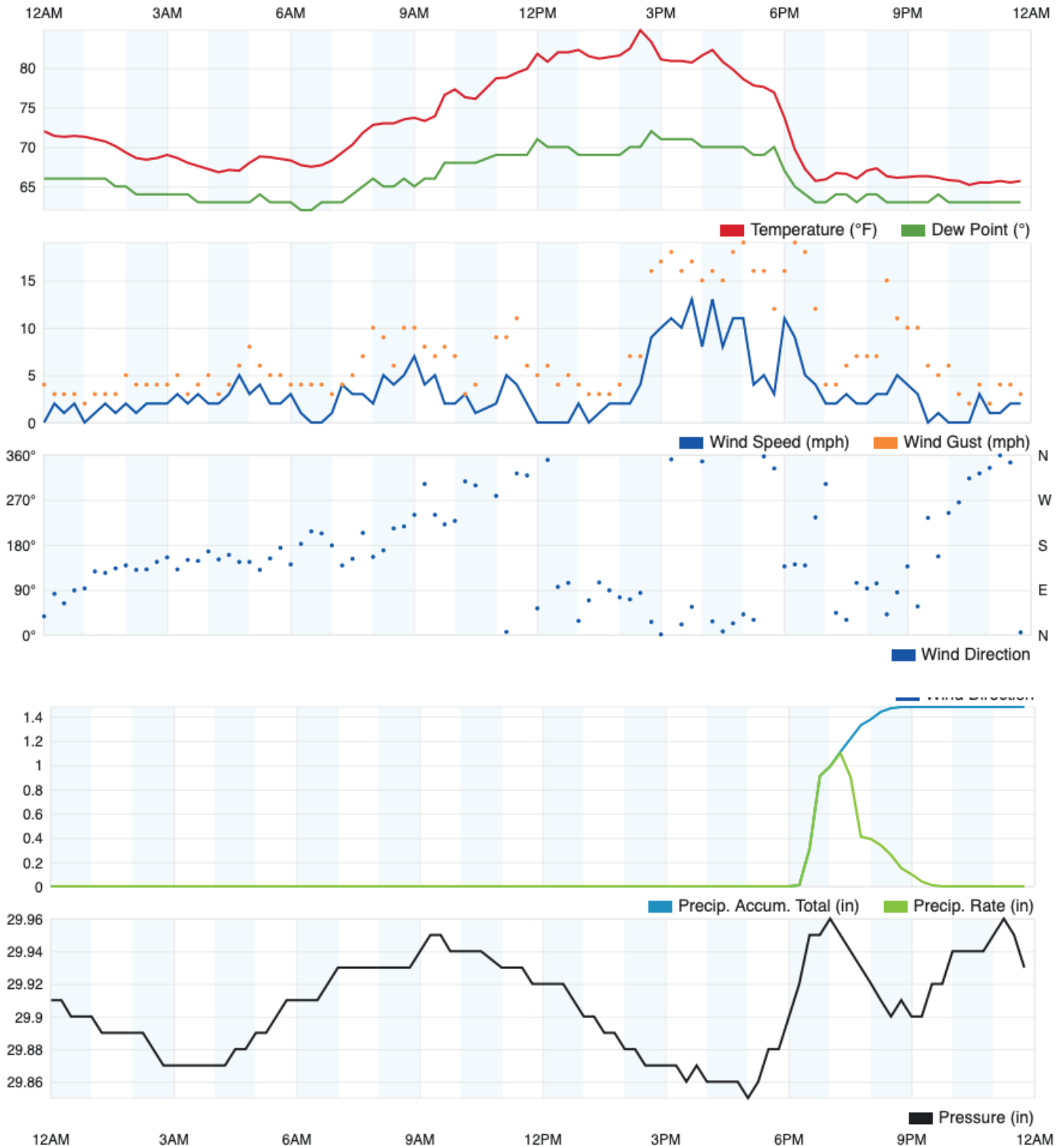
"It's sad to watch somebody go down that path and to take other people down that path," Rothschild said. "And I think prison could have been an opportunity for him to reexamine his life and what he's capable of and use his genuine ability to get attention to help people, and maybe that was never realistic. But it sounds like what a lot of people are hoping for. And now, clearly, that's never going to happen."

Caitlin joined the Arizona Mirror in 2022 with almost 10 years of experience as a reporter and editor, holding local government leaders accountable from newsrooms across the West and Midwest. She's won statewide awards in Nebraska, Indiana and Wisconsin for reporting, photography and commentary.

Groton Daily Independent

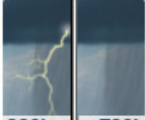

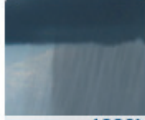
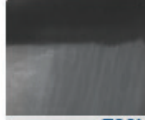
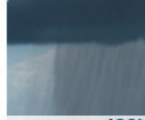


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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday
						
30% → 70%	70%	100%	70%	40%	20% 20%	
Chance T-storms then Showers Likely	T-storms Likely	Showers	Showers Likely and Breezy	Chance Showers and Breezy	Slight Chance T-storms and Breezy then Slight Chance Showers	Sunny
High: 80 °F	Low: 62 °F	High: 74 °F	Low: 57 °F	High: 74 °F	Low: 56 °F	High: 83 °F



Severe Weather Threat Overview

June 23, 2023
4:38 AM

Mainly Tonight into Saturday morning

Timing/Location

Storms will progress eastward today, with better chances later tonight into Saturday morning. The severe threat is best after 7 pm CDT over central South Dakota. The severe threat will spread eastward toward the I-29 corridor tonight.

Tornado Potential

Very Low Low Medium High

Max Hail Size

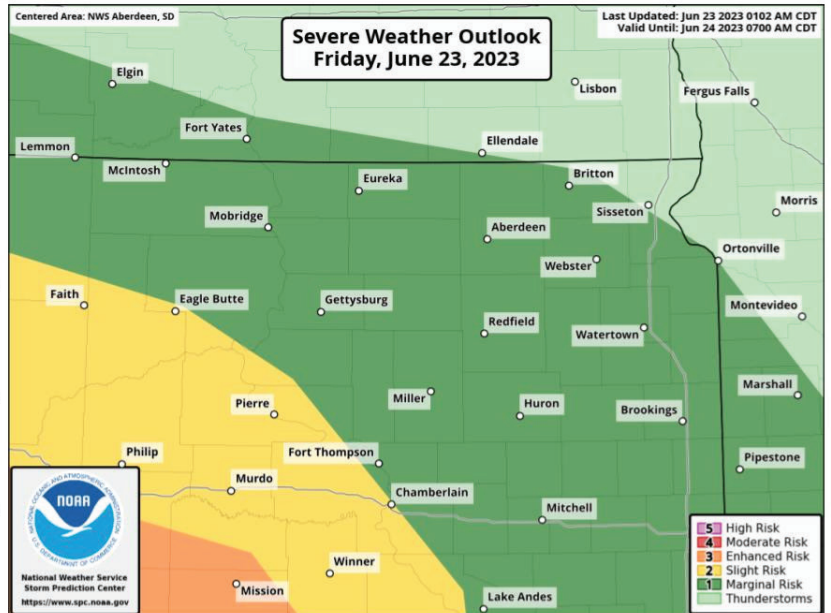
Dimes Quarters **Golfball** Baseball

Max Wind Speed

< 60 mph 60-70 mph **70-80 mph** > 80mph

Heavy Rain/Flooding Potential

Very Low **Low** Medium High



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A weak storm system progressing eastward today will bring scattered showers and thunderstorms. A more intense storm system will cross the region later tonight into the morning hours on Saturday. Severe storms will be possible, with the severe threat best over central South Dakota.

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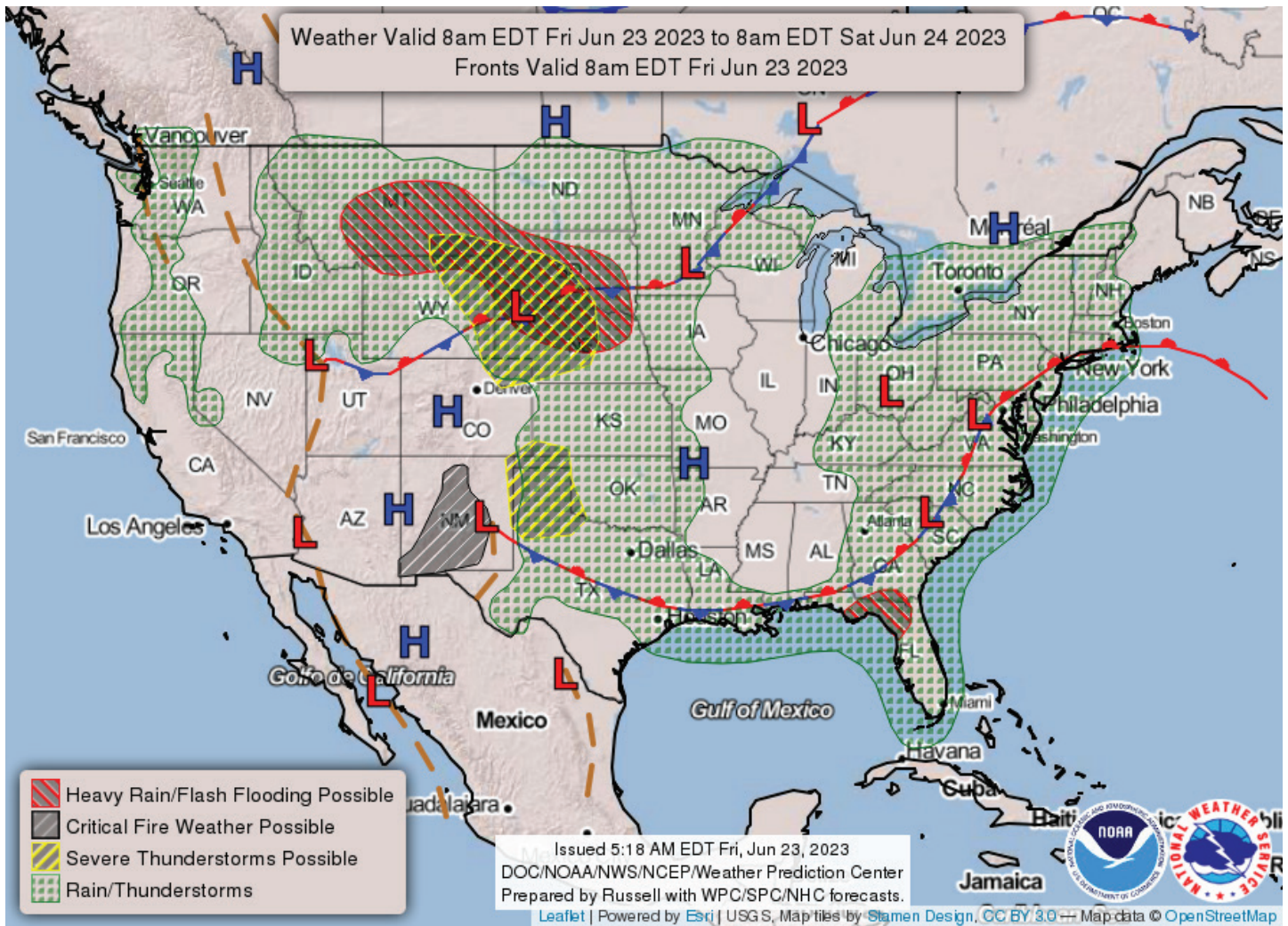
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 85 °F at 2:39 PM
Low Temp: 65 °F at 10:28 PM
Wind: 19 mph at 4:53 PM
Precip: : 1.48

Day length: 15 hours, 44 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 104 in 1911
Record Low: 33 in 1942
Average High: 82
Average Low: 57
Average Precip in June.: 2.83
Precip to date in June.: 1.99
Average Precip to date: 10.08
Precip Year to Date: 9.90
Sunset Tonight: 9:26:42 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:42:54 AM



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Today in Weather History

June 23, 1914: A destructive, estimated F3 tornado moved east across Altamont Township in Brown County. All buildings were destroyed on at least four farms. A man was killed trying to keep his family from being blown out of a shallow cellar.

Another storm moved east from the southeastern part of Watertown to north of Goodwin. Over 200 homes were heavily damaged at Watertown by both an estimated F2 tornado and downburst winds. Barns were destroyed on three farms east of Watertown. The estimated cost was at \$200,000.

June 23, 2002: A powerful supercell thunderstorm produced six tornados from eastern McPherson County and across northern Brown County during the evening hours. The first tornado to touchdown was a brief F0, and occurred 6.4 miles northeast of Leola and resulted in no damage. The second tornado was an F1 and touched down 8.5 miles northeast of Leola and crossed over into Brown County where it dissipated 9 miles northwest of Barnard. This tornado brought down many trees and a barn and caused damage to the siding and the roof of a farmhouse in McPherson County. A third weak satellite F0 tornado occurred following the dissipation of the second tornado and resulted in no damage. A fourth, stronger F3 tornado developed 6 miles west of Barnard and moved east before dissipating 3 miles southeast of Barnard. This tornado brought down some high power lines along with a support tower and tossed a pickup truck 100 yards into a group of trees. The pickup truck was totaled. The tornado caused extensive damage to two farmhouses, several farm buildings, and farm equipment. One farmhouse lost the garage and had many trees completely snapped off down low and debarked. The fifth tornado developed 5 miles southeast of Barnard and became a violent F4 tornado. This tornado caused damage to one farmhouse, several outbuildings, trees, and equipment as it moved northeast and strengthened. The tornado then completely demolished two unoccupied homes, several outbuildings, along with destroying or damaging some farm equipment before dissipating 7.6 miles northeast of Barnard. The sixth tornado was a weak satellite F0, which occurred with this violent tornado and caused no damage. The F4 tornado was the first recorded in Brown County and one of few recorded in South Dakota. The total estimated property loss exceeded a million dollars.

1902 - The temperature at Volcano Springs, CA, soared to 129 degrees to set a June record for the U.S. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders)

1944 - Four tornadoes killed 153 persons and caused five million dollars damage in Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Maryland. The tornadoes formed during the evening and moved southeast along parallel paths flattening everything in their way. The town of Shinnston WV was leveled, and was left with the majority of the casualties. Until that time it was believed that damaging tornadoes did not travel across mountainous terrain. (David Ludlum)

1957 - A few miles west of Fort Stockton TX, softball size hail injured 21 persons unable to find shelter, mostly farm laborers. Some livestock were killed. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A massive hailstorm hit eastern Colorado causing an estimated 60 to 70 million dollars damage. At La Junta, CO, hail as large as softballs caused 37 million dollars damage. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thirty-four cities reported record high temperatures for the date. The reading of 90 degrees at Bluefield, WV, equalled their record for the month of June. The record high of 104 degrees at Billings, MT, was their thirteenth of the month. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Six cities in the High Plains Region reported record low temperatures for the date, including Sheridan, WY, with a reading of 38 degrees. Showers and thunderstorms in the eastern U.S. deluged New Castle County, DE, with 2.5 inches of rain in one hour. (The National Weather Summary)

2010: An F2 tornado destroyed approximately 50 homes and caused damages estimated to be \$15 million in Midland, Ontario. 12 people were reported to be injured. Ontario provided immediate provincial assistance of up to \$1 million to aid in cleanup and repairs.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

CHANGE YOUR COURSE

One night at sea, with the winds howling and the waves crashing all around his ship, the captain of a large destroyer saw blinking lights off in a distance. It appeared as though another ship was heading directly toward him. Turning to his signalman, he ordered him to send a warning, which read: "I'm a Captain. I'm on a destroyer. Change your course ten degrees south."

Came the reply, "I'm a Seaman First Class, Sir. I'm in a lighthouse that is unmovable. Change your course ten degrees north."

There are many times when it does not matter who you are, but where you are, and - even more importantly - where you are going. There is great advice to support this fact in Proverbs: "There is a path before each person that seems right, but ... it ends in death."

There is a vast difference between "the right choice" and the choice that "seems right." Sometimes we make decisions quickly to solve problems without seeking God's guidance. Decisions or solutions that are often simple, easy, convenient or attractive, may - unless we seek God's counsel - lead us in the wrong direction. This is why we need God's help and guidance. Unless we look carefully and cautiously at our options through God's teachings, we cannot be certain that our choices will honor Him and assure us of His blessings and peace and presence.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to look to You for wisdom, insight, and knowledge for every choice we make. Guide us, guard us, and give us direction and protection, always. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: There is a path before each person that seems right, but ... it ends in death. Proverbs 14:12



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

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2023 Community Events

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

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.20.23

6 37 39 45 46 21

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$320,000,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 40 Mins
DRAW: 47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.21.23

2 13 20 35 48 7

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$4,450,000

NEXT 1 Days 14 Hrs 55
DRAW: Mins 47 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.22.23

11 13 34 35 42 16

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 15 Hrs 10 Mins 48
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.21.23

1 3 11 20 31

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$112,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 10
DRAW: Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.21.23

15 18 23 45 48 10

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 39
DRAW: Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

06.21.23

5 11 33 35 63 14

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$427,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 39
DRAW: Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

US engineers contributed to Missouri River flood damage and must pay landowners, court rules

By MARGERY A. BECK Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The U.S. government may have to pay tens of millions of dollars — or more — to landowners along the Missouri River after a court ruled it worsened flooding there since 2007 that killed crops and wrecked homes and businesses.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit upheld a lower court's 2020 ruling that the federal government must pay for the landowners' loss of value to the land. But the appeals court went even further in its decision last Friday, saying that the government must also pay them for crops, farm equipment and buildings lost to the flooding and finding the government contributed to the devastating flood of 2011.

Courts have found the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers responsible for recurrent flooding since 2007, three years after it changed how it manages the Missouri River's flow to better protect the habitat of endangered fish and birds. It did so by notching dikes to increase water flow, keeping more water in reservoirs and reopening historic chutes, allowing the river to meander and erode banks.

Farmers, businesses and other landowners say that unconstitutionally deprived them of their land. The courts have largely agreed, finding that the government violated constitutional protections against taking property without just compensation. That Fifth Amendment protection is often seen in cases of eminent domain, which allows a government to seize private property, with compensation, for a public purpose.

Federal officials argue that the changes the Corps made were necessary to comply with the federal Endangered Species Act and a separate requirement from Congress passed in 1986 to protect fish and wildlife.

The ruling comes as federal and state officials wrestle with the rising costs of floods made more severe by climate change, and droughts that will require tough water management choices.

It's the sort of conflict that will only worsen -- and become more expensive, said James Elliott, a sociology professor at Rice University whose focus is on the confluence of human society and the environment.

"We tend to think of these as environmental issues, but really, they're financial issues, right?" he said. "We've got a lot of development in a lot of places where it's just not sustainable."

The Corps manages floodplains, levees, and other water infrastructure across the U.S., making critical decisions on emergency management. Any resulting court decision, and even a settlement, could have long-lasting consequences on how floodplains and ecosystems are managed in the future, although the government has indicated in court documents that the Corps is dedicated to its plan that protects endangered wildlife.

In total, the government now faces liability for floods in six of the eight years spanning from the beginning of 2007 through 2014, including particularly devastating losses in 2011.

Land value loss alone for which the government was found liable was estimated to be around \$10 million by lower courts. Attorneys for the landowners had estimated that total damages could exceed \$300 million. Total damages across the Missouri River basin in 2011 were estimated at around \$2 billion, according to the National Climatic Data Center.

"So, if you consider how much those crop losses and the 2011 flood damage would be, you can extrapolate from there that it will be significant," said Seth Wright, of Posinelli Law Firm in Kansas City, Missouri, who is the lead trial attorney for the landowners.

Wright said that if the history of the nearly 10-year-old legal case is an indicator, the government is likely to appeal the latest ruling to the U.S. Supreme Court.

"It's certainly frustrating to our clients," Wright said. "We're a decade into this lawsuit and a decade-and-a-half from the first flood. It's time for the government to step up and pay."

Federal officials argue that the courts have overlooked key factors in the case, noting that the plaintiffs' land still occasionally flooded even before the Corps made changes to the river's management in 2004.

They say a publically available document warns of possible changes to Corps' flood protections.

In court documents, officials argue the landowners "should have recognized long ago that the System was built to serve multiple, congressionally authorized purposes, not flood control alone," and that they've never "had a property right to any particular level of federal flood-control protection."

More than 370 landowners in Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and the Dakotas are currently represented in the lawsuit, and a merger with another class-action lawsuit of an additional 60 landowners could happen later.

Lawmakers from affected states have said the Justice Department should settle. In 2020, seven Republican U.S. senators from Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas and Missouri urged the Army to negotiate with landowners.

A spokesman for the Army Corps of Engineers on Wednesday referred questions to the U.S. Department of Justice, which said Thursday that it is considering its next steps following Friday's ruling.

Animal sedative adds new suffering to opioid drug crisis, but is it driving up deaths?

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A powerful animal sedative in the illicit drug supply is complicating the U.S. response to the opioid crisis, scrambling longstanding methods for reversing overdoses and treating addiction.

Xylazine can cause severe skin wounds, but whether it is leading to more deaths — as suggested by officials in Washington — is not yet clear, according to health and law enforcement professionals on the front lines of efforts in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania. In fact, early data suggests the drug may inadvertently be diluting the effects of fentanyl, the synthetic opioid behind most overdose deaths.

There is broad agreement, however, that much more information is needed to understand xylazine's impact, to craft ways of disrupting illegal supplies and to develop medicines to reverse its effects.

"We don't know whether xylazine is increasing the risk of overdose or reducing the risk of overdose," said Dr. Lewis Nelson of Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, who advises federal regulators on drug safety. "All we know is that there are a lot of people taking xylazine and a lot of them are dying, but it doesn't mean that xylazine is doing it."

In almost all cases, xylazine — a drug for sedating horses and other animals — is added to fentanyl, the potent opioid that can be lethal even in small amounts. Some users say the combination, dubbed "tranq" or "tranq dope," gives a longer-lasting high, more like heroin, which has largely been replaced by fentanyl in U.S. drug markets.

Like other cutting agents, xylazine benefits dealers: It's often cheaper and easier to get than fentanyl. Chinese websites sell a kilogram for \$6 to \$20, no prescription required. Chemicals used to produce fentanyl can cost \$75 or more per kilogram.

"Nobody asked for xylazine in the drug supply," said Sarah Laurel, founder of Savage Sisters, a Philadelphia outreach group. "Before anybody knew it, the community was chemically dependent on it. So now, yes, people do seek it out."

From a storefront in Philadelphia's Kensington neighborhood, Laurel's group provides first aid, showers, clothes and snacks to people using drugs.

Xylazine's effects are easy to spot: users experience a lethargic, trance-like state and sometimes black out, exposing themselves to robbery or assault.

"It's a delayed reaction, I could be walking down the street, it's 45 minutes later," says Dominic Rodriguez, who is homeless and battling addiction. "Then I wake up, trying to piece together what happened."

U.S. regulators approved xylazine in 1971 to sedate animals for surgery, dental procedures and handling purposes.

In humans, the drug can cause breathing and heart rates to drop. It's also linked to severe skin ulcers and abscesses, which can lead to infections, rotting tissue and amputations. Experts disagree on the exact cause of the wounds, which are much deeper than those seen with other injectable drugs.

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In Philadelphia, the drug's introduction has created a host of new challenges.

Naloxone, a medication used to revive people who have stopped breathing, doesn't reverse the effects of xylazine. Philadelphia officials stress that naloxone should still be administered in all cases of suspected overdose, since xylazine is almost always found in combination with fentanyl.

With no approved reversal drug for xylazine, the Savage Sisters group has taken to carrying oxygen tanks to help revive people.

Meanwhile, a roaming van staffed by local health workers and city staffers aims to treat the skin wounds before they require hospitalization.

The wounds can make it harder to get people into addiction treatment programs, which typically don't have the expertise to treat deep lesions that can expose tissue and bone.

"If you have someone out there who's ready to come in for treatment, you really want to act on that quickly," said Jill Bowen, who runs Philadelphia's behavioral health department.

The city recently launched a pilot program where hospitals treat patients for wounds and then directly transfer them into addiction treatment.

Xylazine can be addictive and patients who stop taking it report severe withdrawal symptoms, including anxiety and distress. There's no approved treatment but physicians have been using the blood pressure-lowering drug clonidine, which is sometimes prescribed for anxiety.

In April, federal officials declared xylazine-laced fentanyl an "emerging threat," pointing to the problems in Philadelphia and other northeastern cities. Testing is far from uniform, but the drug has been detected in all 50 states and appears to be moving westward, similar to earlier waves of drug use.

Officials describe the drug's toll in stark terms and statistics: Fatal overdoses involving xylazine increased more than 1,200% percent between 2018 and 2021. But that largely reflects increased testing, since most medical examiners weren't looking for the drug until recently.

"What it is doing is making the deadliest drug we've ever seen, fentanyl, even deadlier," Anne Milgram, head of the Drug Enforcement Administration, told attendees at a recent conference.

But those who have studied the problem closely aren't so sure.

One of the only studies looking at the issue reached a startling conclusion: People who overdosed on a combination of fentanyl and xylazine had "significantly less severe" outcomes than those taking fentanyl alone.

It was the opposite of what Dr. Jennifer Love and her colleagues expected, given xylazine's dangerous effects on breathing. But their analysis of more than 320 overdose patients who received emergency care found lower rates of cardiac arrest and coma when xylazine was involved.

Love, an emergency medicine physician at New York's Mount Sinai hospital, suggested xylazine may be reducing the amount of fentanyl in each dose. She stressed that this is only one possible explanation, and more research is needed into xylazine's long-term effects. She also noted that the study didn't track downstream effects of xylazine that could be deadly, including skin infections and amputations.

But hints that xylazine could be blunting fatal overdoses are showing up elsewhere.

In New Jersey, about one-third of the opioid supply contains xylazine, based on testing of drug paraphernalia. But less than 8% of fatal overdoses involved xylazine in 2021, the latest year with complete data.

Police Capt. Jason Piotrowski, who oversees the analysis of state drug data, said xylazine's ability to extend users' high may be a factor in why it's showing up less than expected in fatal overdoses.

"If xylazine is lasting longer and that's why people are using it, then they're not going to need as many doses," he said. "So now their exposure to the more deadly fentanyl decreases."

Like other experts, Piotrowski stressed that this is only one theory and xylazine's impact is far from clear. Philadelphia officials see no upside to the drug.

"I don't frankly see a plus side to xylazine," said Dr. Cheryl Bettigole, the city's health commissioner. "It seems to increase the risk of overdose and it causes these severe, debilitating wounds that interfere with people's ability to get into treatment."

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Philadelphia's annual toll of fatal overdoses has climbed by 14% since xylazine became a significant part of the local drug market around 2018. In 2021, the city reported 1,276 overdose deaths. Bettigole expects final 2022 figures to show another increase.

More than 90% of lab-tested opioids in Philadelphia contain xylazine, according to city figures.

Even as Savage Sisters and other advocates deal with xylazine's toll, they are seeing newer drugs circulate, including nitazenes, a synthetic opioid that can be even more potent than fentanyl.

A shifting mix of opioids, stimulants and sedatives has come to define the U.S. drug epidemic, making it harder to manage a crisis that now claims more than 100,000 lives a year.

The Biden administration and Congress are considering changes to try to limit xylazine prescribing and distribution.

But past restrictions didn't solve the problem: When regulators cracked down on painkillers like OxyContin, people largely shifted to heroin and then fentanyl.

"First we had pills, then we had heroin and then we had fentanyl," Piotrowski said. "Now we have everything. And xylazine is just a part of that."

Follow Matthew Perrone on Twitter: @AP_FDawriter

AP journalists Tassanee Vejpongsa and Matt Rourke in Philadelphia contributed to this story.

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

Interstate 95 is set to reopen less than two weeks after deadly collapse in Philadelphia

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Interstate 95 was set to reopen to traffic Friday less than two weeks after a deadly collapse in Philadelphia shut down a heavily traveled stretch of the East Coast's main north-south highway.

Workers were putting the finishing touches on an interim six-lane roadway that will serve motorists during construction of a permanent bridge. Crews worked around the clock and were poised to finish ahead of schedule. The interstate was scheduled to reopen at noon, according to the governor's office.

The elevated section of I-95 collapsed early on June 11 after a tractor-trailer hauling gasoline flipped on an off-ramp and caught fire. State transportation officials said the driver, who was killed, lost control around a curve. There were no other deaths or injuries.

The closure of an important commercial artery snarled traffic in and around Philadelphia and threatened to raise the cost of consumer goods as truckers were forced to detour around the area. State and federal officials pledged quick action to minimize the economic impact and inconvenience.

To get I-95 operating again as quickly as possible, workers used about 2,000 tons (1,814 metric tons) of lightweight glass nuggets to fill the underpass and bring it up to surface level, then paved over to create three lanes of travel in each direction. A permanent bridge will eventually be constructed.

President Joe Biden joined Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro on a helicopter tour of the site a little more than a week after the collapse and praised the design as "incredibly innovative in order to get this work done in record time."

With rain threatening to delay the reopening, a truck-mounted jet dryer normally used to keep moisture off the track at Pocono Raceway was brought in to keep the fresh asphalt dry enough for lines to be painted.

The 24-hour construction work was live-streamed, drawing thousands of viewers online.

To view live video of the construction work via the state Department of Transportation, go to: <https://www.penndot.pa.gov/RegionalOffices/district-6/Pages/AlertDetails.aspx>

With the fate of Titanic-bound submersible clear, focus turns to cause of the fatal implosion

By PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

The search for a missing Titanic-bound submersible has become an investigation and salvage mission that will take an indefinite amount of time, officials said, as tributes from around the world poured in for the five people killed when the vessel imploded deep in the North Atlantic.

The announcement Thursday that all aboard perished when the submersible imploded near the site of the iconic shipwreck brought a tragic end to a five-day saga that included an urgent around-the-clock search for the vessel known as the Titan.

The investigation into what happened was already underway and would continue in the area around Titanic where debris from the submersible was found, said Rear Adm. John Mauger, of the First Coast Guard District.

"I know there are also a lot of questions about how, why and when did this happen. Those are questions we will collect as much information as we can about now," Mauger said, adding that it was a "complex case" that happened in a remote part of the ocean and involved people from several different countries.

The first hint of a timeline came Thursday evening when a senior U.S. Navy official said that after the Titan was reported missing Sunday, the Navy went back and analyzed its acoustic data and found an "anomaly" that was consistent with an implosion or explosion in the general vicinity of where the vessel was operating when communications were lost. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive acoustic detection system.

Those killed were Stockton Rush, the CEO of OceanGate Expeditions, the company that owned and operated the submersible; two members of a prominent Pakistani family, Shahzada Dawood and his son Suleman Dawood; British adventurer Hamish Harding; and Titanic expert Paul-Henri Nargeolet.

Tributes to those killed and praise for the searchers who tried to save them poured in from across the globe.

Harding's family said in a statement: "He was one of a kind and we adored him... What he achieved in his lifetime was truly remarkable and if we can take any small consolation from this tragedy, it's that we lost him doing what he loved."

In a statement beginning with a Quranic verse, the Dawood family thanked rescuers: "Their untiring efforts were a source of strength for us during this time, We are also indebted to our friends, family, colleagues and well-wishers from all over the world who stood by us during our need."

The Titan launched at 6 a.m. Sunday, and was reported overdue Sunday afternoon about 435 miles (700 kilometers) south of St. John's, Newfoundland. Rescuers rushed ships, planes and other equipment to the site of the disappearance.

Any sliver of hope that remained for finding the crew alive was wiped away early Thursday, when the submersible's 96-hour supply of air was expected to run out and the Coast Guard announced that a debris field had been found roughly 1,600 feet (488 meters) from the Titanic.

"The debris is consistent with the catastrophic loss of the pressure chamber," Mauger said.

The Coast Guard said Thursday that the sounds detected during the search were likely generated by something other than the Titan.

"There doesn't appear to be any connection between the noises and the location (of the debris) on the seafloor," Mauger said.

The Navy official who spoke of the "anomaly" heard Sunday said the Navy passed on the information to the Coast Guard, which continued its search because the Navy did not consider the data to be definitive.

A longtime friend and colleague of Nargeolet told French media that when contact was lost Sunday, he quickly feared the worst.

"Unfortunately, I thought straight away of an implosion," diver and retired underwater filmographer Christian Pétron said Friday to broadcaster France-Info. At the depths in which the submersible was operating, the pressures are intense and unforgiving — equivalent to hundreds of kilograms weighing down on each

square centimeter, he noted.

"Obviously, the slightest problem with the hull and its implosion is immediate," Pétron said.

He opined that Nargeolet was aware of the risks but would have been powered by a thirst for further exploration of the Titanic wreck and its fauna and flora.

Director James Cameron, who has made multiple dives to the wreckage of the Titanic, told the BBC that he knew an "extreme catastrophic event" had happened as soon as he heard the submersible had lost navigation and communications at the same time.

"For me, there was no doubt," Cameron said. "There was no search. When they finally got an ROV (remotely operated vehicle) down there that could make the depth, they found it within hours. Probably within minutes."

He said briefings about 96 hours of oxygen supply and banging noises were a "prolonged and nightmarish charade" that gave the crew members' families false hope.

At least 46 people successfully traveled on OceanGate's submersible to the Titanic wreck site in 2021 and 2022, according to letters the company filed with a U.S. District Court in Norfolk, Virginia, that oversees matters involving the Titanic shipwreck. But questions about the submersible's safety were raised by both by a former company employee and former passengers.

David Lochridge, OceanGate's former director of marine operations, argued in 2018 that the method the company devised for ensuring the soundness of the hull — relying on acoustic monitoring that could detect cracks and pops as the hull strained under pressure — was inadequate and could "subject passengers to potential extreme danger in an experimental submersible."

OceanGate disagreed. Lochridge "is not an engineer and was not hired or asked to perform engineering services on the Titan," it said, and it noted he was fired after refusing to accept assurances from the company's lead engineer that the acoustic monitoring and testing protocol was, in fact, better suited to detect flaws than a method Lochridge proposed.

One of the company's first customers likened a dive he made to the site two years ago to a suicide mission.

"Imagine a metal tube a few meters long with a sheet of metal for a floor. You can't stand. You can't kneel. Everyone is sitting close to or on top of each other," said Arthur Loibl, a retired businessman and adventurer from Germany. "You can't be claustrophobic."

Nicolai Roterman, a deep-sea ecologist and lecturer in marine biology at the University of Portsmouth, England, said the disappearance of the Titan highlights the dangers and unknowns of deep-sea tourism.

"Even the most reliable technology can fail, and therefore accidents will happen. With the growth in deep-sea tourism, we must expect more incidents like this."

Associated Press writers Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates; Ben Finley in Norfolk, Virginia; Holly Ramer in Concord, New Hampshire; Lolita C. Baldor in Washington; Frank Jordans in Berlin; Danica Kirka in London; Gene Johnson in Seattle; Munir Ahmed in Islamabad; and John Leicester in Paris contributed to this report.

Chased from their homes by gangs, thousands of Haitians languish in shelters with lives in limbo

By DÁNICA COTO Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — A gang rampaged through the Cite Soleil slum, killing and raping and setting fire to hundreds of wood-and-tin homes. Forced out of the neighborhood, one family of four lived on the streets of Port-au-Prince until they were struck by a truck as they slept.

Two brothers, 2 and 9, died in the November accident. Jean-Kere Almicar opened his home to their distraught parents, then another family, then another, until there were nearly 200 people camped out in his front yard and nearby.

They are among more than 165,000 Haitians who have fled their homes amid a surge in gang violence, with nowhere to turn in this capital of nearly 3 million people.

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Almicar, who once lived in Scranton, Pennsylvania but moved back to Haiti in 2007, uses his own money. "There was nothing I could do except tell them to come in," Almicar said. "Their home doesn't exist anymore. If they go back, they're going to be killed."

Some 79,000 people are temporarily staying with friends or family, but another 48,000 have crowded into dozens of makeshift shelters like Almicar's or sought refuge in parks, churches, schools and abandoned buildings in Port-au-Prince and beyond. The situation is overwhelming nonprofits and non-governmental organizations.

"The government is not relocating anyone," said Joseph Wilfred, one of several volunteers in charge of an abandoned government building in Port-au-Prince that houses nearly 1,000 people, including him and his family.

Tens of thousands of Haitians have languished in these makeshift shelters for almost a year. They sleep on the hard floor or on flattened cardboard boxes. Belongings are stuffed into big rice bags pushed up against the walls of packed rooms. The gangs that chased them out of their homes and control up to 80% of the capital, by most estimates, are now recruiting children as young as 8 at shelters.

One woman staying at Almicar's place, Lenlen Désir Fondala, said someone snatched her 5-year-old son while they were living in an outdoors park in November. Her face crinkled and she began to cry, whispering that she still dreams of him.

Rapes also are common at the shelters and in the neighborhoods that gangs are razing.

Lovely Benjamin, 26, has scars on her torso and arm after being shot by gangs and attacked with a machete. Her 4-year-old son bears a machete scar on his head. They are homeless, and Benjamin struggles to find work. The gangs torched the items that she used to sell, including rice and oil, and she doesn't have the money to buy more. She and her little boy survived the attack but gang members killed her partner and set his body on fire.

"Everybody was running," she recalled. "The gangs burst into everyone's home."

Benjamin and her son now live in Almicar's front yard along with other neighbors from Cite Soleil. On a recent morning, they crowded together, surrounded by heaps of clothes soaked by recent floods. The rocky floor where they sit and sleep also serves as a makeshift kitchen, with some cooking beans or vegetables on tiny, charcoal-fired stoves.

Those living alongside Benjamin include Januèlle Dafka and her 15-year-old daughter, Titi Paul, who were both raped and impregnated by gang members. Another neighbor, Rose Dupont, confided that she was nine months pregnant when four gang members shot her in the shoulder then beat and raped her, causing her to miscarry. The Associated Press does not identify people who say they are the victims of sexual assault unless they agree to be named, as Dafka, Paul and Dupont did.

The women carry envelopes with detailed medical records of the horrors they endured and hope that someone will help them find a safe place to live.

For now, they take refuge in the yard of Almicar, who is known as "Big Papa."

"He has been investing his time, his money, not to mention his strength to keep us safe," said Dovenald Cetoute, 33, who lives there.

But few are benevolent like Almicar. Police have been evicting people from makeshift shelters, and neighbors have threatened to kick out people left homeless because of fears that gang members might be hiding among them.

The United Nations' International Organization for Migration has helped more than 3,400 people find homes in safer areas and gives families some \$350 to cover one year of rent. But a growing number of those families are returning to shelters as gangs continue to invade communities once considered safe. Even makeshift shelters are closing and moving elsewhere because of the ongoing violence, said Philippe Branchat, head of the IOM in Haiti.

"We are hearing these terrible stories very often," Branchat said, adding that the agency doesn't have access to about half of the makeshift shelters because of gang violence. "The situation is really, really bad."

People at the shelters sometimes can only afford to eat one mango a day. Many young children are

malnourished.

On a recent morning at the abandoned government building that Wilfred helps manage as a makeshift shelter, a woman wailed against the wall as the tiny body of her 1-year-old goddaughter lay on the floor, wrapped in a towel. She had died just hours ago of suspected cholera.

The night before, a 6-year-old boy died under similar circumstances, with health workers who visited the next morning suspecting cholera.

Hours later, an ambulance came by to pick up two other children fighting cholera. The bacteria, which sickens people who swallow contaminated food or water, has been spreading at the shelter that has no power or running water, and just two makeshift holes in the ground that serve as a bathroom for nearly 1,000 people.

The worsening situation is a regular topic at the biweekly meetings that leaders of the shelter hold for those living there.

Sony Pierre, a spokesman for the committee that runs the shelter where he lives, said he is greatly concerned about the living conditions.

"Look at this catastrophe," Pierre said as he waved his arms at the scene behind him, where flies buzzed around aggressively in the oppressive heat. "This is an emergency ... We are looking for help to live with dignity."

Associated Press reporter Evens Sanon contributed.

The Paris summit on finance and climate comes to an end. Time for concrete steps?

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN and SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — After all the talking, time for tangible solutions?

World leaders and finance bosses were set to release a "to-do list" to help developing countries better tackle climate change and poverty, a long-sought goal of the two-day summit in Paris that wraps up on Friday.

Organizers said the gathering will end with a summary of commitments, including a roadmap for what to expect from the upcoming meeting of the Group of 20 major economies and the U.N. climate conference later this year.

The gathering wrapping up in Paris has no mandate to make formal decisions, but French President Emmanuel Macron has pledged to deliver a to-do list that should be accompanied by a progress-tracking tool.

"We have to come up with mobilizations, commitments, new instruments and very concrete solutions that will change life on the ground in countries facing these challenges," Macron said.

U.S. climate envoy John Kerry was on the same wavelength, telling The Associated Press the conference would aim to "come out with some results that are specific to how you can mobilize finance" in a bid to reduce emissions faster.

Several activists and non-governmental organizations have urged the summit participants to ensure that rich countries commit to debt relief for poor nations, including the cancellation of loans. A debt suspension clause for countries hit by extreme climatic events was also discussed.

In addition, the idea of implementing a tax on the greenhouse gas emissions produced from international shipping has been gaining traction, with possible adoption at a July meeting of the International Maritime Organization. Some experts believe that a tax on shipping alone could raise \$100 billion a year, and a strong declaration on this in Paris might provide Macron with a symbolic win, especially if it gets backing from the IMO next month.

To bring in more money, activists are pushing for a tax on the fossil fuel industry and another one on financial transactions — but those two proposals appear to have little support from wealthier nations.

The International Monetary Fund has made \$100 billion worth of assets — called Special Drawing Rights — available to certain vulnerable countries. The French presidency then said France would share 40% of

its own assets from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ineza Grace, a young climate activist from Rwanda, said a good outcome for the summit would be the emergence of a new vision in developed countries for what they need to do.

"To understand how they can replace the current financial structures that are reproducing the colonial structure," she said.

Fellow activist Greta Thunberg, speaking alongside Grace on the sidelines of the meetings, agreed.

"The aspect of climate justice and equity has been more or less excluded from the global climate negotiations and the discourse," Thunberg said.

The summit's first day included announcements of a pair of deals. French officials said debt-burdened Zambia reached a deal with several creditors including China to restructure \$6.3 billion in loans. And Senegal reached a deal with the European Union and western allies to support its efforts to improve its access to energy and increase its share of renewable energy to 40% by 2030.

Many officials from poor and climate-vulnerable nations attended, with only two top leaders from the Group of Seven most developed countries — Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz — in the audience.

The U.S. was represented by Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and climate envoy John Kerry. Other attendees included China's Prime Minister Li Qiang, Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, World Bank head Ajay Banga and IMF President Kristalina Georgieva.

Yellen said during Friday's closing ceremony she was pleased that the U.S. and China were able to collaborate on the fight against climate change, with Qiang also attending.

"As the world's two largest economies, we have a responsibility to work together on global issues," she said. "It's something we can do and something the world expects of us."

Her remarks came after U.S. President Joe Biden defended his harsh public remarks on China, in which he called President Xi Jinping a dictator. Biden said his words would have no negative impact on U.S.-China relations and that he still expects to meet with Xi sometime soon.

Climate activists gathered in central Paris on Friday to make polluters pay for climate damage.

"There will be no climate justice without making the polluters pay," said Patience Nabukala, part of the Fridays for Futures Uganda activist group. "People from countries like mine, we cannot afford to lose more lives, we cannot afford to lose more properties."

Associated Press writers Masha Macpherson and Catherine Gaschka in Paris and Frank Jordans in Berlin contributed. ___ 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.

The US has tons of leftover food. Upcycling seeks to turn would-be trash into ice cream and pizza

By HAVEN DALEY Associated Press

LOS GATOS, Calif. (AP) — At Tyler Malek's ice cream parlors, one cook's trash is another chef's frosty treat.

The head ice cream maker at the Portland, Oregon-based Salt & Straw uses the whey leftover from yogurt makers in upstate New York to make his lemon curd flavor. For chocolate barley milk, he mixes in the remnants of rice and grains from beer brewing to give it a light and creamy taste.

"Instead of calling this food waste, we need to call it wasted food and start decreasing how much wasting we're doing," Malek said.

Malek's ice cream chain is among those at the forefront of the upcycling movement, the process of creating high-quality products from leftover food. Malek's shops from the Pacific Northwest to Miami now feature flavors like "Cacao Pulp & Chocolate Stracciatella Gelato," which is made from leftover cacao pulp from chocolate production that otherwise would have gone to waste.

It's a trend gaining ground as consumers spend more time reading packaging labels and menu ingredients

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to learn where their food comes from and how it affects the environment. More than 35 million tons (31 million metric tons) of food are wasted every year in the U.S. — about 40% of the country's food production — costing the national economy more than \$200 billion, according to the Upcycled Food Association.

Upcycled food is becoming increasingly common in cake mixes and veggie chips at natural grocery stores. Ingredients include fruits and vegetables from farms nationwide that are perfectly edible but often rejected by restaurants and grocery stores because of their shape or color, like white strawberries, wilted greens and ugly mushrooms.

The Upcycled Food Association, which will celebrate World Upcycling Day on Saturday, issues an official "Upcycling Certified" seal to qualifying products. These seals, which adorn the new Salt & Straw upcycled flavors, raise awareness with consumers that the company making the food used such ingredients.

The association initially certified about 30 products in 2021 and now has 450 carrying the label.

"A lot of the food that is uneaten or thrown away in our supply chain is actually due to archaic cosmetic standards or sort of perceptions that what we think is edible or quality food," said Angie Crone, the association's chief executive. "So this is a mark that you can see on the products wherever you go shopping, to be able to understand how that company is reducing food waste in their supply chain."

The association's seal also is featured on all products made by Renewal Mill, an Oakland-based company turning byproducts from plant-based milk into pantry staples like baking flour to reduce waste at the manufacturing level.

"Our first product is the pulp leftover from making soy milk. We turn that into a high fiber gluten-free flour called okara flour," co-founder Caroline Cotto said. "And then we use that flour to make things like baking mixes and ready-to-eat cookies."

The company's okara flour is featured in Salt & Straw's new "Salted Caramel & Okara Cupcakes" flavor.

The movement isn't confined to recycled products found in a trendy ice cream store, farmers market or natural grocery. In San Francisco, a restaurant serving pizza and wine focuses on upcycled ingredients such as ugly mushrooms, misshapen peppers and discolored tomatoes, as well as offcuts of meat for menu stars like beef heart meatballs.

"I think so many people think about dumpster diving or using rotten ingredients, but we have this wildly overproductive food system that accounts for a ton of waste," said Kayla Abe, co-owner of Shuggie's Trash Pie. "Some people might not read that it's a beef heart meatball and they just might see meatball. They order it and they're like, that was the best meatball I've ever had in my life."

Germany's biggest Jewish educational and cultural complex since the Holocaust to open in Berlin

By KIRSTEN GRIESHABER Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — When Berlin Rabbi Yehuda Teichtal first talked about his dream of building Germany's biggest Jewish educational and cultural complex since the Holocaust, most people who heard about the plan were skeptical.

But five years after the groundbreaking, Teichtal, a Berlin rabbi and head of the local Chabad community, beams as he steps onto the seventh-floor balcony of the new curved, blue-tiled building overlooking the campus amphitheater, garden, playground and a plot still covered with containers and construction material that will eventually become a sports field.

"We're changing the narrative about Jews in Germany," Teichtal told The Associated Press earlier this week.

"Too often people only think about the Holocaust and antisemitism when it comes to Jews in Germany," the 50-year-old rabbi said. "Our Jewish campus is about the future, it's about joy, about studying and living together."

The Pears Jewish Campus, in the German capital's Wilmersdorf neighborhood, officially opens on Sunday. The Chabad community's 550 kindergarten, elementary and high school students who are currently spread out in different buildings across the city will all move to the campus when the new school year begins at the end of August.

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In addition to the schools, the campus also will feature a movie theater and a music studio, a library, a kosher deli and a huge indoor basketball court and gym that can be turned into a lecture hall for up to 600 people or a reception hall for weddings and bar mitzvahs.

There's a kitchen for the school cafeteria and another huge one to cater receptions, which includes a bakery to make pastries or to prepare challah for Shabbat.

Jessica Kalmanovich, a mother of a 6-year-old daughter and 3-year-old son who attend the Chabad's elementary school and kindergarten in different neighborhoods of the city, said her family can't wait for the campus to open.

"Every morning, when we drive by the campus, my son asks me, 'When is my kindergarten in the blue building finally ready for me to start going there?'" she said.

The 31-year-old, who was born in Kazakhstan and came to Germany as an infant, called the new campus "a milestone" for Jews in Berlin.

"Our children will get a good Jewish education there, we will be in the center of the city, and we will no longer have problems finding kosher food," she said. "We will be very visible as Jews in Berlin but at the same time feel protected."

Unlike many other Jewish institutions in Germany that are hidden behind walls for fear of possible anti-semitic attacks, the new campus has a glass fence around it. It is connected to the synagogue and community center that have been operated for many years by Chabad, an Orthodox Jewish Hasidic movement.

"We didn't want this to feel like a ghetto," said Teichtal. "We want this to be a happy place, an open house."

When Teichtal, who grew up in Brooklyn, New York, was asked to go to Germany 27 years ago to revive Jewish life there, he had mixed feelings. His great-grandfather was murdered in the Nazis' Auschwitz death camp and more than 60 other relatives also perished in the Holocaust.

But together with his wife Leah, he set out to "bring light to the darkness."

Berlin was home to Germany's biggest Jewish community before the Holocaust. In 1933, the year the Nazis came to power, around 160,500 Jews lived in Berlin. By the end of World War II in 1945, their numbers had diminished to about 7,000 — through emigration and extermination.

Almost 80 years after the Holocaust, in which 6 million European Jews were killed by the Nazis and their henchmen, Berlin's Jewish community is still a far cry from the past. But it's vibrant and alive again — with an estimated 30,000 to 50,000 Jews — and Teichtal has played a major role in creating this bustling community.

In addition to the descendants of the surviving German Jews, many Jews who now live in Berlin emigrated from the former Soviet Union after the collapse of communism in the early 1990s. Young Israelis and American Jews came in droves over the past 15 years, fascinated by the city's laissez-faire vibe, buzzing nightlife and low cost of living.

In a recent development, several thousand Ukrainian Jews settled in Berlin after Russia attacked their home country last year, among them several hundred refugees and orphans who found shelter at the Chabad community.

The new Jewish campus, spread over 8,000 square meters (86,000 square feet), cost 40 million euros (\$43.7 million) that was paid for by the federal and state governments, private companies, foundations and donations. It's designed to cater not only to Jews, but also members of other religions, Teichtal says.

"This place is about creating dialogue, about overcoming prejudice and ignorance," the rabbi said. He paused, then added that his work in Berlin is not yet done with the opening of the Jewish campus.

"I have many other plans," he said with a smile, gazing across the campus. "The synagogue has to be enlarged and there's need for a nursing home — with the help of God, we will make it all come true."

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While Putin may adhere to keeping various factions divided and then intervening to “decide who wins and who loses, and who’s up and who’s down,” the process erodes the government’s authority in wartime, Gould-Davies said.

“That may be a way of keeping the political system going, but it’s certainly not the way to fight the war, because if your military forces are divided and if they’re not fighting together effectively, then your military operations will suffer accordingly and that’s exactly what’s happening here,” he said.

Mark Galeotti, a London-based expert on Russian politics and security, noted the infighting was continuing even as Ukraine is in the early stages of its long-expected counteroffensive — “a point when really everyone should have one single common goal.”

In a recent podcast, he speculated that Putin’s failure to resolve political disputes could be rooted in a lack of interest, a focus on other issues or, more likely, a reluctance to take sides.

“It also raises questions about his overall capacity to do his job,” Galeotti said. “This is the one thing, the one job he can’t really outsource, and he’s not even trying.”

The lack of response from military leaders to Prigozhin’s insults appeared to indicate they weren’t sure if Putin was on their side.

St. Petersburg regional Gov. Alexander Beglov was another recent Prigozhin target, following their long-standing conflict rooted in Beglov’s reluctance to award lucrative contracts to Prigozhin’s companies. Just like the military leaders, Beglov has not responded.

Prigozhin has allied with other hawkish officials, reportedly including Tula Gov. Alexei Dyumin, a former Putin bodyguard seen by many as a potential successor. The Wagner head also gravitated for some time toward Ramzan Kadyrov, the Moscow-backed regional leader of Chechnya. While denouncing most senior military leaders, Prigozhin spoke approvingly about Gen. Sergei Surovikin, who led Russian forces in Ukraine for several months before Putin appointed Gerasimov to oversee the operations.

But some of those alliances have been shaky.

While Kadyrov initially praised Prigozhin and backed some of his criticism of the military leaders, he later shifted course and criticized him for sounding defeatist. Kadyrov’s lieutenants went further, blasting Wagner’s efforts in Bakhmut after Prigozhin made dismissive comments about Chechen fighters in Ukraine. Kadyrov’s right-hand man, Magomed Daudov, bluntly said Prigozhin would have been executed for such statements during World War II.

Prigozhin quickly backed off, saying he was only expressing concern about Russian operations.

Prigozhin has dodged questions about his ambitions, but in a move that reflected his desire to gain political clout, he recently toured Russia, continuing a barrage of blustery comments.

“There are signs that he seeks some sort of political future,” Gould-Davies observed.

Even though Prigozhin owes his position and wealth to Putin, he’s playing the role of outsider with his criticism of some leaders and by trying to appeal to the masses amid setbacks in Ukraine, said Andrei Kolesnikov of the Carnegie Endowment.

“He is posturing as an enemy of the elites, even though he is a product of Putin’s system, the embodiment of his regime and state contracts,” Kolesnikov said. “Prigozhin is playing an independent politician, raising the stakes and testing the system’s limits. But it’s only technically and physically possible for as long as Putin finds him useful and is amused by his escapades.”

In a show of support for the military, Putin backed the Defense Ministry’s demand for all private companies to sign contracts with it — something Prigozhin has refused to do.

And in another sign Putin’s administration may finally be cutting Prigozhin down to size, messaging app channels connected to the Kremlin carried photos of his partying children, including a daughter in Dubai, in apparent retaliation for Prigozhin’s attacks on the defense minister’s daughter.

Prigozhin has urged all-out war with Ukraine, including a total nationwide mobilization and the introduction of martial law in Russia — calls welcomed by some hawks.

But Kolesnikov notes that the vast majority of Russians who are mostly apathetic or unwilling to make larger sacrifices could be frightened and appalled by that message.

He cautions against overestimating Prigozhin's clout and political prospects, and underestimating Putin's authority.

"It's enough for the commander-in-chief to move his finger to make the Wagner chief disappear," Kolesnikov said.

Associated Press writer Danica Kirka in London contributed.

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

Oklahoma death row inmate plans to reject chance for clemency despite maintaining his innocence

By SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — A man scheduled to be executed in September for the 1996 killing of a University of Oklahoma dance student plans to reject his chance for a clemency hearing, saying there is little hope the state's Republican governor would spare his life.

Anthony Sanchez, 44, said in a telephone interview Thursday from Oklahoma's death row that even in the rare case when the five-member Pardon and Parole Board recommends clemency, Gov. Kevin Stitt is unlikely to grant it.

"I've sat in my cell and I've watched inmate after inmate after inmate get clemency and get denied clemency," Sanchez said. "Either way, it doesn't go well for the inmates."

Sanchez cited the recent cases of Bigler Stouffer and James Coddington, both of whom were executed after the board voted 3-2 for clemency that was later rejected by Stitt.

"They went out there and poured their hearts out, man," Sanchez said. "Why would I want to be a part of anything like that, if you're going to sit there and get these guys' hopes up?"

"Why wouldn't I try to prove my innocence through the courts," he added.

Stitt granted clemency to a condemned inmate once, commuting Julius Jones death sentence in 2021 to life in prison without parole. Jones' case had drawn the attention of reality television star Kim Kardashian and professional athletes with Oklahoma ties, including NBA stars Russell Westbrook, Blake Griffin and Trae Young, and NFL quarterback Baker Mayfield. All of them urged Stitt to commute Jones' death sentence and spare his life.

Sanchez, who maintains his innocence, said he is no longer working with his court-appointed attorneys, but Mark Barrett, who represents Sanchez, said he was appointed by a federal judge.

"If we'd been hired and the client didn't want us anymore, that would be the end of it," Barrett said. "When there is an appointment, the judge has to release you from your appointment."

The Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals in April rejected a request from Sanchez's attorneys for an evidentiary hearing in which they claimed Sanchez's late father, Thomas Glen Sanchez, was the actual killer of 21-year-old Juli Busken.

Busken, from Benton, Arkansas, had just completed her last semester at OU when she was abducted on Dec. 20, 1996, from her Norman apartment complex. Her body was found that evening. She had been raped and shot in the head.

The slaying went unsolved for years until DNA recovered from her clothes linked Anthony Sanchez to the crime. He was convicted of rape and murder and sentenced to die in 2006.

A private investigator hired by an anti-death penalty group contends the DNA evidence may have been contaminated and that an inexperienced lab technician miscommunicated the strength of the evidence to a jury.

But former Cleveland County District Attorney Tim Kuykendall has said there was other evidence linking Anthony Sanchez to the killing, including ballistic evidence and a shoe print found at the crime scene.

"I know from spending a lot of time on that case, there is not one piece of evidence that pointed to anyone other than Anthony Sanchez," Kuykendall said. "I don't care if a hundred people or a thousand

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people confess to killing Juli Busken.”

Oklahoma resumed carrying out the death penalty in 2021, ending a six-year moratorium brought on by concerns about its execution methods.

Oklahoma had one of the nation’s busiest death chambers until problems in 2014 and 2015. Richard Glosip was hours away from being executed in September 2015 when prison officials realized they received the wrong lethal drug. It was later learned the same wrong drug had been used to execute an inmate in January 2015.

The drug mix-ups followed a botched execution in April 2014 in which inmate Clayton Lockett struggled on a gurney before dying 43 minutes into his lethal injection and after the state’s prisons chief ordered executioners to stop.

Follow Sean Murphy on Twitter: @apseanmurphy

Chinese human rights lawyer chased out of 13 homes in 2 months as pressure rises on legal advocates

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — A disbarred Chinese human rights lawyer has been forced to move 13 times in two months as part of a pattern of harassment against him and three other prominent rights advocates in Beijing that is further squeezing the country’s battered civil rights community.

Wang Quanzhang said he is now living in a borrowed apartment in the suburbs where the power is frequently cut off, while another lawyer left Beijing entirely in hopes of ending the harassment. His colleague Bao Longjun said he is still in the apartment he owns, but has been barred from leaving it multiple times by unidentified groups of men who loiter outside his door. Bao said a fourth lawyer was detained along with his wife.

All four are prominent members of a group known as the 709 lawyers, after the date — July 9, 2015 — when a crackdown on independent legal advocacy began in which hundreds were arrested. Such advocates are a rare source of help for people facing political charges, or trying to access benefits denied by often unaccountable bureaucracies.

Their work has ranged from defending members of Falun Gong, a religious movement opposed to China’s government that Beijing bans as an “evil cult,” to helping people lobby for increases to their pensions.

All four men were disbarred after their 2015 arrests, but after being released from prison they continued to do similar work that doesn’t require a law license.

Yaqiu Wang, senior China researcher at Human Rights Watch, said in a statement that the lawyers’ ordeals coincided with a series of high-profile visits by foreign dignitaries. French President Emmanuel Macron visited Beijing in early April, followed by Germany’s foreign minister, and most recently U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

The meetings, she wrote, were intended to “signal China is open for business and engagement again. But the petty and inhumane treatment of human rights lawyers and their families show that, the authorities only want to double down on repressing the Chinese civil society.”

Beijing’s police department did not respond to a faxed request for comment.

In mid-April, disbarred rights lawyer Yu Wensheng and his wife were detained by Beijing police while on their way to the European Union Delegation, said Bao Longjun, another one of the four advocates.

Around the same time, two other rights lawyers were sentenced to more than 10 years in prison on charges of “subverting state power.”

Wang, the lawyer who was chased out of his home, and Bao faced more bewildering situations.

Groups of men began hanging out in front of Bao’s and Wang’s doors, and told them they were not allowed to go outside.

The men did not say who they were or why they were there. The lawyers believe they are in-

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formal contractors for the police, a practice widely used by local Chinese governments to apply extralegal pressure to people they view as troublesome.

More pressure came via Wang's landlord. Around the time that the men appeared, the landlord told Wang that his lease was no longer valid and his family had to move. Initially, they refused, but after a few days the apartment's electricity, water and gas were cut off.

Fellow disbarred rights lawyer Li Heping and his family left Beijing after similar pressure, according to Wang and Sophie Luo, an activist based in the U.S. Li declined an interview.

Bao was not forced out of his home, which he owns. He says groups of men in plain clothes come and go intermittently, sometimes confining him to his house.

Bao said the harassment is intended to pressure advocates to leave Beijing. He said that authorities likely hope the advocates will return to their hometowns, where they will be another local government's problem.

Wang and his wife, Li Wenzu, are still in Beijing, after a month and a half during which the couple has moved from apartment to hotel to apartment 13 times.

They've been followed to each location by groups of men in plain clothes who loiter nearby, unnerving landlords and neighbors.

At times, Wang said, hotels have asked him to leave the same day he's checked in. The longest they've managed to stay in one place was a hotel that allowed them to stay for nine days. The couple eventually sent their 10-year-old son to live with relatives.

For the last week, the couple has been living in an apartment in suburban Beijing owned by a friend, where the electricity is frequently cut off.

The first time, Wang said, he was able to restore it by flipping a switch in a fuse box outside the apartment; on later occasions, he found a bicycle lock on the fuse box, or more complex damage that required an electrician to repair.

AP journalists saw seven men hanging around the courtyard of the apartment building on Tuesday.

To cope with blackouts, the couple has installed a solar panel to charge their phones, and stockpiled drinking water, rice and instant noodles.

Wang was measured in describing his ordeal, though clearly frustrated.

"Of course, I hope I can live a peaceful life," he said. For now, "I'm just living one day at a time."

Associated Press reporter Dake Kang and photojournalist Han Guan Ng contributed to this report from Beijing.

Inflation and economic crises strain pilgrims in this year's Hajj, putting it out of reach for some

By JACK JEFFERY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Saudi Arabia is hosting its biggest Hajj pilgrimage in three years, starting Monday. But for many pilgrims, and for many others who couldn't make it, global inflation and economic crises made it more of a strain to carry out Islam's spiritual trip of a lifetime.

Mohammed, a university professor in the Egyptian capital Cairo, said it was an annual tradition for him to apply to go on Hajj. But not this time.

To afford the pilgrimage, "usually you're able to sacrifice something. But this year it was too expensive," he said. After a number of recent major family expenses, the increased price of a Hajj package put it out of reach. Mohammed asked for his surname not be used out for fear of reprisal, given the sensitivities around talking about Egypt's economic woes.

Global inflation has hiked prices for Hajj dramatically, with costs mounting for airlines, transportation, food and accommodation in and around the holy city of Mecca. On top of that, multiple countries — including some with the world's biggest Muslim populations — are suffering economic crises, including dizzying plunges in the values of national currencies.

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With people balking at the costs, a few countries struggled to fill their quota of pilgrims this year, a startling sign when demand usually outstrips the supply of pilgrimage spots many times over.

To control the numbers and to ensure a fair chance for everyone, Saudi Arabia gives every country an allotment of slots for the pilgrimage, usually around a tenth of a percent of the country's Muslim population. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Saudi Arabia barred foreign pilgrims in 2020 and 2021, and last year it dramatically reduced the numbers, cutting quotas in half or more. This year, most quotas are back to pre-pandemic levels.

Egyptian authorities have not announced the total number of Egyptian pilgrims this year, but it appears to be down from the nearly 80,000 who went in 2019 and previous years. EgyptAir, the main carrier, said it was taking 35,000-45,000 Egyptian pilgrims, according to officials quotes in local media. Another 4,000 went by land, according to state media reports. Officials did not respond to AP requests for figures on numbers of pilgrims.

Egypt has faced spiraling economic problems, including inflation reaching 40%. The government has repeatedly devalued the currency and is scrambling to stop the depletion of hard currency reserves amid mounting debt. Since last pilgrimage, the Egyptian pound has lost 40% of its value against the Saudi riyal.

Like many countries, Egypt distributes a portion of its quota through private companies to sell, and a portion of lower-cost, government organized trips through a lottery to applicants.

One of the cheapest Hajj packages, organized by the Interior Ministry, costs 175,000 Egyptian pounds, around \$5,663, according to state media. Last year, the same package cost 90,000 pounds, roughly \$4,770 at the time. In dollars, it's a rise of around 20%, but the price has nearly doubled in pounds.

The manager of one Cairo-based travel agency said that last year he organized 100 Hajj trips, while this year only 40 inquiries have been made. He spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue.

Organizers and pilgrims also struggle with the limits that most Egyptian banks put on foreign cash withdrawals. One travel agent said he has been unable to book flights with foreign airlines because they require dollar payments. An Associated Press journalist currently in Mecca said banking restrictions mean he can only withdraw 1,000 Saudi riyals, roughly \$266, for the week-long stay.

Pilgrim Nadia Awaad said she couldn't afford going by plane, so she's taking the much longer but cheaper land route to Mecca. "Even if it includes more effort, that's not a problem," she said before boarding a bus from Cairo.

Pakistan didn't reach its Hajj quota this year after being hit by mounting inflation and a currency dropping in value.

Abdul Majid, a government employee in Rawalpindi, said he had been saving money for Hajj, "but now I have quit my plan. I cannot meet the wide gap between my savings and the cost."

The price for a government-run trip was initially set at 1.175 million rupees, a jump of 69% over last year's rate in rupees, though at the last minute authorities lowered the cost somewhat, saying they found cheaper deals on accommodation in Mecca.

Private tour companies managed to fill their quota, about half of Pakistan's total 179,000 pilgrimage slots. But applications for the government-run slots fell short, despite a program encouraging Pakistanis abroad to deposit dollars in Pakistani bank accounts to sponsor a pilgrim at home. In the end, Pakistan took the unprecedented step of returning 7,000 unused Hajj slots to Saudi Arabia.

Some countries have the opposite problem: a backlog of people eager to go on Hajj because of the pandemic disruptions of the past three years.

Indonesia received an additional 8,000 Hajj slots from Saudi Arabia this year for a total of 229,000 and easily filled them. Wait times for Indonesians to go on Hajj can drag out for more than a decade. Malaysia also asked for 10,000 more spots on top of its quota of 31,600, though there has been no public confirmation whether Saudi Arabia granted it.

India, where Muslims make up 14% of the population of 1.4 billion people, also lowered the cost of the state-organized Hajj packages, which most of its pilgrims use, by the equivalent of about \$606, effectively giving a subsidy. India is sending its full contingent of more than 175,000 pilgrims.

Infighting among Putin's lieutenants seems to reveal signs of 'deep dysfunction'

By The Associated Press undefined

The video was shocking — not just for what it showed but also for what was said.

Yevgeny Prigozhin, the outspoken millionaire head of the private military contractor Wagner, stood in front of the bloodied bodies of his slain troops in Ukraine and yelled expletive-riddled insults at Russian military leaders, blaming them for the carnage.

"They came here as volunteers and they died to let you lounge in your red wood offices," Prigozhin shouted. "You are sitting in your expensive clubs, your children are enjoying good living and filming videos on YouTube. Those who don't give us ammunition will be eaten alive in hell!"

It was a disquieting display for Russians used to more than two decades of rigidly controlled rule by President Vladimir Putin — years with little sign of infighting among his top lieutenants.

Prigozhin's video in May and his other rants against the military leadership have been met with silence from Putin, as well as the brass. Some see Putin's failure to squelch the infighting as a sign of potential shifts in Russia's political scene that set the stage for more internal battles.

Prigozhin's rift with the military has been ignored by state-controlled TV, where most Russians get their news, although it is followed closely by the politically active, ultrapatriotic readers and viewers on social media networks, which share his contempt for military leaders.

While there are no indications that Putin is losing influence, "there are growing signs of deep dysfunction, anxiety, worry about the war and real problems in marshaling the resources necessary to fight it effectively," said Nigel Gould-Davies, a senior fellow for Russia and Eurasia at the International Institute for Strategic Studies and the editor of its Strategic Survey.

Prigozhin's feud with military leaders goes back years, and it spilled into the open amid the fighting for the eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut that was spearheaded by his mercenaries. It has pushed the 62-year-old Wagner owner, dubbed "Putin's chef" for his lucrative Kremlin catering contracts, to the forefront of Russian politics and signaled his growing ambitions.

He scathingly criticized Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and the chief of the General Staff Gen. Valery Gerasimov, as weak and incompetent in mocking statements full of vulgar language. At one point, he even alleged the army planted mines on the route his fighters planned to use and opened fire at them.

With his crude remarks, Prigozhin ventured into territory where only Putin had gone before: Over the years, the Russian leader occasionally broke decorum with an earthy remark or off-color joke, while top officials used carefully worded language.

In a later video, Prigozhin made a statement that some have interpreted as a thinly veiled attack on Putin himself. He declared that while his men were dying due to the Defense Ministry's failure to supply ammunition, a "happy granddad is thinking he's doing well," and then referred to that "granddad" with an obscenity.

The blunt comment caused a social media uproar, where it was broadly seen as a reference to Putin. Prigozhin later said he was talking about Gerasimov.

"Prigozhin is now sailing much closer to the wind than he ever has," Gould-Davies told The Associated Press.

Sergei Markov, a pro-Kremlin political commentator, described Prigozhin as "the second-most popular man after Putin" and a "symbol of Russia's military victory for millions of people."

Putin needs Prigozhin's mercenaries at a time when the regular military is still recovering from setbacks earlier in the invasion. The Wagner chief's position was bolstered after the private army captured Bakhmut last month in the war's longest and bloodiest battle, relying on tens of thousands of convicts who were promised pardons if they survived six months of fighting.

"Putin dominates the system, but he still sort of depends upon a small number of big people to implement his will, to provide him with resources to carry out his orders, including fighting the war," Gould-Davies told AP.

Still, costs had an impact. Private tour operators in India said the number of people seeking to go was down from pre-pandemic years.

"Naturally some people delay their plans, hoping it will get cheaper next year," said Mohammad Mukaram, a Hajj agent in New Delhi.

Nigeria, which has one of the world's biggest Muslim populations, was able to fill its quota of 95,000 pilgrims at the last minute after many states extended their deadlines for people to pay, authorities said. Despite higher costs, would-be pilgrims delayed by the pandemic were enough to fill demand,

"Even if it reaches 10 million naira (\$21,630), Nigerians will go, especially those committed to it," said Adamu Yusuf, who has been to Mecca on numerous occasions.

Associated Press reporters Sheikh Saaliq in New Delhi and Chinedu Asadu in Lagos, Nigeria, contributed to this report.

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Victor Wembanyama is the No. 1 pick in the NBA draft, with expectations of stardom

By BRIAN MAHONEY AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Victor Wembanyama was the presumed No. 1 pick for months, the rare certainty in an NBA draft process that's often a guessing game.

Yet as the clock above the stage he was facing ticked all the way down to zero, butterflies set in.

"Longest five minutes of my life," Wembanyama said.

The San Antonio Spurs are confident he will be worth the wait.

The Spurs took the 19-year-old from France who arrives with enormous expectations to become basketball's newest sensation on Thursday night, triggering chants of "Wemby! Wemby" from a group of Spurs fans waving signs from the first row of seats in Barclays Center in Brooklyn.

Wembanyama comes with far more height and hype than most No. 1 picks. Listed at 7-foot-4, he dominated his French league in his final season there, leading all players in scoring, rebounding and blocked shots.

Now he makes the move to the NBA, perhaps as the best prospect since LeBron James came out of high school in 2003. Wembanyama brings a package of skills that seem perfect for the modern NBA and too vast for one player, with the size of a center and the shooting and ballhandling ability of a guard.

He teared up as he left the stage with his Spurs cap on and hugged his siblings, then joked afterward about how quickly he was handed a white-and-black No. 1 jersey with his name already on the back.

"Someone knew this was happening somehow," he said.

Just about everyone did.

Wembanyama was the center of attention throughout the draft process and sat in the middle of the green room — for the short time he was there, anyway. He smiled for young fans who screamed "Victor!" as he walked around the arena, even encouraging one to throw him a basketball that he signed and tossed back up into the stands.

The Charlotte Hornets took Alabama freshman forward Brandon Miller with the No. 2 pick.

Scout Henderson of the G League Ignite, whose bling-filled jacket stood in sharp contrast to Wembanyama's solid green look, was the No. 3 pick by the Portland Trail Blazers.

It was during a two-game series between teams featuring Wembanyama and Henderson last October in Las Vegas that Wembanyama solidified himself as the main man in this draft, scoring 37 and 36 points in front of scouts and some future opponents. His highlights, such as a follow dunk of his own missed 3-pointer, became can't-miss content for basketball fans during the past season.

Wembanyama is the Spurs' third No. 1 pick and the first since Tim Duncan in 1997, which led to a stretch

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of five NBA championships through 2014 before they struggled in recent seasons.

He became the first international player drafted No. 1 without playing any college basketball since Andrea Bargnani in 2006 and ended a run of 13 straight years where a college freshman went first. Blake Griffin, a sophomore in 2010, was the last No. 1 who wasn't a one-and-done.

Henderson was originally considered the likely No. 2 pick before Miller passed him after his outstanding season for the Crimson Tide. But the 19-year-old believes the two years he played in the NBA's minor league has him more ready for NBA success.

"I'm the most prepared player in the draft. That's what I say," Henderson said. "The fact that I went there for two years just taught me so much. On the court, as well, but a lot of things off the court."

Draft history was made with the Nos. 4 and 5 picks. Twins Amen and Ausar Thompson of Overtime Elite became the first brothers to be selected in the top 10 of the same draft, with Amen going to the Houston Rockets and Ausar following to the Detroit Pistons.

"Means a lot to my family," Amen Thompson said. "We were going to be happy whoever went first. For us to go back-to-back, be the first twins to go back-to-back in the top five means a lot."

Anthony Black of Arkansas was taken sixth by Orlando, ending the run of three straight players who hadn't gone to college. But then it was right back to the international ranks when Indiana picked Bilal Coulibaly, Wembanyama's teammate with Boulogne-Levallois Metropolitans 92 whose stock soared in the postseason as the team reached the finals in the Pro A League.

The Pacers dealt Coulibaly's rights to Washington for Houston forward Jarace Walker, who was taken at No. 8.

The Nos. 10 and 12 picks were also swapped, with the Dallas Mavericks taking Kentucky guard Cason Wallace and dealing his rights to the Oklahoma City Thunder, who had taken Duke big man Dereck Lively II.

Gradey Dick of Kansas, whose dazzling red jacket resembled Dorothy's shoes from "The Wizard of Oz," went to Toronto with the No. 13 pick before Jordan Hawkins of national champion UConn was taken by New Orleans to end the lottery.

There were few trades in the first round, with the Utah Jazz making all three of their picks. They took Taylor Hendricks of UCF at No. 9, Baylor's Keyonte George at No. 16 and Brice Sensabaugh of Ohio State at No. 28.

The surprise of the first round was Villanova forward Cam Whitmore, projected to be a top-10 pick, falling to the Rockets at No. 20. Nick Smith Jr. of Arkansas went to Charlotte at No. 27 after being considered a lottery selection.

The Miami Heat, who lost in the NBA Finals, took UCLA's Jaime Jaquez Jr. at No. 18.

Familiar names in the second round included UCLA's Amari Bailey to Charlotte at No. 41, Emoni Bates of Eastern Michigan to Cleveland at No. 49 and Isaiah Wong of Miami to Indiana at No. 55.

The draft was shortened to 58 picks because Chicago and Philadelphia forfeited second-round selections for violating league rules with the timing of their free agency discussions.

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

Twitter faces 'stress test' of Europe's tough new Big Tech rules

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

A top European Union official is in Silicon Valley to check whether Twitter is ready to comply with the bloc's tough new digital rulebook, a set of sweeping new standards that the world's biggest online platforms all must obey in just two months.

European Commissioner Thierry Breton, who oversees digital policy, is the EU's point person working to get tech companies in line for the Digital Services Act, which will force companies to crack down on hate speech, disinformation and other harmful material on their sites. It takes effect Aug. 25 for the biggest platforms.

The law, along with new regulations in the pipeline for data and artificial intelligence, has made Brussels

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a trailblazer in the growing global movement to clamp down on Big Tech.

Breton tweeted about his meeting Thursday at Twitter headquarters to carry out a voluntary “stress test” to prepare for the new rules.

“The company is taking this exercise very seriously,” he said, adding he had “constructive dialogue” with owner Elon Musk and new CEO Linda Yaccarino

The mock exercise tested Twitter’s readiness to cope with the DSA’s requirements, including protecting children online and detecting and mitigating risks like disinformation, under both normal and extreme situations.

Despite Musk’s claims to the contrary, independent researchers have found misinformation — as well as hate speech — spreading on Twitter since the billionaire Tesla CEO took over the company last year. Musk has reinstated notorious election deniers, overhauled Twitter’s verification system and gutted much of the staff that had been responsible for moderating posts.

Last month, Breton warned Twitter that it “can’t hide” from its obligations after the social media site abandoned the bloc’s voluntary “code of practice” on online disinformation, which other social media platforms have pledged to support.

Under the Digital Services Act, combating disinformation will become a legal requirement.

Musk has said Twitter will comply.

“If laws are passed, Twitter will obey the law,” Musk told the France 2 TV channel this week when asked about the DSA.

Breton’s agenda Friday includes discussions about the EU’s digital rules and upcoming artificial intelligence regulations with Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg and OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, whose company makes the popular AI chatbot ChatGPT.

The DSA is part of a sweeping update to the EU’s digital rulebook aimed at forcing tech companies to clean up their platforms and better protect users online.

For European users of big tech platforms, it will be easier to report illegal content like hate speech, and they will get more information on why they have been recommended certain content.

Violations will incur fines worth up to 6% of annual global revenue — amounting to billions of dollars for some tech giants — or even a ban on operating in the EU, with its with 450 million consumers.

Breton also is meeting Jensen Huang, CEO of Nvidia, the dominant supplier of semiconductors used in AI systems, for talks on the EU’s Chips Act to boost the continent’s chipmaking industry.

The EU, meanwhile, is putting the final touches on its AI Act, the world’s first comprehensive set of rules on the emerging technology that has stirred fascination as well as fears it could violate privacy, upend jobs, infringe on copyright and more.

Final approval is expected by the end of the year, but it won’t take effect until two years later. Breton has been pitching a voluntary “AI Pact” to help companies get ready for its adoption.

Evangelical leader hopes conference is ‘testosterone booster shot’ for anti-abortion 2024 candidates

By WILL WEISSERT and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A year after the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, some of the Republican Party’s most powerful evangelical Christian voices are gathering to celebrate a ruling that sent shockwaves through American politics and stripped away a constitutional protection that stood for almost a half century.

At the Faith & Freedom Coalition’s annual conference in Washington, GOP presidential candidates will be urged to keep pushing for stronger abortion restrictions, even as Democrats insist the issue will buoy them ahead of the 2024 election.

Former President Donald Trump, whose three nominees to the high court allowed for the reversal of nationwide abortion rights, will give the keynote address Saturday night, the anniversary of the court’s Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization decision. Many of his Republican rivals are set to speak

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Friday, including Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, former Vice President Mike Pence, Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina, and former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie.

Ralph Reed, founder and chairman of the Faith & Freedom Coalition, said the conference's dates were negotiated years ago, so the fact that it's falling on the Dobbs anniversary is a "serendipitous coincidence."

"But we're certainly going to do everything that we can, as an organization and as a pro-life and pro-family movement, to give our candidates a little bit of a testosterone booster shot and explain to them that they should not be on the defensive," Reed said. "Those who are afraid of it need to, candidly, grow a backbone."

Such a political pep talk may be necessary since Democrats say fighting to preserve abortion rights can energize their base and help the party hold the Senate, flip the House and reelect President Joe Biden. Despite unfavorable historical precedent, Democrats managed a stronger-than-expected showing during last year's midterm elections and continue to point to abortion as a key reason why.

Even Trump has suggested that strict abortion restrictions were a weakness for Republicans, posting on his social media site in January that the party's underwhelming midterm performance "wasn't my fault" and instead blaming "the 'abortion issue,' poorly handled by many Republicans, especially those that firmly insisted on No Exceptions, even in the case of Rape, Incest, or Life of the Mother."

Democratic National Committee chair Jaime Harrison said this week, "Every 2024 Republican presidential candidate — every single one — is running on an extreme anti-choice record." The DNC announced a six-figure ad campaign, including billboards from Tallahassee, Florida, to Phoenix, that will trumpet GOP support for a nationwide abortion ban.

The Supreme Court ruling paved the way for near-total bans in some Republican-led states, though voters in others rejected state constitutional referendums that would have removed virtually any abortion right protections. Democrats have vowed to codify the right to an abortion in federal law, but don't have the votes in Congress to do so.

Michigan Sen. Gary Peters, head of the Democrats' Senate campaign arm, said top Republican presidential candidates will back a nationwide abortion ban to win support in their GOP primaries, then shift to a more moderate position for the general election.

"They will try to juice up their base with the issue and then pretend that that's not their position," Peters said. "They're not going to get away with that."

An Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll last July found that a majority of Americans say Congress should pass a law guaranteeing access to legal abortion nationwide. But the same poll showed that many Americans back some restrictions on abortion, especially after the first trimester of pregnancy.

Among the GOP candidates, DeSantis and Pence support bans after six weeks of pregnancy. Scott has backed a 15-week ban, and former United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley, who is speaking to the conference on Saturday, has said she supports a federal ban but has not said at what point in pregnancy she would seek to ban abortions.

Trump, meanwhile, has avoided specifying what national limits, if any, he would support on abortion.

One major anti-abortion group, Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, has said it would not support any White House candidate who did not, at a minimum, support passing a nationwide ban on abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy.

Those attending the gathering will encourage the presidential candidates to "shift the focus and shift the language" around abortion, Reed said, so as to "frame the narrative, not around stages of gestation — whether weeks or months or trimesters, which I think is falling into the trap of the left — but talking about the unborn child."

Pence, an evangelical Christian, will be speaking at the Faith & Freedom Coalition event for the first time since 2021, when he was booed by some and faced shouts of "traitor." That event, held in Florida, came months after the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, when Pence defied Trump's unprecedented demands to overturn Biden's victory in the 2020 election.

The former vice president is also expected to speak Saturday at the National Celebrate Life Rally at the

Lincoln Memorial.

Despite evangelicals' initial reluctance to back Trump in 2016, Reed said the former president's administration had a strong abortion record to point to. He said Trump also impressed evangelicals by moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in 2018, which the evangelical movement supported because of the deep religious significance of the area.

"I think the bar has been raised and I think the ceiling is going to keep moving up," Reed said of evangelicals' expectations for pro-Israel, anti-abortion presidential primary candidates.

That's because, he said, the candidates understand "there is no path to the Republican nomination for president that doesn't go through the evangelical vote."

They fled the war in Nigeria's northeast. Then bulldozers levelled their homes at a camp in Abuja

By CHINEDU ASADU Associated Press

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — On a breezy morning at the height of the dry season six months ago, Rifkatu Andruwus and her children were chatting in front of their house in a displacement camp in the heart of Nigeria's capital. Suddenly, security forces stormed into the camp, followed closely by bulldozers.

The family of seven had just about half an hour to pack their belongings and leave before their shanty house and about 200 others were reduced to rubble.

"They sent people to come and tell us to pack," said 66-year-old Andruwus. "Then they started demolishing."

The Durumi camp for the displaced in Abuja, Nigeria's capital, had been home for Andruwus since her family fled the fighting 10 years ago between Nigerian security forces and Islamic extremists in the country's northeast.

She arrived here after narrowly escaping death herself, but one of her sons and a grandson were killed in an attack by the extremists in the town of Gwoza in the northeastern Borno state.

Islamic extremist rebels launched an insurgency there in 2009 to fight against Western education and to establish Islamic law, or Sharia, in the region. At least 35,000 people have been killed and more than 2 million displaced due to the violence by the militant Boko Haram group and a breakaway faction backed by the Islamic State group, according to U.N. agencies.

Since the demolition of Durumi in December, Andruwus and hundreds of others who had lived in the camp, have been forced to spend their nights out in the open and under the rain — with no compensation or alternative shelter provided by authorities.

Slums and shantytowns are often targeted in rampant demolitions across Africa's most populous country, and especially in Abuja. The government has defended the actions as a sustained effort to restore the city's master plan — a conceptual layout meant to promote growth in this oil-rich Western African nation.

But the latest demolitions have evicted some of the most vulnerable people in the city, further worsening a housing crisis caused by high rents and growing demand, activists say.

The situation has led activists to mount a pressure campaign on authorities to provide alternative shelter or at least compensate the homeless, many of whom are among the poorest in the country.

Almost two-thirds of Nigerians live in poverty and the country also struggles with record unemployment. The World Bank says as many as 46% of the nation's more than 200 million people do not have access to electricity.

So far, the activists' efforts have had little success, and even then, mainly thanks to help from philanthropists. Authorities in Abuja have insisted the demolition of the Durumi camp was legal and carried out for safety reasons.

Amnesty International says the forced evictions in the city are illegal — often with no prior notice or alternative shelter provided for those whose houses are demolished.

"Many of the demolitions in and around Abuja are just cases of an attempt to take over land from the poor (and give it) to the rich," said Isa Sanusi, Amnesty's acting director for Nigeria.

He said Nigerian authorities often use the issue of illegal drugs and insecurity as an excuse for the evictions.

"That victims of the forced evictions are without a shelter just shows that no resettlement plans nor compensation have been put in place before the forced evictions," added Sanusi.

The Durumi camp was for years a place of shelter and hope for those who fled the extremist violence and were looking to rebuild their lives in Abuja. But the authorities claimed it was a hideout for criminals.

Though it housed more than 2,000 displaced persons, the improvised camp had not received any aid from the government in recent years, surviving only on food items and medicines donated by aid groups and benefactors, according to Ibrahim Ahmadu, who acts as the camp's chairman and now helps to mobilize resources for the homeless.

Many of the families that once lived in Durumi now roam the streets homeless while the young are further exposed to social ills such as drug abuse, violence and crime, said Gabriel Ogwuche. His group, the Society for the Youth and the Downtrodden, has been fighting the demolitions.

Like many other households, Andruwus' family managed to survive while in the camp on what they earned from menial jobs, as farmworkers or from petty trade. But with no roof over their heads, survival has become increasingly difficult.

Many of the camp's former occupants have found shelter under the trees in Durumi and under overpasses that crisscross Abuja's streets. The lucky ones have mosquito nets they were given by aid groups or charitable individuals.

Some of the others have decided to return to their villages in Borno despite the ongoing fighting there.

"We lived a life more than this (but) it was Boko Haram that chased us from our homes and brought us here," said 18-year-old Ibrahim Zakaria, whose family also lost their house in the demolition of Durumi.

"Now we seek help from the government and no help comes," he added.

Tourist sub's implosion draws attention to murky regulations of deep-sea expeditions

By BEN FINLEY Associated Press

NORFOLK, Va. (AP) — When the Titan submersible made its fateful dive into the North Atlantic on Sunday, it also plunged into the murkily regulated waters of deep-sea exploration.

It's a space on the high seas where laws and conventions can be sidestepped by risk-taking entrepreneurs and the wealthy tourists who help fund their dreams. At least for now.

"We're at a point in submersible operations in deep water that's kind of akin to where aviation was in the early 20th century," said Salvatore Mercogliano, a history professor at Campbell University in North Carolina who focuses on maritime history and policy.

"Aviation was in its infancy — and it took accidents for decisions to be made to be put into laws," Mercogliano said. "There'll be a time when you won't think twice about getting on a submersible and going down 13,000 feet. But we're not there yet."

Thursday's announcement by the U.S. Coast Guard that the Titan had imploded near the Titanic shipwreck, killing all five people on board, has drawn attention to how these expeditions are regulated.

Mercogliano said such operations are scrutinized less than the companies that launch people into space. In the Titan's case, that's in part because it operated in international waters, far from the reach of many laws of the United States or other nations.

The Titan wasn't registered as a U.S. vessel or with international agencies that regulate safety, Mercogliano added. Nor was it classified by a maritime industry group that sets standards on matters such as hull construction.

Stockton Rush, the OceanGate CEO who died on Titan, had said he didn't want to be bogged down by such standards.

"Bringing an outside entity up to speed on every innovation before it is put into real-world testing is anathema to rapid innovation," Rush wrote in a blog post on his company's website.

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The Titan was a small vessel that was launched from another ship, the Canadian icebreaker Polar Prince, a setup that Mercogliano likened to pulling a boat on a trailer, in terms of regulatory purposes.

"The highway patrol has jurisdiction over the car and over the trailer, but not over the boat," he said. "The boat is cargo."

Experts say wrongful death and negligence lawsuits are likely in the Titan case — and they could be successful. But legal actions will face various challenges, including waivers signed by the Titan passengers that warned of the myriad ways they could die.

Mike Reiss, a writer for "The Simpsons" television show who went on a Titanic expedition with OceanGate in 2022, recalled that his waiver said he would be "subject to extreme pressure. And any failure of the vessel could cause severe injury or death."

"I will be exposed to risks associated with high pressure gases, pure oxygen, high voltage systems which could lead to injury, disability and death," Reiss said Thursday, going by memory. "If I am injured, I may not receive immediate medical attention."

Thomas Schoenbaum, a University of Washington law professor and author of the book "Admiralty and Maritime Law," said such documents may be upheld in court if they are worded well.

"If those waivers are good, and I imagine they probably are because a lawyer probably drafted them, (families) may not be able to recover damages."

At the same time, OceanGate could still face repercussions under the Passenger Vessel Safety Act of 1993, Schoenbaum said. But it may depend on which arm of OceanGate owned the Titan submersible.

Rush, the late OceanGate CEO, told AP in 2021 that it was an American company. But he said OceanGate Expeditions, which led dives to the Titanic, was based in the Bahamas.

Schoenbaum said the Bahamas subsidiary has the potential to circumvent U.S. law, but courts have at times "pierced the corporate veil" and OceanGate could be found liable.

There are also questions of whether the Titan was insured or if the Canadian icebreaker's insurance could come into play.

The countries where lawsuits may be filed could also depend on contracts signed by passengers and crew.

"I would be very surprised, in a high-risk operation like this, if the contract did not address which law applies and where any claim can be filed," said George Rutherglen, a professor of admiralty law at the University of Virginia.

In the meantime, Rutherglen said, he expects the U.S. will respond with tighter regulations given the loss of life and the millions of dollars spent by the Coast Guard.

"These wrecks at the bottom of the sea have become more accessible with advancing technology," Rutherglen said. "It doesn't mean that it's necessarily become safer to go down and take a look."

The International Maritime Organization, which regulates commercial shipping, could take some kind of action, he added, and Congress also could pass legislation. Nations such as the U.S. could, for example, block ships engaging in such expeditions from docking in their ports.

"I would just be surprised if any incident with all of these costs involved — wrongful death, expensive rescue — would not lead to some initiatives," he said.

But not everyone agrees.

Forrest Booth, a San Francisco-based partner at Kennedys Law, said the International Maritime Organization "has no authority to impose its will."

"There could be a move for states to adopt an international treaty on the deep ocean," Booth said via email. "But that will be resisted by some nations that want to do deep-sea mining, etc. I do not think much of substance will happen after the media attention of this event dies down."

Associated Press researcher Rhonda Shafner contributed to this story.

India's Modi brings comedy game to big White House dinner in his honor

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE and FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi brought his comedy game to Thursday's big White House dinner in his honor, cracking jokes about his lack of singing chops, the time President Joe Biden wanted him to eat even though he was fasting and how well Indians and Americans are getting along.

Not really known for having a sense of humor, the prime minister kept the nearly 400 guests in stitches as he toasted Biden and first lady Jill Biden before dinner was served.

"I know your hospitality has moved your guests to sing. I wish, I too, had the singing talent," Modi joked. "I could have also sang before you all."

He was referring to South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, who surprised guests when he got up onstage during a White House state dinner honoring him in April and belted out a rendition of "American Pie," one of his favorite songs, to raucous applause.

Modi is on a state visit designed to highlight and foster deeper ties between India and the U.S. He said that with every passing day, Indians and Americans are getting to know each other better.

"We can pronounce each other's names correctly. We can understand each other's accent better," he joked. "Kids in India become Spider-Man on Halloween and America's youth is dancing to the tune of 'Naatu Naatu,'" a catchy song from the Indian movie "RRR."

Modi said Thursday's dinner would give him a chance to make up for not eating during a banquet that he said Biden hosted for him in 2014. Modi was observing a religious fast at the time.

"I remember you were asking me and asking me again and again what I could eat during my fast. But it was not possible for me to eat anything and you were quite concerned about it," he said. "Well today, I'm making up for it. All that you desired at that time with so much affection is being fulfilled today."

Biden, who was less humorous in his toast, recalled that he said two decades ago when he was chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the world would be safer if the United States and India "grew to be the closest friends and partners in the world."

"I believe that even more today now that I'm president," Biden said.

The leaders addressed each other before an audience made up of titans of business, fashion, entertainment and more, with the likes of designer Ralph Lauren, filmmaker M. Night Shyamalan and tennis legend Billie Jean King rubbing shoulders with tech leaders from Apple, Google and Microsoft.

Shyamalan powered past reporters as he arrived, declaring it "lovely" to be at the White House. Lauren, who paired his tuxedo with gray New Balance sneakers, revealed he had designed the first lady's off-shoulder green gown, calling her style "chic and elegant." And violinist Joshua Bell, part of the after-dinner entertainment, said the evening was a "little different than anything I've done before."

He said he would "skip out" of dinner early to practice. Bell played a rendition of Antonio Vivaldi's "Summer."

Saris — some thoroughly modern and including a Barbiecore hot pink one — and sequins were prominent among those lucky enough to attend the black-tie affair with a guest list heavy on prominent Indian Americans. Politicians of both parties also made the cut, notably including Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and House Majority Leader Steve Scalise, along with Aruna Miller, Maryland's recently elected lieutenant governor.

Other notables included social media influencer Jay Shetty, big Democratic donors like Florida lawyer John Morgan and civil rights activist Martin Luther King III. The CEO contingent included Apple's Tim Cook, Google's Sundar Pichai and Microsoft's Satya Nadella.

Guests dined on a plant-based menu of millet and corn salad, Portobello mushrooms and strawberry shortcake, catering to the prime minister's vegetarian tastes. For guests wanting something more, roasted sea bass was available upon request.

Despite deep differences over human rights and India's stance on Russia's war in Ukraine, Biden extended to Modi the administration's third invitation for a state visit. It included the state dinner, a high diplomatic

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honor that the U.S. reserves for its closest allies.

Biden hopes all the pomp and attention lavished on Modi — from the thousands who gathered on the White House lawn to cheer his arrival in the morning to the splashy dinner at the end of the day — will help him firm up relations with the leader of a country the U.S. believes will be a pivotal force in Asia for decades to come.

Guests rode trolley cars down to a pavilion erected on the White House south grounds decorated in the green and saffron colors of India's flag.

Despite concerns about backsliding on democracy in India, Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., said she was attending to send the message that the nation of 1.4 billion people is important and "we must call out some of the real issues that are threatening the viability of democracy in all of our countries."

A group of more than 70 lawmakers, organized by Jayapal, wrote to Biden this week urging him to raise concerns about the erosion of religious, press and political freedoms with Modi.

Pichai said he looked forward to the dinner as "an exciting time for U.S.-India relations."

"I think we have two countries which have a lot of shared foundations, large democratic systems and values," Pichai said earlier Thursday in an interview. He cited technology as one area of mutual interest between the nations. "So I think it's an exciting opportunity. I'm glad there is a lot of investment in a bilateral relationship."

Jill Biden enlisted California-based chef Nancy Curtis to help in the kitchen. Curtis specializes in plant-based cooking and said the menu "showcases the best of American cuisine seasoned with Indian elements and flavors." Saffron risotto accompanied the mushroom main course, and dessert was infused with cardamom and rose syrup. She used millet because India is leading an international year of recognition for the grain.

Lotus flowers, which are native to Asia and featured in Indian design, were visible throughout the pavilion, along with saffron-hued floral arrangements that differed from table to table.

"We hope guests feel as if someone has set that table just for them — because we have," the first lady said as she and her staff previewed the setup.

After-dinner entertainment also included Penn Masala, a South Asian a cappella group founded by students at the University of Pennsylvania, and the U.S. Marine Band Chamber Orchestra.

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Associated Press Philanthropy Editor Glenn Gamboa in New York and AP Congressional Correspondent Lisa Mascaro in Washington contributed to this report.

3M reaches \$10.3 billion settlement over contamination of water systems with 'forever chemicals'

By JOHN FLESHER AP Environmental Writer

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. (AP) — Chemical manufacturer 3M Co. will pay at least \$10.3 billion to settle lawsuits over contamination of many U.S. public drinking water systems with potentially harmful compounds used in firefighting foam and a host of consumer products, the company said Thursday.

The deal would compensate water providers for pollution with per- and polyfluorinated substances, known collectively as PFAS — a broad class of chemicals used in nonstick, water- and grease-resistant products such as clothing and cookware.

Described as "forever chemicals" because they don't degrade naturally in the environment, PFAS have been linked to a variety of health problems, including liver and immune-system damage and some cancers.

The compounds have been detected at varying levels in drinking water around the nation. The Environmental Protection Agency in March proposed strict limits on two common types, PFOA and PFOS, and said it wanted to regulate four others. Water providers would be responsible for monitoring their systems for the chemicals.

The agreement would settle a case that was scheduled for trial earlier this month involving a claim by Stuart, Florida, one of about 300 communities that have filed similar suits against companies that produced

firefighting foam or the PFAS it contained.

3M chairman Mike Roman said the deal was "an important step forward" that builds on the company's decision in 2020 to phase out PFOA and PFOS and its investments in "state-of-the-art water filtration technology in our chemical manufacturing operations." The company, based in St. Paul, Minnesota, will halt all PFAS production by the end of 2025, he said.

The settlement will be paid over 13 years and could reach as high as \$12.5 billion, depending on how many public water systems detect PFAS during testing that EPA has required in the next three years, said Dallas-based attorney Scott Summy, one of the lead attorneys for those suing 3M and other manufacturers.

The payment will help cover costs of filtering PFAS from systems where it's been detected and testing others, he said.

"The result is that millions of Americans will have healthier lives without PFAS in their drinking water," Summy said.

Earlier this month, three other companies — DuPont de Nemours Inc. and spinoffs Chemours Co. and Corteva Inc. — reached a \$1.18 billion deal to resolve PFAS complaints by about 300 drinking water providers. A number of states, airports, firefighter training facilities and private well owners also have sued.

The cases are pending in U.S. District Court in Charleston, South Carolina, where Judge Richard Gergel is overseeing thousands of complaints alleging PFAS damages. A trial of a complaint by the city of Stuart, Florida, had been scheduled to begin this month but was delayed to allow time for additional settlement negotiations.

Most of the lawsuits have stemmed from firefighter training exercises at airports, military bases and other sites around the U.S. that repeatedly used foams laced with high concentrations of PFAS, Summy said.

The 3M settlement is subject to court approval, he said.

3M's website says the company helped the U.S. Navy develop foams containing PFAS chemicals in the 1960s.

"This was an important and life-saving tool that helped combat dangerous fires, like those caused by jet fuel," the company said.

3M said its participation in the settlement "is not an admission of liability" and said if it was rejected in court, "3M is prepared to continue to defend itself."

The cost of cleansing PFAS from U.S. water systems eventually could go much higher than the sums agreed to in the settlements, Summy acknowledged.

"I'm not sure anyone knows what that ultimate number will be," he said. "But I do think this is going to make a huge dent in that cost ... and you don't have to litigate for the next decade or longer."

The Titan submersible imploded, killing all 5 on board, the US Coast Guard says

By PATRICK WHITTLE, HOLLY RAMER and LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

A submersible carrying five people to the Titanic imploded near the site of the shipwreck and killed everyone on board, authorities said Thursday, bringing a tragic end to a saga that included an urgent around-the-clock search and a worldwide vigil for the missing vessel.

The sliver of hope that remained for finding the five men alive was wiped away early Thursday, when the submersible's 96-hour supply of oxygen was expected to run out following its Sunday launch and the Coast Guard announced that debris had been found roughly 1,600 feet (488 meters) from the Titanic in North Atlantic waters.

"This was a catastrophic implosion of the vessel," said Rear Adm. John Mauger, of the First Coast Guard District.

After the craft was reported missing, the U.S. Navy went back and analyzed its acoustic data and found an anomaly that was "consistent with an implosion or explosion in the general vicinity of where the Titan submersible was operating when communications were lost," a senior Navy official told The Associated Press on Thursday.

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The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive acoustic detection system.

The Navy passed on that information to the Coast Guard, which continued its search because the Navy did not consider the data to be definitive.

OceanGate Expeditions, the company that owned and operated the submersible, said in a statement that all five people in the vessel, including CEO and pilot Stockton Rush, "have sadly been lost."

The others on board were two members of a prominent Pakistani family, Shahzada Dawood and his son Suleman Dawood; British adventurer Hamish Harding; and Titanic expert Paul-Henri Nargeolet.

"These men were true explorers who shared a distinct spirit of adventure, and a deep passion for exploring and protecting the world's oceans," OceanGate said in a statement. "We grieve the loss of life and joy they brought to everyone they knew."

OceanGate has been chronicling the Titanic's decay and the underwater ecosystem around it via yearly voyages since 2021. The company has not responded to additional questions about the Titan's voyage this week.

The company's office was "closed indefinitely while the staff copes with the tragic loss of their team member," according to a statement Thursday by the Port of Everett, which is about 30 miles (50 kilometers) north of downtown Seattle and is home to OceanGate.

The Coast Guard will continue searching for more signs about what happened to the Titan.

While the Navy likely detected the implosion Sunday through its acoustics system, underwater sounds heard Tuesday and Wednesday — which initially gave hope for a possible rescue — were probably unrelated to the submersible. The Navy's possible clue was not known publicly until Thursday, when The Wall Street Journal first reported it.

With a search area covering thousands of miles — twice the size of Connecticut and in waters 2 1/2 miles (4 kilometers) deep — rescuers all week rushed ships, planes and other equipment to the site of the disappearance.

Broadcasters around the world started newscasts at the critical hour Thursday with news of the submersible. The Saudi-owned satellite channel Al Arabiya showed a clock on air counting down to their estimate of when the air could potentially run out.

The White House thanked the U.S. Coast Guard, along with Canadian, British and French partners who helped in the search and rescue efforts.

"Our hearts go out to the families and loved ones of those who lost their lives on the Titan. They have been through a harrowing ordeal over the past few days, and we are keeping them in our thoughts and prayers," it said in a statement.

The Titan launched at 6 a.m. Sunday and was reported overdue that afternoon about 435 miles (700 kilometers) south of St. John's, Newfoundland. By Thursday, when the oxygen supply was expected to run out, there was little hope of finding the crew alive.

In 2021 and 2022, at least 46 people successfully traveled on OceanGate's submersible to the Titanic site, according to letters the company filed with a U.S. District Court in Norfolk, Virginia, that oversees matters involving the shipwreck. But questions about the submersible's safety were raised by former passengers.

One of the company's first customers likened a dive he made to the site two years ago to a suicide mission.

"Imagine a metal tube a few meters long with a sheet of metal for a floor. You can't stand. You can't kneel. Everyone is sitting close to or on top of each other," said Arthur Loibl, a retired businessman and adventurer from Germany. "You can't be claustrophobic."

During the 2 1/2-hour descent and ascent, the lights were turned off to conserve energy, he said, with the only illumination coming from a fluorescent glow stick.

The dive was repeatedly delayed to fix a problem with the battery and the balancing weights. In total, the voyage took 10 1/2 hours.

Nicolai Roterman, a deep-sea ecologist and lecturer in marine biology at the University of Portsmouth, England, said the disappearance of the Titan highlights the dangers and unknowns of deep-sea tourism.

"Even the most reliable technology can fail, and therefore accidents will happen," Roterman said. "With

the growth in deep-sea tourism, we must expect more incidents like this.”

Associated Press writers Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates; Ben Finley in Norfolk, Virginia; Frank Jordans in Berlin; Danica Kirka in London; and John Leicester in Paris contributed to this report.

2.5M Genworth policyholders and 769K retired California workers and beneficiaries affected by hack

By SOPHIE AUSTIN and FRANK BAJAK Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — The country’s largest public pension fund says the personal information of about 769,000 retired California employees and other beneficiaries — including Social Security numbers — was among data stolen by Russian cybercriminals in the breach of a popular file-transfer application.

It blamed the breach on a third-party vendor that verifies deaths. The same vendor, PBI Research Services/Berwyn Group, also lost the personal data of at least 2.5 million Genworth Financial policyholders, including Social Security numbers, to the same criminal gang, according to the Fortune 500 insurer.

The California Public Employees Retirement system said they were offering affected members two years of free credit monitoring. Genworth said in a statement posted online it would offer credit monitoring and ID theft protection.

The breach of the MOVEit file-transfer program, discovered last month, is estimated by cybersecurity experts to have compromised hundreds of organizations globally. Confirmed victims include the U.S. Department of Energy and several other federal agencies, more than 9 million motorists in Oregon and Louisiana, Johns Hopkins University, Ernst & Young, the BBC and British Airways.

The criminal gang behind the hack, known as Cl0p, is extorting victims, threatening to dump their data online if they don’t pay up.

Genworth disclosed the hack Thursday of the MOVEit instance managed by PBI Research in a filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Minnesota-based PBI Research did not immediately return a phone message seeking details on which of its other customers may have been affected. The company’s website lists the Nevada, New Jersey and Tennessee public pension funds as among customers of its mortality verification service.

“This external breach of information is inexcusable,” CalPERS CEO Marcie Frost said in a news release. “Our members deserve better. As soon as we learned about what happened, we took fast action to protect our members’ financial interests, as well as steps to ensure long-term protections.”

CalPERS had more than \$442 billion in assets as of Dec. 31 and about 1.5 million members.

Security experts say such so-called supply-chain hacks expose an uncomfortable truth about the software organizations use: Network security is only as strong as the weakest digital link in the ecosystem.

The stolen data included names, birth dates and Social Security numbers — and might also include names of spouses or domestic partners and children, officials said. CalPERS planned to send letters Thursday to those affected by the breach.

CalPERS said PBI notified it of the breach on June 6, the same day cybersecurity firms began to issue reports on the breach of MOVEit, whose maker, Ipswitch, is owned by Progress Software.

PBI reported the breach to federal law enforcement, and CalPERS placed “additional safeguards” to protect the information of retirees who use the member benefits website and visit a regional office, officials said. The agency did not elaborate on those safeguards, citing security reasons.

This story has been corrected to reflect that Genworth disclosed the hack on Thursday, not June 16.

Bajak reported from Boston.

Sophie Austin is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms

to report on undercovered issues. Follow Austin on Twitter: @sophieadanna

Chris Paul traded to Warriors, Jordan Poole sent to Wizards, source tells AP

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

Chris Paul's pursuit of an NBA championship is taking him to the Golden State Warriors, after they agreed to the framework of a trade Thursday that will send Jordan Poole to the Washington Wizards, according to a person with knowledge of the matter.

The trade also includes a package of draft capital, said the person, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the trade has not been finalized and approved by the NBA.

ESPN first reported the agreement was struck by the teams.

"I'm excited," Paul, who is on a book tour, told The Charlotte Observer on Thursday. "I'm really excited."

Paul also said that he's already talked to Warriors star Stephen Curry. "It was good," Paul said.

The Wizards agreed to acquire Paul from Phoenix last week, in the deal that sent Bradley Beal from Washington to the Suns.

Paul had two of his title-hope seasons thwarted by the Warriors. In 2018, Paul and the Houston Rockets had a 3-2 series lead in the Western Conference finals before he got hurt, missed the final two games and Golden State prevailed — on the way to the NBA title.

And in 2019, the Warriors beat Paul and the Rockets again, that time in the West semifinals before ultimately falling to Toronto in the NBA Finals.

The move could also provide the Warriors with financial flexibility in future seasons. Poole is about to begin a four-year, \$128 million deal. Paul is due about \$31 million this coming season and has nothing guaranteed after that.

It may usher in something totally new and different for Paul — a bench role.

He has appeared in 1,214 regular-season games and another 149 in the playoffs, and has started every single one of them. But it obviously seems unlikely that he would supplant guards Stephen Curry or Klay Thompson in Golden State's starting lineup.

So, at 38 years old and about to enter his 19th NBA season, Paul could find himself in a new position. But there is an obvious tradeoff, since the Warriors will almost certainly be considered a title-contender going into next season after winning four championships in the last decade — and Paul has never gotten his championship. He went to the NBA Finals with Phoenix in 2021, but the Suns blew a 2-0 series lead and lost to Milwaukee in six games.

The 12-time All-Star averaged 13.9 points and 8.9 assists this past season for Phoenix.

Poole, who turned 24 earlier this week, joins a Washington team now fully in the midst of a complete rebuild. He averaged 20.4 points this past season, one that began with Golden State veteran Draymond Green punching Poole at practice during training camp before taking a brief leave of absence from the team.

Green is set to become a free agent, one that the Warriors want to retain.

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

Judge blocks Wyoming's 1st-in-the-nation abortion pill ban while court decides lawsuit

By MEAD GRUVER Associated Press

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP) — Abortion pills will remain legal in Wyoming for now, after a judge ruled Thursday that the state's first-in-the-nation law to ban them won't take effect July 1 as planned while a lawsuit proceeds.

Attorneys for Wyoming failed to show that the ban wouldn't harm the plaintiffs before their lawsuit is resolved, Teton County Judge Melissa Owens ruled after hearing arguments from both sides. Meanwhile,

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those plaintiffs “have clearly showed probable success on the merits,” Owens said.

While other states have instituted de facto bans on the medication by broadly prohibiting abortion, only Wyoming has specifically banned abortion pills. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in April that access to one of the two pills, mifepristone, may continue while litigants seek to overturn the Food and Drug Administration’s approval of it.

Wyoming’s pill ban is being challenged by four women, including two obstetricians, and two nonprofit organizations. One of the groups, Wellspring Health Access, opened as the state’s first full-service abortion clinic in years in April following an arson attack in 2022.

They’re also suing to stop a near-total ban on abortion enacted in Wyoming in March. Owens has suspended that law, too, and combined the two lawsuits.

Because abortion remains legal in Wyoming, banning abortion pills would require women to get more invasive surgical abortions instead, Marci Bramlet, an attorney for the ban opponents told Owens in Thursday’s hearing.

“It effectively tells people you must have open-heart surgery when a stent would do,” Bramlet said.

A state constitutional amendment enacted in 2012 also came into play in court arguments. The amendment passed in response to the Affordable Care Act, former President Barack Obama’s health care law, says Wyoming residents have the right to make their own health care decisions.

Wyoming’s new abortion laws allow exceptions to save life and for cases of rape or incest that are reported to police. But abortion for other reasons isn’t health care under the amendment, Jay Jerde, an attorney for the state, argued.

“It’s not restoring a woman’s body from pain, injury or physical sickness,” Jerde said. “Medical services are involved, but getting an abortion for reasons other than health care, it can’t be a medical decision.”

Pregnancy involves pain and sickness, Owens pointed out. But women don’t get abortions for that reason, countered Jerde.

Attorneys for the plaintiffs later questioned how the state could know the motives of women getting abortions.

Wyoming’s new laws were enacted after the U.S. Supreme Court struck down *Roe v. Wade* last year. Since then, some 25 million women and teenagers have been subjected to either stricter controls on ending their pregnancies or almost total bans on the procedure.

In central Wyoming, services at Wellspring Health Access include pill abortions — a method for ending pregnancy that is used in more than half of all U.S. abortions, said Julie Burkhart, Wellspring’s president, in a statement.

“Medication abortion is safe, effective, and has been approved by the FDA for more than two decades,” Burkhart said.

Previously only one other clinic in Wyoming — a women’s health center in Jackson, some 250 miles (400 kilometers) away — offered pill abortions.

Wyoming officials didn’t immediately return a request for comment but previously have promised to vigorously defend the legality of the new laws.

In recent years, abortions using two kinds of pills, usually taken days apart, have become the preferred method for ending pregnancy in the U.S., in part because the process offers a less invasive alternative to surgical abortions. Until Wyoming Gov. Mark Gordon signed the legislation outlawing medication abortions, no state had passed a law specifically prohibiting abortion pills, according to the Guttmacher Institute, a research group that supports abortion rights.

However, 13 states enacted blanket abortion bans that included medical abortions and 15 states already had limited access to the pills.

Starting with an abortion ban that was set to take effect last summer, Owens has now blocked three abortion bans signed into law by Gordon, the Republican governor who appointed her.

She serves GOP-dominated Sublette and Fremont counties as well as Teton County, an ultra-wealthy and not-so-Republican area many Wyomingites don’t see as representative of their state.

First gene therapy for deadly form of muscular dystrophy gets FDA approval for young kids

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The first gene therapy for a deadly form of muscular dystrophy received preliminary U.S. approval on Thursday despite concerns from some government scientists about the treatment's ability to help boys with the inherited disease.

The Food and Drug Administration approval provides a new option for some patients with Duchenne muscular dystrophy, a rare muscle-wasting disease that causes weakness, loss of mobility and early death. It almost always affects males.

Drugmaker Sarepta Therapeutics said it would charge \$3.2 million for the one-time treatment, slightly less than a \$3.5 million gene therapy for hemophilia launched last year. Like most medicines in the U.S., the cost will be mostly paid by insurers — not patients — including private plans and government programs.

The FDA OK'd the treatment only for children ages 4 and 5, based on study results showing the therapy helped produce a protein needed for muscle growth, which is missing in boys with the condition. The gene therapy had been studied in children up to age 7.

Sarepta's IV treatment delivers a replacement gene for the one that is mutated in boys with the condition. "Today's approval addresses an urgent unmet medical need and is an important advancement in the treatment of Duchenne muscular dystrophy, a devastating condition with limited treatment options," said FDA's Dr. Peter Marks, in a statement Thursday.

The FDA said the increase in protein seen with the therapy, Elevidys, is "reasonably likely to predict" a benefit in patients 4 to 5 years old, who don't have other preexisting complications.

Patients, physicians and parents pushed for the therapy's approval at a public meeting in April, sharing videos of boys running, riding bikes and doing sports and other activities, which they attributed to the treatment.

But FDA scientists detailed a long list of concerns with the company's research, particularly a mid-stage study that the company submitted for FDA review. Overall, it failed to show that boys who received the therapy performed significantly better on measures like standing, walking and climbing than those who got a dummy treatment, although the results were better in younger kids.

Still, the FDA's outside experts voted narrowly in favor of making the gene therapy available on a preliminary basis, noting the deadly nature of Duchenne and the risk of delaying a potentially beneficial treatment. The vote was non-binding, but the FDA often uses such recommendations to bolster its decisions.

The FDA advisers who backed the drug also seemed reassured that data from an ongoing 120-patient late-stage study is expected to wrap up late this year. If the results don't show a benefit, the FDA has the option to revoke the approval.

The gene therapy was the latest treatment OK'd through the FDA's fast-track route, which allows drugs to launch based on early results, before they're confirmed to benefit patients. Until recently, the agency rarely used its power to pull drugs that failed to live up to their early promise.

The shortcut approach has come under increasing scrutiny from academic researchers, government watchdogs, and congressional investigators. But the FDA has also faced pressure from patient groups to use that route more aggressively for debilitating diseases, approving a string of recent treatments for Alzheimer's, Lou Gehrig's disease and other conditions with few treatment options.

Agency leaders have also pledged to use "regulatory flexibility" when considering drugs for rare diseases, such as Duchenne, which affects about 1 in 3,300 boys in the U.S. Most people with the condition do not live past their 20s.

Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Sarepta has won accelerated approval for three drugs to treat different groups of Duchenne patients since 2016. None of those drugs have yet been confirmed to work; studies designed to secure full FDA approval are ongoing.

For the gene therapy, initial results from the company's late-stage study are expected late this year,

with more details released in 2024. Pfizer is among several competing drugmakers also working on gene therapies for the condition.

Sarepta's treatment uses a disabled virus to ferry the replacement gene into cells. But because the gene for the missing dystrophin protein is so large, a smaller version of the gene is used. The FDA reviewers noted that the resulting protein is significantly different than any naturally occurring form and there is no evidence that it results in improved mobility or health for patients.

Regulators also worried about the potential consequences of giving patients an unproven gene therapy. Scientists believe there could be dangerous immune system reactions if someone is given a second virus-delivered therapy. That means patients who receive Sarepta's gene therapy might be ineligible for future treatments that use viruses, FDA staff said.

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UN puts Russian forces on blacklist for killing children and attacking schools in Ukraine

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The United Nations put Russian forces on its annual blacklist of countries that violate children's rights in conflict for killing boys and girls and attacking schools and hospitals in Ukraine, according to a new report seen Thursday by The Associated Press.

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in the report to the Security Council that he is "appalled" by the high number of "grave violations" against children in Ukraine in 2022, "shocked" at the number of attacks on schools and hospitals, "concerned" by the detention of children, and "troubled" that some Ukrainian children have been transferred to Russia.

The U.N. chief did not put Israel on the blacklist for grave violations against 1,139 Palestinian children, including 54 killings last year — as supporters had hoped.

Instead, he welcomed Israel's engagement with the U.N. special envoy for children in armed conflict, Virginia Gamba and its "identification of practical measures including those proposed by the U.N." to protect children.

Riyad Mansour, the Palestinian U.N. ambassador, told reporters Guterres "made a big mistake" in not listing the most extreme government in Israel's history.

"It is very disappointing to the Palestinian people and to the Palestinian children," he said.

In the wide-ranging report, the secretary-general said that last year children were disproportionately affected by conflict. He said the U.N. verified grave violations against 13,469 children, including 2,985 who were killed, in 24 countries and one region.

"Grave violations" include the recruitment and use of youngsters by combatants, killings and injuries, sexual violence, abductions, and attacks on schools and hospitals.

Guterres said the spread of conflicts to new areas contributed to a 140% increase in grave violations in Myanmar and a 135% increase in South Sudan. An upsurge in activity by armed groups, including al-Qaida and the Islamic State, also caused a severe deterioration of the situation in the central Sahel, particularly in Burkina Faso, leading to an 85% increase in grave violations.

Violations also increased in Colombia, Israel, the Palestinian territories, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Sudan and Syria, the secretary-general said.

While armed groups were responsible for 50% of the grave violations, Guterres said government forces were mainly responsible for the killing and maiming of children, for the attacks on schools and hospitals, and for the denial of humanitarian access.

The countries with the most verified violations were Congo, Israel and the Palestinian territories, Somalia and Syria, he said. By contrast, Afghanistan, Central African Republic and the Philippines saw a decrease in grave violations, and last year's truce in Yemen contributed to a 40% drop in violations.

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The report also lists two new countries of concern for children: Haiti and Niger.

Guterres said the Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups were listed for carrying out 480 attacks on schools and hospitals, and for killing children, in particular through their shelling and airstrikes on cities and towns. According to the report, 136 Ukrainian children were killed and 518 injured.

The secretary-general urged Russian forces to abide by their obligations under international law and their own commitments to protect children, including by avoiding the military use of schools and hospitals, putting in place accountability and reparations measures, and exchanging information with the U.N. on all children in conflict-affected areas.

Guterres also urged Russia to ensure that no changes are made to the personal status of Ukrainian children, including their nationality.

Deportations of Ukrainian children have been a concern since Russia's invasion, and the International Criminal Court increased pressure on Russia when it issued arrest warrants on March 17 for President Vladimir Putin and the Russian children's rights commissioner, Maria Lvova-Belova, accusing them of abducting children from Ukraine.

The U.N. chief said he is also concerned by the number of grave violations against children by Ukrainian forces and urged them to abide by protections for civilians under international law.

According to the report, Ukrainian armed forces were responsible for the deaths of 80 children and injuries to 175 others, as well as 212 attacks on schools and hospitals.

Lawyers submitted bogus case law created by ChatGPT. A judge fined them \$5,000

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A federal judge on Thursday imposed \$5,000 fines on two lawyers and a law firm in an unprecedented instance in which ChatGPT was blamed for their submission of fictitious legal research in an aviation injury claim.

Judge P. Kevin Castel said they acted in bad faith. But he credited their apologies and remedial steps taken in explaining why harsher sanctions were not necessary to ensure they or others won't again let artificial intelligence tools prompt them to produce fake legal history in their arguments.

"Technological advances are commonplace and there is nothing inherently improper about using a reliable artificial intelligence tool for assistance," Castel wrote. "But existing rules impose a gatekeeping role on attorneys to ensure the accuracy of their filings."

The judge said the lawyers and their firm, Levidow, Levidow & Oberman, P.C., "abandoned their responsibilities when they submitted non-existent judicial opinions with fake quotes and citations created by the artificial intelligence tool ChatGPT, then continued to stand by the fake opinions after judicial orders called their existence into question."

In a statement, the law firm said it would comply with Castel's order, but added: "We respectfully disagree with the finding that anyone at our firm acted in bad faith. We have already apologized to the Court and our client. We continue to believe that in the face of what even the Court acknowledged was an unprecedented situation, we made a good faith mistake in failing to believe that a piece of technology could be making up cases out of whole cloth."

The firm said it was considering whether to appeal.

Castel said the bad faith resulted from the failures of the attorneys to respond properly to the judge and their legal adversaries when it was noticed that six legal cases listed to support their March 1 written arguments did not exist.

The judge cited "shifting and contradictory explanations" offered by attorney Steven A. Schwartz. He said attorney Peter LoDuca lied about being on vacation and was dishonest about confirming the truth of statements submitted to Castel.

At a hearing earlier this month, Schwartz said he used the artificial intelligence-powered chatbot to help him find legal precedents supporting a client's case against the Colombian airline Avianca for an injury

incurred on a 2019 flight.

Microsoft has invested some \$1 billion in OpenAI, the company behind ChatGPT.

The chatbot, which generates essay-like answers to prompts from users, suggested several cases involving aviation mishaps that Schwartz hadn't been able to find through usual methods used at his law firm. Several of those cases weren't real, misidentified judges or involved airlines that didn't exist.

The judge said one of the fake decisions generated by the chatbot "have some traits that are superficially consistent with actual judicial decisions" but he said other portions contained "gibberish" and were "nonsensical."

In a separate written opinion, the judge tossed out the underlying aviation claim, saying the statute of limitations had expired.

Lawyers for Schwartz and LoDuca did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

DeSantis sues Biden administration over university accrediting system

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis announced Thursday that the state has filed a lawsuit against the Biden administration and the U.S. Department of Education over accreditation agencies, which control federal aid for students.

The lawsuit, filed Wednesday in Fort Lauderdale federal court, challenges a federal law that requires colleges and universities to submit to private accreditors to qualify for federal funding. It targets the U.S. Department of Education, Secretary Miguel Cardona and other federal officials.

The lawsuit comes as DeSantis, who is seeking the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, imposes his conservative agenda on the state's education system. Earlier this year, he appointed trustees to the board of New College of Florida, a tiny Sarasota school of about 1,000 students that was best known for its progressive thought and creative course offerings. The new board intends to turn the school into a classical liberal arts school modeled after conservative favorite Hillsdale College in Michigan.

Speaking about the accreditation lawsuit on Thursday, DeSantis said he refuses "to bow to unaccountable accreditors who think they should run Florida's public universities."

"We're asking the court to find this arrangement to be unconstitutional," DeSantis said.

White House spokesperson Abdullah Hasan said in an email that DeSantis was bringing his culture wars, like book bans, to the longstanding system that helps ensure students receive a quality college education.

"If Republican elected officials could have their way, library shelves would be stocked with guns – not books – and curriculums would be loaded with conspiracy theories, not facts," Hasan said. "These culture wars do nothing to actually help students, and only make things worse. This Administration won't allow it. We're committed to ensuring all students receive a high-quality education, and will fight this latest effort by opponents to get in the way of that."

Under federal law, the private accrediting agencies decide which universities and colleges are eligible for approximately \$112 billion in federal funding. The agencies provide a standard of requirements that universities must follow to maintain accreditation.

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, or SACS, oversees the accreditation of colleges and universities in Florida.

However, Florida passed a law last year that prohibits colleges and universities from being accredited by the same agency or association for consecutive accreditation cycles. It also allows universities to sue accreditors for damages if they believe they had been negatively affected.

The state law requires more than half of Florida's public colleges and universities to change accreditors in the next two years. Their ability to make these changes "is substantially burdened" by what DeSantis described as the Biden administration's "abuse of the current accreditation scheme."

In order to seek a new accreditor, a university must receive permission from the U.S. Department of Education.

"You cannot take legislative power and delegate it to an unaccountable private body," DeSantis said.

"Under their theory, the accreditor can serve as a veto against the entire state of Florida."

He noted that the accrediting agency seeks to take the responsibility for ensuring the wellbeing of colleges and universities away from the governor, Legislature and taxpayers.

"So, you know, that's a view that really, this board trumps the entire state of Florida," DeSantis said. "We reject that, and today we are going to do something about it."

DeSantis and Moody cited as an example that SACS "threatened the accreditation of Florida State University" in 2021 when Richard Corcoran, then the state's commissioner of education, was a candidate to be the next president of the school. The accrediting agency said Corcoran's candidacy posed a potential conflict of interest if he failed to resign as schools commissioner.

Florida State eventually selected Richard McCullough as its president. Earlier this year, Corcoran was selected as an interim president of New College. Earlier this year, DeSantis appointed six new trustees to run the college.

FDA warns stores to stop selling Elf Bar, the top disposable e-cigarette in the US

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Food and Drug Administration on Thursday said it has sent warning letters to dozens of retailers selling fruit- and candy-flavored disposable e-cigarettes, including the current best-selling brand, Elf Bar.

It's the latest attempt by regulators to crack down on illegal disposable vapes that have poured into U.S. stores in recent years.

Last month, the FDA issued orders allowing customs officials to seize shipments of Elf Bar, Esco Bar and two other brands at U.S. ports. None of the products have received FDA authorization and they come in flavors like cotton candy, which regulators say can appeal to teenagers.

In the latest action, the FDA said it issued warnings to 189 convenience stores, vape shops and other retailers.

"We're not going to stand by as bad actors are profiting off the sale of illegal products that are addicting our nation's youth," Brian King, the FDA's tobacco center director, said in an interview. "Today's action is just part of our long-standing efforts to address those products, particularly flavored disposable products."

The FDA has tried for years to regulate the multibillion-dollar vaping industry, but separate data released by government researchers Thursday shows unauthorized e-cigarettes continue to launch.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention analysis showed the number of e-cigarette brands in the U.S. grew from 184 in early 2020 to 269 by late 2022.

The rise coincided with the growing popularity of disposable e-cigarettes. The analysis showed disposables' share of vaping sales more than doubled from 24.7% in early 2020 to nearly 52% by late last year.

Researchers from the CDC and a nonprofit, Truth Initiative, analyzed data from IRI, which collects sales records from convenience stores, gas stations and other retailers.

Elf Bar was the best-selling disposable in the U.S. and the third-best selling e-cigarette by late last year. Only the reusable e-cigarettes Vuse, from Reynolds American, and Juul had higher sales.

The FDA and CDC also cited Elf Bar in a separate report about thousands of calls to U.S. poison centers concerning e-cigarettes, mainly involving children under age 5.

When accidentally ingested, liquid nicotine can cause seizures, convulsions, vomiting and brain injury. Reports of nicotine poisoning have gone up and down over the past decade, but government scientists said calls increased more than 30% between last spring and March this year.

Brand information was not reported in 95% of cases, but when it was, Elf Bar was the most frequently named product.

Despite the missing data, FDA's King called the high number of reports involving Elf Bar a "canary in the coal mine."

"What we want to do is nip things in the bud before they're allowed to expand even further," King said.

Manufactured by a Chinese firm, iMiracle Shenzhen, Elf Bar is part of a wave of copycat e-cigarettes that have followed a path paved by Puff Bar, a popular brand of disposables that briefly racked up hundreds of millions in sales after regulators cracked down on older vaping products like Juul.

In early 2020, the FDA restricted flavors in cartridge-based reusable e-cigarettes like Juul to just menthol and tobacco, which are more popular with adults. But the flavor restriction didn't apply to disposable e-cigarettes, which are thrown away after use.

After the FDA tried to force Puff Bar off the market, the company relaunched and said it was now using laboratory-made nicotine, which didn't fall under FDA's original oversight of tobacco-derived nicotine. Most disposable makers followed the same playbook.

Congress closed the loophole last year. Under the law, companies were supposed to remove their vapes from the market and file FDA applications, but new products continue to launch.

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Writer's lawyers say Trump is wrong about \$5 million sex abuse-defamation jury award

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Former President Donald Trump's claim that a jury sided with him when it agreed he didn't rape an advice columnist in a luxury Manhattan department store in the 1990s was an erroneous interpretation of the jury's \$5 million award and its finding that he sexually abused her, her lawyers said Thursday.

The lawyers urged a federal judge to reject a request by Trump's attorneys that he lower the amount for sexual abuse and defamation awarded to the writer, E. Jean Carroll, to less than \$1 million or let another jury hear evidence about damages and make its own determination.

In doing so, the attorneys said Trump's lawyers had unjustly tried to mischaracterize the May verdict, which resulted from a two-week trial. Trump did not attend the trial, though extensive excerpts of his recorded October deposition were shown to jurors.

Carroll, 79, testified that Trump, 77, turned a flirtatious and fun chance encounter between the two into a violent sexual assault inside a Bergdorf Goodman dressing room in the spring of 1996, leaving her so traumatized that she never had another romantic relationship.

The jury awarded \$2 million in compensatory damages for sexual abuse. Most of the rest of the \$5 million award was for defamation. Trump's lawyers said the sex abuse award was grossly excessive and the rest was based on pure speculation.

In papers filed after the verdict, Trump's attorneys argued that the jury's conclusion that he sexually abused Carroll "could have included groping of Plaintiff's breasts through clothing, or similar conduct, which is a far cry from rape."

"In fact, that was not a version of events that was presented to the jury at trial at all," Carroll's lawyers wrote. "The word 'breast' was not used a single time during Carroll's testimony, in contrast to the word 'vagina,' which was used repeatedly."

They added: "Trump cannot now demand that damages be based on some imaginary version of events in which he did nothing more than touch Carroll's breast through her dress."

The jury award likely resulted from its understanding that Carroll repeatedly "has had to relive the painful sensation of Trump's fingers jamming inside her," Carroll's lawyers said.

Carroll first made her claims publicly in a 2019 memoir that she was raped by Trump. Immediately, the then-president denied it and disparaged her claims, saying he didn't know her and had never been inside a department store with her.

Her lawyers said the portion of the jury verdict attributed to defamation was well earned by someone "defamed by one of the loudest voices in the world, in a statement read by millions and millions of people, which described you as a liar, labeled your account of a forcible sexual assault a 'hoax,' and accused you

of making up a horrific accusation to sell a 'really crummy book.'"

The trial judge, Lewis A. Kaplan, recently agreed to let Carroll amend a second defamation lawsuit still pending against Trump with fresh defamation claims resulting from comments Trump made at a CNN town hall a day after the verdict.

Carroll is now seeking \$10 million more in compensatory damages and substantially more in punitive damages after Trump called her a "whack job" and repeated his claims that she made up the story that he attacked her.

Trump attorney Joe Tacopina said he would not comment beyond what was written in submissions to the judge.

The Associated Press typically does not name people who say they have been sexually assaulted unless they come forward publicly, as Carroll has done.

The former president announced his third campaign for the White House on Nov. 15. In March, Trump became the first former U.S. president to be criminally charged, facing 34 felony counts in a Manhattan courtroom of falsifying business records as part of a hush money scheme. He is now under federal indictment on dozens of charges related to alleged mishandling and retention of classified documents. He has pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Biden defends calling Chinese leader Xi a 'dictator' and says he still expects to meet with him

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden on Thursday defended his harsh public comments on China, including calling President Xi Jinping a dictator, saying his words would have no negative impact on U.S.-China relations and that he still expects to meet with Xi sometime soon.

Biden said his blunt statements regarding China are "just not something I'm going to change very much."

The remarks, which drew a formal protest from China, opened a new rift just days after Secretary of State Antony Blinken concluded a visit to Beijing that was meant as a step toward stabilizing ties and improving communications.

But Biden was undeterred.

"I expect to be meeting with President Xi sometime in the future, near-term. And I don't think it's had any real consequence," he said.

His latest rebuff to China came on the same afternoon he welcomed Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the White House in an alliance-strengthening move against their shared rival, China.

Just hours earlier, China's embassy in Washington said it had delivered a formal protest, with Chinese Ambassador Xie Feng telling senior White House and State Department officials Wednesday that Washington "should take earnest actions to undo the negative impact" of what Biden said or "bear all the consequences."

"With the latest irresponsible remarks about China's political system and its top leader, people cannot help but question the sincerity of the U.S. side" in seeking to stabilize relations, the embassy said in a statement. "The Chinese government and people do not accept any political provocation against China's top leader and will resolutely respond."

At a campaign fundraiser on Tuesday, Biden had called the Chinese president a dictator, depicted him as out-of-touch during last winter's tumult over a Chinese spy balloon, and dismissed China as having "real economic difficulties."

As an official government-to-government communication, the ambassador's message to the Biden administration carries more weight than the critical comments made a day earlier by a Chinese government spokesperson to reporters. China gave no further details of how the ambassador delivered his message, whether it was seeking an apology from the Biden administration, or what the consequences would be.

China and the U.S. in recent years have been cycling in and out of diplomatic flare-ups. China has used

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measures ranging from cutting diplomatic ties to staging military maneuvers off Taiwan to show its displeasure.

Biden administration officials on Wednesday defended Biden's remarks, saying the president has made a point of drawing distinctions between the world's democracies and autocracies. The State Department said Thursday that it does not comment on private diplomatic discussions.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen addressed the latest rift Thursday at an unrelated news conference in Paris, saying, "with respect to the comments, I think President Biden and I both believe it's critical to maintain communication ... to clear up misperceptions, miscalculations. We need to work together where possible."

"But we have disagreements, and we are also forthright in recognizing we do have disagreements," she added.

Yellen has recently advocated for improving relations between the U.S. and China, arguing cooperation is needed for the sake of maintaining global stability.

U.S. climate envoy John Kerry, at the same global finance and climate event as Yellen, expressed the urgency of resuming climate discussions between China and the U.S., the No. 1 and No. 2 emitters of climate-damaging fumes from fossil fuels.

Talks between the two countries were vital in the breakthrough that led to the 2015 Paris climate accord. But climate discussions between the two have stalled in the past couple of years over the governments' diplomatic disputes and other issues.

When it comes to slowing climate change, it "should be China and the United States working together on a global threat in a way that can build some confidence and change the dynamics of the relationship. That's the hope," Kerry told a small group of reporters.

He said Xi and Biden understood the urgency of the emissions talks. "Every day that goes by without them is a day for mischief," Kerry said.

Chinese Premier Li Qiang was among the dozens of heads of state and government, world finance officials and activists who converged on the French capital to discuss ways of reforming the global financial system and addressing the debt, climate change and poverty crises, especially for developing nations.

"I believe it's important, as President Biden does, that the world's two largest economies are ... working together in addressing global challenges," Yellen said.

Corbet contributed from Paris.

House Republicans push off Biden impeachment bid for now as hard-right clamors for action

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Eager to impeach President Joe Biden, hard-right House Republicans forced a vote Thursday that sent the matter to congressional committees in a clear demonstration of the challenge that Speaker Kevin McCarthy faces in controlling the majority party.

The ability of single lawmaker in the 435-member House to drive an impeachment resolution this week caught Republicans off guard and many of them viewed it as a distraction from other priorities.

The measure charges Biden with "high crimes and misdemeanors" over his handling of the U.S. border with Mexico.

Rep. Lauren Boebert, backed by allies, was able to use House rules to force a snap vote on such a grave constitutional matter. The 219-208 party-line vote sent her resolution to committees for possible consideration, like any other bill. They are under no obligation to do anything.

Still, Boebert, R-Colo., argued during debate, "The House is taking historic action."

The episode underscores the hold that the House conservative flank exerts over McCarthy, compelling him to accommodate their hard-right priorities if he wants to stay in power.

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Conservatives are gearing up for more. The process Boebert employed is the same method that Rep. Anna Paulina Luna, R-Fla., relied on to force a vote Wednesday to censure Democratic Rep. Adam Schiff over his investigations into Donald Trump's ties to Russia.

"There's going to be no end to this," Schiff said.

"Kevin McCarthy has no control over his conference," Schiff said. "The race to the extreme is now running the House of Representatives and of course it's doing terrible damage to the institution."

During Thursday's debate, Republicans were admonished multiple times by the presiding officer to tone down their remarks.

Democrats argued that the case against Biden made a mockery of the seriousness of impeachment and was merely an attempt to distract from the twice-impeached Trump, the former Republican president now indicted for hoarding classified documents under the Espionage Act.

"Today they're dishonoring this House and dishonoring themselves by bringing to the floor this ridiculous impeachment referral resolution," said Massachusetts Rep. Jim McGovern, the top Democrat on the House Rules Committee, suggesting Trump put his allies up to it.

"This body has become a place where extreme, outlandish and nutty issues get debated passionately, and important ones not at all," McGovern said. "In short, the Republican Party is a joke."

The vote capped days of maneuvering by McCarthy, R-Calif., to quell the uprising within his party over a roll call that many did not to take.

A sudden vote to impeach Biden would have been politically difficult for GOP lawmakers and a potentially embarrassing spectacle for McCarthy, splitting his party. In a private meeting Wednesday, McCarthy encouraged lawmakers to consider the traditional process for bringing such consequential legislation forward. Boebert had used what is called a privileged resolution to force the vote.

In the end, McCarthy negotiated a deal with her to send the Biden impeachment resolution for review to the House Judiciary Committee and the House Homeland Security Committee, fending off a vote for some time.

"I think it's best for everybody," McCarthy said.

But conservatives said more such votes are ahead.

"We are just beginning," said Republican Rep. Chip Roy of Texas, an influential member of the House Freedom Caucus.

Conservatives are lining up votes, for example, to impeach Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and censure Democratic Rep. Bennie Thompson, who was the chairman of the committee investigating the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol. It's part of their effort to steer control of the House from the traditional centers of power, including the speaker's office.

"This is what we were talking about," said Republican Rep. Matt Gaetz of Florida, a leader in the conservative efforts to block McCarthy's rise to speaker.

Boebert said that if the committees drag their feet, she would bring her resolution back to the floor "every day for the rest of my time here in Congress," forcing a House vote on Biden's impeachment.

Rank-and-file Republicans were angry at being forced into the position of having to vote on a resolution to impeach Biden even though they had not gone through the traditional process of an impeachment inquiry. They resented a single lawmaker jumping the queue of priorities.

In one fiery exchange overheard Wednesday on the House floor, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., laid into Boebert for taking the Biden impeachment on her own. Greene has her own articles of impeachment against the president.

Greene confirmed a report about the exchange later and said of Boebert, "She has a great skill and talent for making most people here not like her."

Boebert declined to comment about the conversation, only saying it's "not middle school."

Trump was impeached twice — on corruption and obstruction charges over withholding military aid to Ukraine while seeking political dirt on Biden, and later on charges of inciting the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the Capitol. Both times, Trump was acquitted by the Senate.

Associated Press writers Farnoush Amiri and Stephen Groves contributed to this report.

Rep. George Santos' aunt and dad signed his bail bond to keep him out of jail while awaiting trial

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The two people who bailed Rep. George Santos out of federal custody have been revealed to be his father and his aunt, a detail the Republican fought to keep secret as he faces criminal charges and swirling questions about his finances.

Gercino dos Santos Jr. and Elma Preven were named in a court filing on Thursday as the co-signers of Santos' \$500,000 bond, which enabled his release as he awaits trial on federal charges of fraud, money laundering and theft of public funds.

Santos, R-N.Y., had fought to keep their names secret. They were revealed after media organizations, including The Associated Press, petitioned the court for the records to be unsealed, citing the right of public access to court proceedings.

In a court filing earlier this month, his attorney, Joseph Murray, said Santos would rather go to jail than subject his guarantors to the "great harm" that could come from public disclosure. Under the bond agreement, the co-signers did not have to pay any money upfront, but would be held financially liable if Santos did not return to court.

While the identities of signatories are normally made public, Murray pointed to the "media frenzy and hateful attacks" faced by Santos as a reason to make an exception. Santos told reporters after his initial court appearance they would "never get" information about the source of his bail funds, claiming the media would "harass them and make their life miserable."

But after news organizations pushed for the filings to be made public, a federal judge denied Santos' request to keep the information secret. Santos appealed the decision, with his lawyer arguing that the co-signers should be given the opportunity to withdraw their support before the names are released. The appeal was denied on Tuesday.

On Thursday, Santos said on Twitter that he and his family had "made peace" with the decision to unseal the filing. "Now I pray that the judge is correct and no harm comes to them," he added.

In a newly unsealed filing, Judge Joanna Seybert wrote Santos "did nothing to diffuse the 'media frenzy,'" adding that his attempts to shield the names of his family members had "simply created hysteria over what is, in actuality, a nonissue."

Both his aunt and father are New York residents who donated to Santos' political campaign. In campaign finance records, his father lists his occupation as a painter. Preven said she worked as a mail carrier. Attempts to reach them on Thursday were unsuccessful.

Efforts by Santos to withhold their names from the public had fueled speculation and doubt, with some House Democrats suggesting that a financial supporter could be seeking to exert political influence on the congressman.

Earlier this week, Reps. Dan Goldman, D-N.Y., and Greg Landsman, D-Ohio, introduced a resolution calling on the House Ethics Committee to disclose the names so they could determine whether Santos was in violation of congressional gifting rules.

Santos pleaded not guilty on May 10 to a 13-count indictment charging that he duped donors, stole from his campaign, lied to Congress about being a millionaire and cheated to collect unemployment benefits he didn't deserve.

He has defied calls to resign, while refusing to answer questions about the source of his wealth, including a \$700,000 payment he made to his campaign. According to federal prosecutors, Santos vastly overstated his income and assets, falsely certifying that he earned a \$750,000 salary from a consulting company known as the Devolder Organization LLC.

Santos could face up to 20 years in prison if convicted. He is due back in court on June 30th.

Supreme Court rules against Navajo Nation in Colorado River water rights case

By JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court ruled against the Navajo Nation on Thursday in a dispute involving water from the drought-stricken Colorado River.

States that draw water from the river — Arizona, Nevada and Colorado — and water districts in California that are also involved in the case had urged the court to decide for them, which the justices did in a 5-4 ruling. Colorado had argued that siding with the Navajo Nation would undermine existing agreements and disrupt the management of the river.

The Biden administration had said that if the court were to come down in favor of the Navajo Nation, the federal government could face lawsuits from many other tribes.

Lawyers for the Navajo Nation had characterized the tribe's request as modest, saying they simply were seeking an assessment of the tribe's water needs and a plan to meet them.

The facts of the case go back to treaties that the tribe and the federal government signed in 1849 and 1868. The second treaty established the reservation as the tribe's "permanent home" — a promise the Navajo Nation says includes a sufficient supply of water. In 2003 the tribe sued the federal government, arguing it had failed to consider or protect the Navajo Nation's water rights to the lower portion of the Colorado River.

Writing for a majority made up of conservative justices, Justice Brett Kavanaugh explained that "the Navajos contend that the treaty requires the United States to take affirmative steps to secure water for the Navajos — for example, by assessing the Tribe's water needs, developing a plan to secure the needed water, and potentially building pipelines, pumps, wells, or other water infrastructure."

But, Kavanaugh said, "In light of the treaty's text and history, we conclude that the treaty does not require the United States to take those affirmative steps."

Kavanaugh acknowledged that water issues are difficult ones.

"Allocating water in the arid regions of the American West is often a zero-sum situation," he wrote. It is important, he said, for courts to leave "to Congress and the President the responsibility to enact appropriations laws and to otherwise update federal law as they see fit in light of the competing contemporary needs for water."

A federal trial court initially dismissed the lawsuit, but an appeals court allowed it to go forward. The Supreme Court's decision reverses that ruling from the appeals court.

In a dissent, Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote that he would have allowed the case to go forward and he characterized the Navajo's position as a "simple ask."

"Where do the Navajo go from here?" he wrote. "To date, their efforts to find out what water rights the United States holds for them have produced an experience familiar to any American who has spent time at the Department of Motor Vehicles. The Navajo have waited patiently for someone, anyone, to help them, only to be told (repeatedly) that they have been standing in the wrong line and must try another."

Gorsuch said one "silver lining" of the case may be that his colleagues in the majority recognized that the tribe may still be able to "assert the interests they claim in water rights litigation, including by seeking to intervene in cases that affect their claimed interests."

Gorsuch, a conservative and Colorado native who has emerged as a champion of Native rights since joining the court in 2017, was joined by the court's three liberals: Justices Sonia Sotomayor, Elena Kagan and Ketanji Brown Jackson.

During arguments in the case in March, Justice Samuel Alito pointed out that the Navajo Nation's original reservation was hundreds of miles away from the section of the Colorado River it now seeks water from.

Today, the Colorado River flows along what is now the northwestern border of the tribe's reservation, which extends into New Mexico, Utah and Arizona. Two of the river's tributaries, the San Juan River and the Little Colorado River, also pass alongside and through the reservation. Still, one-third of the some 175,000

people who live on the reservation, the largest in the country, do not have running water in their homes. The government argued that it has helped the tribe secure water from the Colorado River's tributaries and provided money for infrastructure, including pipelines, pumping plants and water treatment facilities. But it said no law or treaty required the government to assess and address the tribe's general water needs. The states involved in the case argued that the Navajo Nation was attempting to make an end run around a Supreme Court decree that divvied up water in the Colorado River's Lower Basin.

In a statement, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren called the ruling "disappointing" and said the tribe's lawyers "continue to analyze the opinion and determine what it means for this particular lawsuit."

"My job as the President of the Navajo Nation is to represent and protect the Navajo people, our land, and our future," Nygren said. "The only way to do that is with secure, quantified water rights to the Lower Basin of the Colorado River."

Rita McGuire, a lawyer who represented states opposing the tribe's claims, said the court "ruled exactly right" and that "we're very pleased."

Associated Press reporter Michael Phillis in St. Louis contributed to this report.

As a transgender woman, a New York City subway icon finds her own voice

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

CRANFORD, N.J. (AP) — The voice is familiar to the millions who ride New York City's subways, its deep and resonant tone ringing through tunnels and across the tracks. For more than a decade, Bernie Wagenblast has lent that voice to automated announcements alerting passengers to train arrivals and politely directing people to "please stand away from the platform edge."

But earlier this year, Wagenblast, 66, went on the radio to publicly reveal a different voice — higher pitched and softer spoken — that is more reflective of the transition from the man she was to the transgender woman she was always meant to be.

For decades, Wagenblast's voice — low, authoritative and benign all at once — has provided a career and livelihood. Yet she knows that her transformation won't be complete unless she replaces her "guy voice" with one that has the vocal register, timbre and tone of a woman.

"Because my voice has played such a critical role in my life, to me it's important that my voice sound as authentically female as it can," she said at her home in Cranford, New Jersey, about 20 miles (33 kilometers) southwest of Manhattan.

By sharing her story, she aspires to use her new voice, literally and figuratively, to inspire and empower others struggling with gender dysphoria during fraught times for LGBTQ+ communities as a wave of legislation restricts their rights across the country. Lawmakers in 20 states have moved to ban gender-affirming care. Some new laws keep transgender students off girls sports teams or out of certain bathrooms. Still others limit drag performances.

"I think just my existence, by sharing my story, helps to make people understand," Wagenblast said.

Wagenblast knew as a child that she was meant to be a girl. But different social mores prevailed at the time, so she kept her secret inside as she got older.

She embraced the voice she had and pursued a career in radio, contributing to several stations in New York as an on-air traffic reporter.

More than a dozen years ago, Wagenblast landed the job that has given her an audience of millions.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which operates the country's busiest public transit system, uses several announcers. Wagenblast's voice is heard on most numbered train lines. Another oft-heard message, "Stand clear of the closing doors, please," is voiced by a different announcer, Charlie Pellett.

Now semi-retired, Wagenblast continues to produce transportation-themed podcasts and newsletters.

Although Wagenblast is retraining her voice for a more feminine sound, she won't leave her former voice totally behind — she can switch between vocal registers — because she could still use it professionally.

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"I'm happy that millions of people are familiar with it," she said. "Almost everybody who lives in New York has heard my voice at one time or another, and that just kind of blows my mind to think 8 million people — more than 8 million people — know my voice."

The change won't affect the subway announcements that have made Wagenblast's voice recognizable. There are no plans to rerecord the work she did for the MTA or for the Port Authority of New York, which uses her voice for announcements on the AirTrain that serves Newark airport.

Wagenblast is mindful of all the strife and mental anguish suffered by transgender people still too afraid to become their true selves publicly, as she once was.

Over the years, she's revealed her gender identity to family, including the woman Wagenblast married. "I did tell my future wife, before I asked her to marry me, about this part of my life because I knew it was not going to change," Wagenblast said, "and I wanted her to know that before I asked her to marry me."

Together, they raised three daughters. They separated right before Wagenblast began socially transitioning and presenting as a woman.

One night last fall, Wagenblast decided to attend a community event as a woman, her first time doing so publicly. That night, she put on a wig and wore a borrowed dress. A friend did her makeup.

"In the past year, Bernie had concerns with acceptance, with people accepting her for who she is, how she wanted to appear, how she wanted to sound," said Nicole Brownstein, who ran a support group at a New Jersey pride center and befriended Wagenblast several years ago.

Brownstein called coming out a double-edged sword that makes transgender communities more visible but also "brings you into the public eye and potentially makes you a target."

As communities across the country celebrate Pride Month, transgender rights are front and center at some parades and other festivities as a show of solidarity. Organizers of Sunday's annual Pride Parade in New York City, the nation's largest commemoration of the 1969 riots that launched the gay rights movement, say the hostile acts "disproportionately targeting our trans siblings are disturbing and devastatingly not new."

Waiting for a train at Grand Central Terminal, rider Billy Navarrete said she considered it unimportant that the voice she hears now belongs to a transgender woman.

"I think it's fine because now they're their true self. So I'm happy for them," she said, before correcting the pronoun to "her."

Microsoft, regulators tangle in court over fate of \$69 billion deal that could reshape video gaming

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Federal regulators on Thursday launched a legal attack on Microsoft's proposed \$69 billion takeover of video game maker Activision Blizzard by depicting it as an anticompetitive weapon while Microsoft hailed the deal as a way to make popular games such as Call of Duty more widely available at cheaper prices.

Those were the dramatically contrasting pictures drawn by lawyers arguing before U.S. District Judge Jacqueline Scott Corley on the first of five days of scheduled hearings in San Francisco that are likely to make or break what would be the most expensive acquisition in technology history.

The U.S. Federal Trade Commission is trying to persuade Corley to issue an order that would prevent the takeover from being consummated before a more extensive administrative trial begins August 2 in Washington. Meanwhile Microsoft is fighting to close the deal ahead of a July 18 deadline that would require paying a \$3 billion breakup fee to Activision.

Microsoft struck the deal 17 months ago in hopes of expanding its video game imprint beyond its Xbox console, which has about half the market share of the longtime industry leader Sony and its PlayStation device.

But the FTC has been fighting hard to block a deal that it fears will enable Microsoft to make popular franchises such as Call of Duty and World of Warcraft exclusive to the Xbox and online subscription services

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that are becoming an increasingly bigger part of the \$210 billion worldwide video game market — larger than the movie and music industries combined.

FTC lawyer James Weingarten told Corley the agency will show evidence that Microsoft will have a “myriad of strategies” to withhold popular games from PlayStation and rival subscription prices, degrade the quality of games on competing platforms and raise prices on games that have developed fiercely loyal audiences.

“Activision makes the games that gamers want to play,” Weingarten asserted. “Having differentiated content is critical to selling more consoles and getting more subscribers.”

Microsoft lawyer Beth Wilkinson belittled the FTC’s argument as a “very naive” thesis that ignores the pressure the company’s gaming division will be under to deliver profit margins to justify the huge price being paid for Activision and the fierce backlash likely to happen among highly opinionated video game fans if a popular franchise such as Call of Duty was withheld from other platforms.

“They couldn’t face the wrath from the gamers,” Wilkinson argued. She also pointed to lengthy commitment that Microsoft has already made to make Call of Duty available on Nintendo’s Switch console and a Nvidia gaming subscription service as evidence that the Activision deal would be “good news for consumers.”

Microsoft also tried to present evidence that Sony is trying to blow up the deal to preserve its giant lead in the console market. As part of that effort, Wilkinson displayed an email from Sony executive Jim Ryan shortly after the Activision deal was announced that indicated his confidence that Call of Duty would remain available the PlayStation for many years to come. Ryan, the CEO of Sony Interactive Entertainment, wrote that even though he wished the deal hadn’t happened, he believed that Sony would be okay.

Several months after Ryan issued that reassuring email, Wilkinson said Sony emerged as the FTC’s “complainer in chief” about the Activision deal and so far hasn’t rebuffed Microsoft’s offer to make an ironclad commitment to keep Call of Duty on the PlayStation console. When Wilkinson tried to display some information about Microsoft’s offer, a Sony lawyer interrupted the proceedings to assert the document was confidential and it was taken off the screen.

A videotaped deposition of Ryan is expected to be played in court at some point in the proceedings. Both Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella and Activision Blizzard CEO Bobby Kotick are expected to testify in person before the proceedings are scheduled to conclude June 29.

Corley isn’t expected to rule until after the Independence Day holiday.

The hearings represent a major test of the FTC’s amped-up oversight of Big Tech under Chairperson Lina Khan, who has been outspoken about her belief that U.S. regulators were too lenient in past deals that helped increase the power of companies such as Amazon, Google and Facebook. The courtroom tussle with Microsoft comes six months after the FTC took Facebook owner Meta Platforms to court in Silicon Valley to try to stop a takeover of a virtual reality fitness company only to be rebuffed by the judge in that case.

Another major regulator, the U.K.’s Competition and Markets Authority, also has taken action to thwart Microsoft’s takeover.

Microsoft has lashed back against the British regulators standing in its way with an appeal of their decision, as well as voicing strong opposition to U.K. government officials.

—
AP Technology Writer Matt O’Brien contributed to this story.

Tech billionaires’ cage match? Musk throws down the gauntlet and Zuckerberg accepts challenge

Associated Press undefined

WASHINGTON (AP) — Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg are ready to fight, offline.

In a now-viral back-and-forth seen on Twitter and Instagram this week, the two tech billionaires seemingly agreed to a “cage match” face off.

It all started when Musk, who owns Twitter, responded to a tweet about Meta reportedly preparing to release a new Twitter rival called “Threads.” He took a dig about the world becoming “exclusively under Zuck’s thumb with no other options” — but then one Twitter user jokingly warned Musk of Zuckerberg’s

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jiu jitsu training.

"I'm up for a cage match if he is lol," Musk wrote late Tuesday.

Zuckerberg, CEO of Facebook and Instagram parent company Meta Platforms, soon responded — and appeared to agree to Musk's proposal.

"Send me location," Zuckerberg wrote on a Wednesday night Instagram story, which showed a screenshot of Musk's tweet alongside another user's response urging the Twitter owner to "start training."

Zuckerberg is actually trained in mixed martial arts. The Facebook founder posted about completing his first jiu jitsu tournament last month.

In response to Zuckerberg's location request on Wednesday, Musk proposed the Vegas Octagon. He then joked about his fighting skills and workout routine, suggesting that the fight may not be serious.

"I have this great move that I call 'The Walrus', where I just lie on top of my opponent & do nothing," Musk wrote.

Whether or not Musk and Zuckerberg actually make it to the ring has yet to be seen — especially as Musk often tweets about action prematurely or without following through. But, even if their cage match agreement is all a joke, the banter gained attention. An endless chain of memes and posts to "choose your fighter" have sprung up in response.

"The story speaks for itself," a Meta spokesperson said in a statement to The Associated Press. Zuckerberg has not commented further.

Despite the uncertainty of a cage match actually happening, bids are already being placed for a projected winner. DraftKings' projected odds stood at 140+ for Musk and -160 for Zuckerberg on Thursday.

The Associated Press also reached out to the Ultimate Fighting Championship, which owns the Octagon, and Twitter for statements. Twitter's press email responded with a poop emoji, its standard automated response to reporters.

In Europe's empty churches, prayer and confessions make way for drinking and dancing

By RAF CASERT Associated Press

MECHELEN, Belgium (AP) — The confessionals where generations of Belgians admitted their sins stood stacked in a corner of what was once Sacred Heart Church, proof the stalls — as well as the Roman Catholic house of worship — had outlived their purpose.

The building is to close down for two years while a cafe and concert stage are added, with plans to turn the church into "a new cultural hot spot in the heart of Mechelen," almost within earshot of where Belgium's archbishop lives. Around the corner, a former Franciscan church is now a luxury hotel where music star Stromae spent his wedding night amid the stained-glass windows.

Across Europe, the continent that nurtured Christianity for most of two millennia, churches, convents and chapels stand empty and increasingly derelict as faith and church attendance shriveled over the past half century.

"That is painful. I will not hide it. On the other hand, there is no return to the past possible," Mgr. Johan Bonny, bishop of Antwerp, told the Associated Press. Something needs to be done and now, ever more of the once sacred structures are repurposed for anything from clothes shops and climbing walls to night clubs.

It is a phenomenon seen over much of Europe's Christian heartland from Germany to Italy and many nations in between. It really stands out in Flanders, in northern Belgium, which has some of the greatest cathedrals on the continent and the finest art to fill them. If only it had enough faithful. A 2018 study from the PEW research group showed, in Belgium, that of the 83% that say they were raised Christian, only 55% still consider themselves so. Only 10% of Belgians still attended church regularly.

Nowadays, visiting international choirs may find that their singers outnumber the congregation.

On average, every one of the 300 towns in Flanders has about six churches and often not enough faithful to fill a single one. Some become eyesores in city centers, their maintenance a constant drain on finances.

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Mechelen, a town of 85,000 just north of Brussels is the Roman Catholic center of Belgium. It has two dozen churches, several huddled close to St. Rumbold's cathedral with its UNESCO World Heritage belfry tower. Mayor Bart Somers has been working for years to give many of the buildings a different purpose.

"In my city we have a brewery in a church, we have a hotel in a church, we have a cultural center in a church, we have a library in a church. So we have a lot of new destinations for the churches," said Somers, who as Flemish regional minister is also involved in repurposing some 350 churches spread across the densely populated region of 6.7 million.

A landmark repurposing project in Belgium was Martin's Patershof hotel in Mechelen, where the interior of the church was gutted to create rooms where the beds have headboards resembling organ pipes and a breakfast room next to the altar where wafers of gold leaf hover overhead. "We often hear that people come here to relax and enjoy the silence of its former identity," said hotel manager Emilie De Preter.

With its understated luxury, it offers contemplation, and more.

"In the hotel, people sleep in a church, maybe have sex in a church. So you could say: ethically, is it a good idea to have a hotel in a church? I don't have so many hesitations," said Somers. "I am more concerned about the actual architectural value."

The design value is especially clear at St. Anthony of Padua church in Brussels, also known as Maniak Padoue climbing club these days, where the multicolored hand and footholds on the wall now compete with the stained glass as the prime multicolored attraction.

"The stained glass brings a real shimmering and warm light to the venue when the sun goes through it, so we can really feel the presence of the remains of the church," said Kyril Wittouck, the co-founder of the club. "The altar is still in place, so we are surrounded by remains and it reminds us where we actually are."

Also in Brussels, the Spirito night club has taken over a deconsecrated Anglican church and has a drawing of a priest kissing a nun as its logo.

It is not exactly what Bishop Bonny had in mind.

Even if Roman Catholic religion is on the wane, a sense of the sacral or a need for reflection is also still present in society, whether one is religious, agnostic or atheist. And the aura of tranquility emanating from a church is hard to match. So for Bonny, there is no reason to turn churches into supermarkets or discos.

"Those are places for contemplation. And is that not exactly that the care of the church should be about?" he said. Bonny thinks the most successful and gratifying repurposing has been the handing over to other Christian communities, be they Coptic or Eastern European.

At his office, though, he can get weary just looking at the procession of suitors for empty Roman Catholic buildings. His heart is heavy when a real estate agent shows up. "They see possibilities. And you cannot believe, suddenly, how pious they can become when a financial opportunity presents itself. Suddenly they are more devout than a nun."

Knowing the winding history of Christianity over centuries, Bonny takes the long view, since the near future does not look bright. "Every 300 years we nearly had to start again," he said. "Something new, I'm sure, will happen. But it takes time."

At the Martin's Patershof, there is even a condition that the church can reclaim the building if it is needed again, said De Preter. The hotel elements were built on steel beams and could be totally disassembled and taken out again. "If the church, at a certain point, wants the building back — which holds a very small chance, probably — it is possible."

San Francisco displays the largest ever pink triangle for Pride month in a stand against pushback

HAVEN DALEY undefined

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The giant canvas pink triangle that is one of the LGBTQ+ community's Pride month symbols in San Francisco is bigger than ever this year. Volunteers said they are taking a stand for their rights amid a national pushback from conservative lawmakers.

Hundreds of volunteers installed the triangle made out of cloth and canvas on San Francisco's Twin Peaks

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viewpoint, one of the city's most popular tourist spots, as part of the city's Pride celebrations.

At nearly an acre in size and visible from up to 20 miles (32 kilometers) away, this year's triangle is the largest since the annual tradition started in 1995.

"We've had a lot of progress in the last decade: marriage equality and getting rid of 'don't ask, don't tell,'" said Patrick Carney, co-founder of Friends of the Pink Triangle, the group which organizes the installation each year.

"Since we had so many victories, people are coming out of the woodwork to push us back," he added.

The pink triangle was used by Nazis during the Holocaust to identify the thousands of gay prisoners who were thrown into concentration camps. Later, gay rights advocates adopted the emblem and turned it into a symbol of love and solidarity.

Organizers said recent legislation that has sought to limit their rights, including Florida's so-called "Don't Say Gay" law banning classroom instruction about sexual orientation, make the pink triangle especially relevant this year.

"Our lives are very under threat right now, particularly Black and brown transgender people," said volunteer Maureen Futtner. "And I just feel like I need to be active and out and proud."

The pink triangle will be on display until July 1.

Supreme Court rules against a man who was given 27 years in prison for having a gun

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court ruled Thursday that a man whose conviction on gun charges was called into question by a recent high court decision is out of luck.

The court's conservatives were in the 6-3 majority against the man, Marcus DeAngelo Jones, who was given a 27-year prison sentence for violating a federal law meant to keep guns out of the hands of people with previous criminal convictions.

Jones had argued that he should be allowed another chance to get his conviction thrown out following a 2019 court decision. In that case, the justices ruled prosecutors must prove that people charged with violating federal gun laws knew they were not allowed to have a weapon.

Jones tried to reopen his case following the 2019 decision, but a federal appeals court ruled against him. The issue in the case is technical, though important, and involves when defendants can make their claims in court, not the facts of Jones' case.

Justice Clarence Thomas wrote for the court that people who have used up their appeals don't get another day in court "based solely on a more favorable interpretation of statutory law adopted after his conviction became final."

Only two instances, newly discovered evidence or the court's new interpretation of a constitutional provision, authorize a second bite at the apple under a 1996 federal law meant to limit federal appeals, Thomas wrote.

Most federal appeals court would have allowed Jones to reopen his case, but Thomas wrote that those decisions amounted to an "end-run around" the 1996 law, known as AEDPA.

In dissent, the three liberal justices wrote that the decision produces "bizarre outcomes" and "disturbing results."

Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson noted that the ruling, coupled with other recent limits on appeals imposed by the court, have transformed "a statute that Congress designed to provide for a rational and orderly process of federal postconviction judicial review into an aimless and chaotic exercise in futility."

Jones was convicted in 2000 for being a felon in possession of a gun. His lawyers argued that he thought his record had been cleared and no longer was prohibited from having a gun.

The case is Jones v. Hendrix, 21-857.

NBA draft day arrives, and for Wembanyama a big man will realize his big dreams

NEW YORK (AP) — The day Victor Wembanyama has dreamed of for years has arrived.

The 19-year-old from France figures he was about 12 when he began thinking about being an NBA player and then being selected No. 1 in the draft, which seems certain to happen Thursday night in Brooklyn.

The San Antonio Spurs have that pick and the opportunity to add a player who is being considered a can't-miss prospect, perhaps the likes that hasn't been seen since LeBron James in 2003.

Wembanyama has thrown out the first pitch at Yankee Stadium and said he hoped to visit Times Square, but the trip he came to New York to take is the simple walk up to the stage at Barclays Center after NBA Commissioner Adam Silver announces the top pick.

Wembanyama will then show off the suit he selected to cover his 7-foot-4 frame. Many players keep their style plans a surprise, though potential No. 2 pick Brandon Miller of Alabama said he will be sporting red and black, the Crimson Tide's colors.

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

A year after fall of Roe, 25 million women live in states with abortion bans or tighter restrictions

By GEOFF MULVIHILL, KIMBERLEE KRUESI and CLAIRE SAVAGE Associated Press

One year ago Saturday, the U.S. Supreme Court rescinded a five-decade-old right to abortion, prompting a seismic shift in debates about politics, values, freedom and fairness.

Twenty-five million women of childbearing age now live in states where the law makes abortions harder to get than they were before the ruling.

Decisions about the law are largely in the hands of state lawmakers and courts. Most Republican-led states have restricted abortion. Fourteen ban abortion in most cases at any point in pregnancy. Twenty Democratic-leaning states have protected access to abortion.

Here's a look at what's changed since the Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization ruling.

LAWS HAVE BEEN ENACTED IN 25 STATES TO BAN OR RESTRICT ABORTION ACCESS

Last summer, as women and medical providers began to navigate a landscape without legal protection for abortion, Nancy Davis' doctors advised her to terminate her pregnancy. The fetus she was carrying had no skull and was expected to die soon after birth.

But doctors in Louisiana, where Davis lived, would not provide the abortion due to a new law banning it throughout pregnancy in most cases.

Davis became one of the women whose stories, told on news sites and network news, in newspapers and blogs, illustrated the shifting ground doctors and their patients tried to navigate.

At the same time, abortion opponents who worked for decades to abolish a practice they see as murder cheered the Supreme Court's Dobbs ruling. Anti-abortion groups said the 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling that legalized abortion nationwide was undemocratic because it prevented states from enacting bans.

"The Dobbs decision was a democratic victory for life that generations fought for," said E.V. Osment, a spokeswoman for Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, a major anti-abortion group.

While some states scrambled to pass new restrictions, others already had enacted laws that were designed to take effect if the court overturned Roe.

More than 25 million women ages 15 to 44, or about 2 in 5 nationally, now live in states where there are more restrictions on abortion access than there were before Dobbs. More than 5.5 million more live in states where restrictions have been adopted but are on hold pending court challenges. Bans on abortion no later than 12 weeks into pregnancy are on the books in nearly every state in the Southeast — though some are not in effect.

Many laws that make exceptions for medical emergencies do not clearly define those situations. After

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Davis went public with her challenges last year, Louisiana lawmakers debated whether doctors in the state were right to deny her an abortion under a law that has exceptions for "medically futile" pregnancies and when there's a substantial risk of death or impairment for the woman. But the Legislature made no changes to clarify the law.

Davis is among a number of women who ended up traveling out of state to have a legal surgical abortion. She got help from a fund that raises money for women to travel for such purposes.

With her fiancé by her side, Davis flew to New York in September, when she was about four months pregnant. The whole experience was heartbreaking, she said.

"A mother's love starts as soon as she knows she's pregnant. That attachment starts instantly," she said. "It was days I couldn't sleep. It was days I couldn't eat."

ABORTION ACCESS HAS BEEN PROTECTED IN 20 STATES

As some states restricted abortion, others locked in access. Clinics moved across state lines, added staff and lengthened hours to accommodate women leaving their home states to end their pregnancies.

In 25 states, abortion remains generally legal up to at least 24 weeks of pregnancy. In 20 of those states, protections have been solidified through constitutional amendments or laws. Officials in many of those states, including California, Colorado, Minnesota, New Mexico and New York, have explicitly invited women from places where the procedure is banned.

Women have flocked to states with legal access.

CHOICES Center for Reproductive Health had for decades treated patients in Memphis, Tennessee, some seeking abortions. After Tennessee's abortion ban kicked in last year, the clinic opened a second outpost that's about a three-hour drive away, in Carbondale, Illinois, a state that has positioned itself as an oasis for abortion access.

"I would say 80% or more of our patients continue to come from the communities that CHOICES has always taken care of," said CEO Jennifer Pepper, who said the Illinois clinic sees on average 350 patients a month. "They're coming from Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas and even Texas, but now they're having to travel much farther."

Kansas is one of the closest places to obtain abortions for people in parts of Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas. A new clinic opened in Kansas City, Kansas, four days before Dobbs. Within weeks, the clinic was overwhelmed. Even after lengthening hours, hiring staff and flying in physicians, it's been able to take only about 10% to 15% of people who have sought an abortion there.

Dr. Iman Alsaden, the Planned Parenthood medical director based in Kansas, said most patients in the Kansas clinics are now coming from elsewhere.

"You're in a really, really dire public health situation when you are looking at someone who had to jump through endless amounts of hoops just to make this work and saying they're so lucky they're able to do this," Alsaden said.

In anticipation of out-of-state patients, states such as Hawaii have passed laws to allow more health care workers, such as nurse practitioners, to provide abortions. In New Jersey, officials late last year announced a grant to train more medical professionals to perform the procedures.

THE NUMBER OF ABORTIONS IS NOT CLEAR

Because of reporting lags and gaps in data, the impact on the number of abortions provided across the U.S. is not completely clear. But the authors of #WeCount, a survey conducted for the Society of Family Planning, a nonprofit organization that promotes research and supports abortion access, say the monthly average went down after Dobbs.

The group's data finds that the number of abortions provided through clinics, hospitals and other providers in states where bans were put in place plummeted to nearly zero. The tracking effort collects monthly data, providing a snapshot of abortion trends after Roe v. Wade was overturned. It does not reflect self-managed abortions, relies on estimates in places where providers do not supply data and does not fully account for seasonal differences in pregnancies or abortions.

Still, it's the fullest national picture available for now. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data covering 2022 is not likely to be released until late 2024. Even then, the picture won't be com-

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pletely clear: Not every state collects abortion data, and what is collected does not include self-managed abortions provided outside clinics, hospitals and doctor's offices.

In Louisiana, where abortion was legal until 22 weeks' gestational age before Dobbs, the state reported more than 7,400 abortions in 2020, the last year for which full data was available. #WeCount found there were an average of 785 a month in April and May 2022 — and fewer than 10 every month since the ban there has been in place.

There are similar trends elsewhere. In Idaho, 1,700 abortions were reported in 2020, and #WeCount found fewer than 10 a month recently. In Texas, state data shows only a handful of abortions monthly from August through January. Before restrictions there took effect in 2021, there were often more than 5,000 per month.

The #WeCount survey of abortion providers has found that the overall average number of abortions at clinics and hospitals was lower in the months after the Dobbs ruling, from July 2022 through March but that the number of abortions has risen dramatically in states that border those with no access, such as Illinois, Kansas, New Mexico and North Carolina. In Illinois, for instance, the survey tallied about 5,600 abortions in April 2022 and more than 7,900 in March 2023.

PILLS ARE AN EVEN MORE DOMINANT ABORTION METHOD

Even before the court ruled, most abortions in the U.S. were done through a two-pill regimen, not a surgical procedure. Now groups are using medication to provide access — however illegal -- in states where abortion is banned.

For example, Aid Access works with doctors overseas and in states with shield laws, which are intended to bar abortion-related investigations by other states. Those doctors prescribe the medications and Aid Access ships them. It saw requests in a sample of 30 states more than double from before a draft of the Dobbs ruling was leaked last year until it became official and bans started taking effect.

The group's Netherlands-based founder and director, Rebecca Gomperts, believes most U.S. women who want abortions are still managing to get them.

"The fact that the abortion pill is available," she said, "that makes the tragic of it much less profound."

Still, she said, those who struggle the most for access are poor and Black women.

The move from surgical to medication abortion has frustrated abortion opponents, who have taken their case to court. Some abortion opponents are calling for the abortion drug mifepristone to lose its 23-year-old approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The Supreme Court has preserved access for now.

SOME STATES ARE INCREASING SUPPORT FOR MOMS AND CHILDREN

One ripple from overturning Roe in conservative states has been a new willingness to adopt measures such as improving foster care and benefits for postpartum women.

Mississippi, where the Dobbs case originated, is a key example. Republican Gov. Tate Reeves signed off on several proposals that he deemed as the "next phase" of the "pro-life agenda." This included expanding a tax credit from \$3.5 million a year to \$10 million a year for people or businesses who donate to anti-abortion centers, which provide diapers, clothing and other assistance for pregnant women and have been accused of providing misleading information to steer women away from abortion. He also approved creating an income tax credit of up to \$10,000 for adopting a child who lives in Mississippi and \$5,000 for a adopting a child from outside the state.

He also agreed to extend Medicaid health insurance coverage for lower-income women until a year after they give birth, rather than just two months.

The state's two Catholic bishops sent a letter to lawmakers and Reeves in February calling for the Medicaid expansion.

"This they felt was consistent with the intent of Dobbs," Jackson Bishop Joseph Kopacz said in an interview, "saying that it can't stop at birth."

For Shannon Bagley, the executive director of the Center for Pregnancy Choices, an anti-abortion center just outside Jackson that will benefit from the expanded tax credit, said it's offering more parenting classes and focusing on helping eligible women sign up for Medicaid, job search assistance and offering donated

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car seats, cribs and other baby items.

"This is a new era and we're going to have to be more and we're going to have to do more," she said.

LAWSUITS ABOUND

In conservative Utah, a ban on abortions throughout pregnancy took effect almost immediately after the Dobbs ruling. But the next day, the state's Planned Parenthood affiliate challenged the law, saying it violated the state constitution.

A judge put the ban on hold while the case works its way through the courts.

It's one of more than 50 lawsuits filed on abortion policy since the Dobbs ruling. Lawsuits have been the foundation of the abortion debate for decades, but now the burden is on abortion-rights advocates to prove that restrictions are too harsh, rather than on anti-abortion groups to prove they are justified.

Many challenges rely on arguments about the rights to personal autonomy or religious freedom. A Texas lawsuit alleges women were denied abortions even when their lives were at risk.

Bans or restrictions are on hold in at least six states while judges sort out their long-term fate. The only states where a top court has permanently rejected restrictions since the Dobbs ruling are Iowa and South Carolina. In the latter, lawmakers later adopted a new ban, but enforcement is on hold due to a court challenge.

In Utah, lawmakers this year passed a first-in-the-nation law banning abortion clinics. But a judge put enforcement of that on hold, too, while the court case plays out.

CRIMINAL COURTS HAVE NOT BEEN BUSY WITH ABORTION CASES

There's little evidence that doctors, women, or those who help them get abortions are being prosecuted.

In Mississippi, the state attorney general's office says no charges have been brought under a new law that calls for up to 10 years in prison for anyone who provides or attempts to provide an abortion in cases where it wasn't to save the woman's life or to end a pregnancy caused by rape or incest.

Progressive prosecutors across the country, including in states with bans, have said that they would not pursue abortion-related cases, or that they would make them a low priority. One in Florida was suspended from his job for it by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis.

James Bopp Jr., general counsel to the National Right to Life committee, finds it troubling that prosecutors would not pursue abortion cases. He said it's a change from the era before Roe v. Wade, when most states restricted abortion.

"They were going to enforce the laws; there was no question they were going to do that," Bopp said. "That was their obligation."

Legislative efforts to classify abortion as homicide or murder in South Carolina, Kentucky and Louisiana also have sputtered.

"The question about punishing the pregnant person is going to become the existential question in the anti-abortion movement," said Greer Donley, an abortion law expert and associate professor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law.

But Bopp said prominent anti-abortion groups like his oppose such measures. He said women who pursue abortions are "victims of the abortion culture, victims of men, particularly wealthy men."

ABORTION REMAINS A DOMINANT POLITICAL ISSUE

The political table has been reset, with Republicans entering a new election season weighing how to balance the interests of a base that wants the strictest bans possible against the desires of the broader electorate.

Polling has consistently found that most Americans think abortions should be available in at least some circumstances, including early in a pregnancy, but that most also favor restrictions later in a pregnancy. Polling from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research has found that the majority opposed banning abortion in the first six weeks of pregnancy, but most also favor barring abortions after 24 weeks of pregnancy. Only six states have no limit, and abortion is rare after 21 weeks.

Last year, voters sided with abortion-rights advocates in all six states with abortion-related ballot measures, including in generally conservative Kansas and Kentucky. The issue was also a major factor in why

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Democrats performed better than expected in 2022 elections.

There are pushes for ballot measures to protect abortion access in several states, including Ohio.

In Indiana, South Carolina and West Virginia — all states that have adopted bans since Dobbs — the legislative battles were not between Democrats and Republican over whether to impose restrictions but among Republicans on just how far to go.

Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America believes the issue could be a boost for conservatives with the right framing. The group announced this year that it's working with Kellyanne Conway, a former Trump adviser, to "get pro-life candidates on offense in the 2024 election cycle."

PROGRESSIVES WORRY ABOUT OTHER RIGHTS

Among advocates on the left, a lot of alarm bells rang over Justice Clarence Thomas' concurring opinion in Dobbs. "We should reconsider all of this Court's substantive due process precedents," including cases that found married people have the right to obtain contraceptives, people can engage in private, consensual sex acts and the right to same-sex marriage, Thomas wrote.

So far, measures on those areas have not gained traction. State legislation on contraceptives has aimed only to guarantee or protect access to it, and President Joe Biden last year signed a law to safeguard same-sex marriage.

Instead, Republican lawmakers in many states focused in 2023 on restricting gender-affirming care, especially for transgender minors.

Mulvihill reported from Cherry Hill, New Jersey, Kruesi from Nashville and Savage from Chicago. Emily Wagster Pettus in Jackson, Mississippi, contributed.

Hondurans see little hope for nation's prisons as details of cold-blooded massacre emerge

By MARLON GONZÁLEZ Associated Press

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (AP) — Authorities in Honduras began to hand over to relatives the hacked, burned corpses of 46 women killed in the worst riot at a women's prison in recent memory.

Some of the bodies were so badly burned they need genetic testing or dental studies to identify, said Yuri Mora, the spokesman for Honduras' national police investigation agency.

The picture that began to emerge of Tuesday's violence at the women's prison in Tamara, Honduras was one of a carefully planned massacre of supposed rival gang members by inmates belonging to the notorious Barrio 18 street gang.

The carnage has led to calls for change to the country's prison system and even talk of whether Honduras should emulate the drastic zero-tolerance, no-privileges prisons set up in neighboring El Salvador by President Nayib Bukele.

While El Salvador's crackdown on gangs has given rise to rights violations, it has also proved immensely popular in a country long terrorized by street gangs.

"One of the grave dangers is the Bukele-ization of the security problem in this country, with everything that would imply," said Honduran human rights expert Joaquin Mejia.

Nobody debates that Honduras' prisons are in a shameful state. In Tuesday's riot, incarcerated members of the notorious Barrio 18 gang slaughtered 46 other women inmates by spraying them with gunfire, hacking them with machetes and then locking survivors in their cells and dousing them with flammable liquid.

Chillingly, the gang members were able to arm themselves with pistols and machetes, brush past guards and attack. They even carried locks to shut their victims inside, apparently to burn them to death.

Jessica Sánchez, an activist with the Civil Society Group, a human rights organization, said "we believe that this massacre was carried out on orders from a criminal network, and I am sure it was known beforehand, and nothing was done."

Miguel Martínez, a security ministry spokesman, said the attack was taped by security cameras up to

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the moment the gang members destroyed them in what he called a planned attack.

"You can see the moment in which the women overcome the guards, leaving them helpless, and take their keys," Martínez said.

President Xiomara Castro said the riot at the prison in Tamara northwest of Tegucigalpa was "planned by maras (street gangs) with the knowledge and acquiescence of security authorities."

Castro fired Security Minister Ramón Sabillón, and replaced him with Gustavo Sánchez, who had been serving as head of the National Police.

She ordered that all of the country's 21 prisons be placed for one year under the control of the military police, who will be asked to train 2,000 new guards.

But she didn't announce any immediate plan to improve the conditions in prison, which are characterized by overcrowding and crumbling facilities. Security is so lax that inmates often run their own cellblocks, selling prohibited goods and extorting money from other inmates.

Many doubted the answer lies in adopting the kind of brutally regimented prisons that El Salvador has built.

"Building more prisons in Honduras isn't necessary. Why? Why build more prisons that turn into slaughterhouses for people, when the government has no control over them?" said Roberto Cruz, 54, who runs a small retail outlet in the capital.

"What is needed are professional people to run the prisons," Cruz said, acknowledging that "it is a big, complex problem that needs an urgent solution."

Most don't trust the government to get it right.

"We demand an international investigation that can really look at the issue of prisons and women" in prison, said Sánchez.

For now, the cold facts of Tuesday's massacre are emerging: 18 pistols, an assault rifle, two machine pistols and two grenades were found in the prison after the riot. All were smuggled into the facility.

Then there was the shocking fact that — as in many Latin American jails — some of the inmates' children were living with their mothers in the prison at the time of the attack.

"Some of the women were living with their children in detention. These children are now left behind and highly vulnerable. I am deeply concerned about their well-being and safety," said Garry Conille, the regional director for UNICEF, the U.N. children's fund.

It was not known whether any children witnessed the attack.

The riot's death toll surpassed that of a fire at a female detention center in Guatemala in 2017, when girls at a shelter for troubled youths set fire to mattresses to protest rapes and other mistreatment. The smoke and fire killed 41 girls.

The worst prison disaster in a century also occurred in Honduras, in 2012, at the Comayagua men's penitentiary, where 361 male inmates died in a fire possibly caused by a match, cigarette or some other open flame.

A year after fall of Roe, 25 million women live in states with abortion bans or tighter restrictions

By GEOFF MULVIHILL, KIMBERLEE KRUESI and CLAIRE SAVAGE Associated Press

One year ago, the U.S. Supreme Court rescinded a five-decade-old right to abortion, prompting a seismic shift in debates about politics, values, freedom and fairness.

Twenty-five million women of childbearing age now live in states where the law makes abortions harder to get than they were before the ruling.

Decisions about the law are largely in the hands of state lawmakers and courts. Most Republican-led states have restricted abortion. Fourteen ban abortion in most cases at any point in pregnancy. Twenty Democratic-leaning states have protected access.

Here's a look at what's changed since the Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization ruling.

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LAWS HAVE BEEN ENACTED IN 25 STATES TO BAN OR RESTRICT ABORTION ACCESS

Last summer, as women and medical providers began to navigate a landscape without legal protection for abortion, Nancy Davis' doctors advised her to terminate her pregnancy because the fetus she was carrying was expected to die soon after birth.

But doctors in Louisiana, where Davis lived, would not provide the abortion due to a new law banning it throughout pregnancy in most cases.

At the same time, abortion opponents who worked for decades to abolish a practice they see as murder cheered the Supreme Court's Dobbs ruling. Anti-abortion groups said the 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling that legalized abortion nationwide was undemocratic because it prevented states from enacting bans.

"The Dobbs decision was a democratic victory for life that generations fought for," said E.V. Osment, a spokeswoman for Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, a major anti-abortion group.

While some states scrambled to pass new restrictions, others already had enacted laws that were designed to take effect if the court overturned Roe.

More than 25 million women ages 15 to 44, or about 2 in 5 nationally, now live in states where there are more restrictions on abortion access than there were before Dobbs.

Davis got help from a fund that raises money for women to travel for abortions and went to New York for a procedure. The whole experience was heartbreaking, she said.

"A mother's love starts as soon as she knows she's pregnant. That attachment starts instantly," she said. "It was days I couldn't sleep. It was days I couldn't eat."

ABORTION ACCESS HAS BEEN PROTECTED IN 20 STATES

As some states restricted abortion, others locked in access. In 25 states, abortion remains generally legal up to at least 24 weeks of pregnancy. Twenty of them have been solidified abortion rights through constitutional amendments or laws.

CHOICES Center for Reproductive Health had for decades treated patients seeking abortions in Memphis, Tennessee. After Tennessee's abortion ban kicked in last year, the clinic opened an outpost three hours away, in Carbondale, Illinois .

"They're coming from Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas and even Texas," said CEO Jennifer Pepper. "But now they're having to travel much farther."

THE NUMBER OF ABORTIONS IS NOT CLEAR

With lags and gaps in official reporting, the impact of the Dobbs ruling on the number of abortions is not clear.

A survey conducted for the Society of Family Planning, a nonprofit organization that promotes research and supports abortion access, has found that the number has fallen to nearly zero in states with bans and risen in neighboring states with fewer restrictions, and on balance the number of abortions declining. But the survey does not capture self-managed abortions outside the traditional medical system, usually done with through a two-pill regimen.

Before the Dobbs ruling, pills were already the most common method of abortion in the U.S. Now, there are more networks to provide access to pills in states with abortion bans.

Some abortion opponents are calling for the abortion drug mifepristone to lose its government approval. The Supreme Court has preserved access for now.

LAWSUITS ABOUND

More than 50 lawsuits have been filed over abortion policy since the Dobbs ruling. Many challenges rely on arguments about the rights to personal autonomy or religious freedom. A Texas lawsuit alleges women were denied abortions even when their lives were at risk.

Bans or restrictions are on hold in at least six states while judges sort out their long-term fate. The only states where the top court has permanently rejected restrictions since the Dobbs ruling are Iowa and South Carolina.

CRIMINAL COURTS HAVE NOT BEEN BUSY WITH ABORTION CASES

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Progressive prosecutors across the country, including in states with bans, have said that they would not pursue abortion-related cases, or that they would make them a low priority.

ABORTION REMAINS A DOMINANT POLITICAL ISSUE

The political table has been reset, with Republicans entering a new election season weighing how to balance the interests of a base that wants the strictest bans possible against the desires of the broader electorate.

Polling has consistently found that most Americans think abortions should be available early in a pregnancy, but that most also favor restrictions later in a pregnancy.

Last year, voters sided with abortion-rights advocates in all six states with abortion-related ballot measures. The issue was also a major factor in why Democrats performed better than expected in 2022 elections.

It's emerged as a key issue in the race for the 2024 GOP presidential nomination.

Mulvihill reported from Cherry Hill, New Jersey, Kruesi from Nashville and Savage from Chicago. Emily Wagster Pettus in Jackson, Mississippi, contributed.

Lean green flying machines take wing in Paris, heralding transport revolution

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

LE BOURGET, France (AP) — Just a dot on the horizon at first, the bug-like and surprisingly quiet electrically-powered craft buzzes over Paris and its traffic snarls, treating its doubtless awestruck passenger to privileged vistas of the Eiffel Tower and the city's signature zinc-grey rooftops before landing him or her with a gentle downward hover. And thus, if all goes to plan, could a new page in aviation history be written.

After years of dreamy and not always credible talk of skies filled with flying, nonpolluting electric taxis, the aviation industry is preparing to deliver a future that it says is now just around the corner.

Capitalizing on its moment in the global spotlight, the Paris region is planning for a small fleet of electric flying taxis to operate on multiple routes when it hosts the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games next summer. Unless aviation regulators in China beat Paris to the punch by greenlighting a pilotless taxi for two passengers under development there, the French capital's prospective operator — Volocopter of Germany — could be the first to fly taxis commercially if European regulators give their OK.

Volocopter CEO Dirk Hoke, a former top executive at aerospace giant Airbus, has a VVIP in mind as his hoped-for first Parisian passenger — none other than French President Emmanuel Macron.

"That would be super amazing," Hoke said, speaking this week at the Paris Air Show, where he and other developers of electric vertical take-off and landing aircraft — or eVTOLs for short — competed with industry heavyweights for attention.

"He believes in the innovation of urban air mobility," Hoke said of Macron. "That would be a strong sign for Europe to see the president flying."

But with Macron aboard or not, those pioneering first flights would still be just small steps for the nascent industry that has giant leaps to make before flying taxis are muscling out competitors on the ground.

The limited power of battery technology restricts the range and number of paying passengers they can carry, so eVTOL hops are likely to be short and not cheap at the outset.

And while the vision of simply beating city traffic by zooming over it is enticing, it also is dependent on advances in airspace management. Manufacturers of eVTOLs aim in the coming decade to unfurl fleets in cities and on more niche routes for luxury passengers, including the French Riviera. But they need technological leaps so flying taxis don't crash into each other and all the other things already congesting

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the skies or expected to take to them in very large numbers — including millions of drones.

Starting first on existing helicopter routes, “we’ll continue to scale up using AI, using machine-learning to make sure that our airspace can handle it,” said Billy Nolen of Archer Aviation Inc. It aims to start flying between downtown Manhattan and Newark’s Liberty Airport in 2025. That’s normally a 1-hour train or old-fashioned taxi ride that Archer says its sleek, electric 4-passenger prototype could cover in under 10 minutes.

Nolen was formerly acting head of the Federal Aviation Administration, the U.S. regulator that during his time at the agency was already working with NASA on technology to safely separate flying taxis. Just as Paris is using its Olympic Games to test flying taxis, Nolen said the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics offer another target for the industry to aim for and show that it can fly passengers in growing numbers safely, cleanly and affordably.

“We’ll have hundreds, if not thousands, of eVTOLs by the time you get to 2028,” he said in an interview with The Associated Press at the Paris show.

The “very small” hoped-for experiment with Volocopter for the Paris Games is “great stuff. We take our hats off to them,” he added. “But by the time we get to 2028 and beyond ... you will see full-scale deployment across major cities throughout the world.”

Yet even on the cusp of what the industry portrays as a revolutionary new era kicking off in the city that spawned the French Revolution of 1789, some aviation analysts aren’t buying into visions of eVTOLs becoming readily affordable, ubiquitous and convenient alternatives to ride-hailing in the not-too-distant future.

And even among eVTOL developers who bullishly talked up their industry’s prospects at the Paris show, some predicted that rivals will run dry of funding before they bring prototypes to market.

Morgan Stanley analysts estimate the industry could be worth \$1 trillion by 2040 and \$9 trillion by 2050 with advances in battery and propulsion technology. Almost all of that will come after 2035, analysts say, because of the difficulty of getting new aircraft certified by U.S. and European regulators.

“The idea of mass urban transit remains a charming fantasy of the 1950s,” said Richard Aboulafia of AeroDynamic Advisory, an aerospace consultancy.

“The real problem is still that mere mortals like you and I don’t get routine or exclusive access to \$4 million vehicles. You and I can take air taxis right now. It’s called a helicopter.”

Still, electric taxis taking to Paris’ skies as Olympians are going faster, higher and stronger could have the power to surprise — pleasantly so, Volocopter hopes.

One of the five planned Olympic routes would land in the heart of the city on a floating platform on the spruced-up River Seine. Developers point out that ride-hailing apps and E-scooters also used to strike many customers as outlandish. And as with those technologies, some are betting that early adopters of flying taxis will prompt others to try them, too.

“It will be a total new experience for the people,” said Hoke, Volocopter’s CEO. “But twenty years later someone looks back at what changed based on that and then they call it a revolution. And I think we are at the edge of the next revolution.”

AP Airline Writer David Koenig contributed to this report from Dallas.

More AP coverage of the Paris Olympics: <https://apnews.com/hub/2024-paris-olympic-games> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Wizards trading Porzingis to Celtics in 3-team deal with Smart headed to Grizzlies, AP sources say

By NOAH TRISTER and KYLE HIGHTOWER AP Sports Writers

The Washington Wizards have agreed to trade center Kristaps Porzingis to the Boston Celtics as part of a three-team trade that also includes Marcus Smart heading to the Memphis Grizzlies, two people with

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knowledge of the deal said Thursday morning.

The people spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the agreements hadn't been announced. The trade comes with Porzingis accepting his player option for next season.

The deal also includes the Grizzlies acquiring Smart, the 2022 Defensive Player of the Year, from Boston in exchange for first-round draft picks in 2023 and 2024. ESPN reported the Wizards are also receiving guard Tyus Jones from Memphis, and forwards Mike Muscala and Danilo Gallinari and a second-round pick this year from Boston.

The Celtics add the 7-foot-3 Porzingis after they lost in seven games to Miami in the Eastern Conference finals. Porzingis is coming off a solid season in Washington in which he averaged a career-high 23.2 points per game along with 8.4 rebounds. Most importantly, he stayed healthy enough to play in 66 games, his most since 2016-17 when he was with the New York Knicks.

Porzingis' departure completes a swift breakup of Washington's core after the Wizards agreed to trade Bradley Beal to Phoenix, and Kyle Kuzma declined his option. Washington has missed the playoffs the past two seasons and is now clearly in a rebuilding mode under new team president Michael Winger.

Smart has played in Boston all nine of his NBA seasons, was its longest-tenured player and one of the strongest presences in the locker room. He also ranks fourth on the franchise's career lists for 3-pointers (911) and assists (2,700). His departure leaves the Celtics with Derrick White and reigning Sixth Man of the Year Malcolm Brogdon as the top two candidates to replace Smart.

Smart brings much needed experience to a young Memphis team that needs help at point guard following the announcement of Ja Morant's 25-game suspension for next season. Smart also brings postseason experience to the Grizzlies, who have won only one playoff series despite finishing second in the West the past two seasons.

The Celtics reached the NBA Finals in 2022, but were unable to make it back this season despite their talented tandem of Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown.

Boston becomes Porzingis' fourth NBA team. Drafted in 2015 by New York with the fourth overall pick, he played three seasons with the Knicks before being traded to Dallas before the deadline in 2019 — when he was recovering from knee surgery. The Wizards acquired him from Dallas 16 months ago.

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In rowdy scene, House censures Rep. Adam Schiff over Trump-Russia investigations

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House voted Wednesday to censure California Rep. Adam Schiff for comments he made several years ago about investigations into Donald Trump's ties to Russia, rebuking the Democrat and frequent critic of the former president along party lines.

Schiff becomes the 25th House lawmaker to be censured. He was defiant ahead of the vote, saying he will wear the formal disapproval as a "badge of honor" and charging his GOP colleagues of doing the former president's bidding.

"I will not yield," Schiff, who is running for the Senate in his home state, said during debate over the measure. "Not one inch."

When it was time for Schiff to come to the front of the chamber to be formally censured, immediately after the vote, the normally solemn ceremony turned into more of a celebratory atmosphere. Dozens of Democrats crowded to the front, clapping and cheering for Schiff and patting him on the back. They chanted "No!," "Shame!" and "Adam! Adam!"

House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., read the resolution out loud, as is tradition after a censure. But he only read part of the document before leaving the chamber as Democrats heckled and interrupted him.

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"Censure all of us," one Democrat yelled.

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.

More than 20 Republicans voted with Democrats last week to block the censure resolution, but they changed their votes this week after the measure's sponsor, Republican Rep. Anna Paulina Luna of Florida, removed a provision that could have fined Schiff \$16 million if the House Ethics Committee determined he lied. Several of the Republicans who voted to block the resolution last week said they opposed fining a member of Congress in that manner.

The final vote on Wednesday was 213-209 along party lines, with a handful of members voting present.

The revised resolution says 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. Both investigations concluded that Russia intervened in the 2016 presidential election but neither found evidence of a criminal conspiracy.

"Representative Schiff purposely deceived his Committee, Congress, and the American people," the resolution said.

The House has only censured two other lawmakers in the last 20 years. Republican Rep. Paul Gosar of Arizona was censured in 2021 for tweeting an animated video that depicted him striking Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., with a sword. Former Democratic Rep. Charlie Rangel of New York was censured in 2010 for serious financial and campaign misconduct.

The censure itself carries no practical effect, except to provide a historic footnote that marks a lawmaker's career. But the GOP resolution would also launch an ethics investigation into Schiff's conduct.

While Schiff did not initiate the 2017 congressional investigation into Trump's Russia ties — then-House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes, a Republican who later became one of Trump's most ardent defenders, started it — Republicans arguing in favor of his censure Wednesday blamed him for what they said was the fallout of that probe, and of the separate investigation started that same year by Trump's own Justice Department.

Luna said that Schiff's comments that there was evidence against Trump "ripped apart American families across the country" and that he was "permanently destroying family relationships." Several blamed him for the more than \$30 million spent by then-special counsel Robert Mueller, who led the Justice Department probe.

Schiff said the censure resolution "would accuse me of omnipotence, the leader of some a vast Deep State conspiracy, and of course, it is nonsense."

Democrats aggressively defended their colleague. Maryland Rep. Jamie Raskin, who led Trump's second impeachment, called the effort an "embarrassing revenge tour on behalf of Donald Trump."

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 criminal charges.

The House intelligence committee probe launched by Nunes similarly found that Russia intervened in the election but that there was no evidence of a criminal conspiracy. Schiff was the top Democrat on the panel at the time.

Schiff said last week that the censure resolution was "red meat" that McCarthy was 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-

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candidate Joe Biden. Schiff was the lead House prosecutor making the case for conviction to the Senate, arguing repeatedly that “right matters.” 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. The Senate again acquitted Trump.

In the censure resolution against Schiff, Luna 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 — who testified before the House Judiciary Committee on Wednesday — 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.

In the hours before the vote, Schiff’s campaign sent out a fundraising email that said Luna had introduced “yet ANOTHER resolution to censure me.”

“The vote and debate will happen imminently,” the email read, asking recipients to donate to help him fight back. “Once more, I have to be on the House floor to listen as MAGA Republicans push false and defamatory lies about me.”

Democrats argued that the House censure resolution is an effort to distract from Trump’s recent indictment on 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 more evidence that the government is conspiring against the former president.

“This is not a serious resolution,” said Rep. Madeleine Dean, D-Pa., but political theater to “distract from Donald Trump’s history of transgressions and now indictments.”

Today in History: June 23, Nasser elected Egypt’s president

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, June 23, the 174th day of 2023. There are 191 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlights in History:

On June 23, 1888, abolitionist Frederick Douglass received one vote from the Kentucky delegation at the Republican convention in Chicago, effectively making him the first Black candidate to have his name placed in nomination for U.S. president. (The nomination went to Benjamin Harrison.)

On this date:

In 1860, a congressional resolution authorized creation of the United States Government Printing Office, which opened the following year.

In 1931, aviators Wiley Post and Harold Gatty took off from New York on a round-the-world flight that lasted eight days and 15 hours.

In 1947, the Senate joined the House in overriding President Harry S. Truman’s veto of the Taft-Hartley Act, designed to limit the power of organized labor.

In 1956, Gamal Abdel Nasser was elected president of Egypt.

In 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson, Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin (ah-LEK’-say koh-SEE’-gihn) opened a three-day summit at Glassboro State College in New Jersey.

In 1969, Warren E. Burger was sworn in as chief justice of the United States by the man he was succeeding, Earl Warren.

In 1972, President Richard Nixon signed Title IX barring discrimination on the basis of sex for “any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”

In 1985, all 329 people aboard an Air India Boeing 747 were killed when the plane crashed into the Atlantic Ocean near Ireland because of a bomb authorities believe was planted by Sikh separatists.

In 1994, the movie “Forrest Gump,” starring Tom Hanks as a simple yet kindhearted soul and his serendipitous brushes with greatness, was released by Paramount Pictures.

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In 1995, Dr. Jonas Salk, the medical pioneer who developed the first vaccine to halt the crippling rampage of polio, died in La Jolla (HOY'-ah), California, at age 80.

In 2016, Britain voted to leave the European Union after a bitterly divisive referendum campaign, toppling Prime Minister David Cameron, who had led the campaign to keep Britain in the EU.

In 2020, the Louisville police department fired an officer involved in the fatal shooting of Breonna Taylor more than three months earlier, saying Brett Hankison had shown "extreme indifference to the value of human life" when he fired ten rounds into Taylor's apartment.

Ten years ago: Edward Snowden, the National Security Agency contractor behind the disclosures of the U.S. government's sweeping surveillance programs, left Hong Kong for Moscow with the stated intention of seeking asylum in Ecuador; however, Snowden ended up remaining in Moscow. Aerialist Nik Wallenda completed a tightrope walk that took him a quarter mile over the Little Colorado River Gorge in northeastern Arizona. Sci-fi and fantasy writer Richard Matheson, 87, died in Los Angeles.

Five years ago: Trump administration officials said the government knew the location of all children in its custody after separating them from their families at the border, and that it was working to reunite them. The Vatican tribunal convicted a former Holy See diplomat, Monsignor Carlo Capella, and sentenced him to five years in prison for possessing and distributing child pornography.

One year ago: Donald Trump hounded the Justice Department to pursue his false election fraud claims, contacting the agency's leader "virtually every day" and striving in vain to enlist top law enforcement officials in a desperate bid to stay in power, according to testimony to the House panel investigating the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol riot. In a major expansion of gun rights, the Supreme Court says Americans have a right to carry firearms in public for self-defense. The European Union's leaders agreed to make Ukraine a candidate for EU membership, setting in motion a potentially yearslong process that could draw the embattled country further away from Russia's influence and bind it more closely to the West.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Diana Trask is 83. Actor Ted Shackelford is 77. Actor Bryan Brown is 76. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas is 75. Actor Jim Metzler is 72. "American Idol" ex-judge Randy Jackson is 67. Actor Frances McDormand is 66. Rock musician Steve Shelley (Sonic Youth) is 61. Writer-director Joss Whedon is 59. R&B singer Chico DeBarge is 53. Actor Selma Blair is 51. Actor Joel Edgerton is 49. Rock singer KT Tunstall is 48. Actor Emmanuelle Vaugier is 47. Singer-songwriter Jason Mraz is 46. Football Hall of Famer LaDainian Tomlinson is 44. Actor Melissa Rauch is 43. Rock singer Duffy is 39. Country singer Katie Armiger is 32.