

# Groton Daily Independent

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“  
Our most treasured family heirloom are our sweet family memories. The past is never dead, it is not even past.  
-William Faulkner

## Groton Community Calendar

### Sunday, June 25

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.

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

United Methodist: Conde Worship, 8:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton Worship, 10:30 a.m. (Welcome Pastor Rob)

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

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

Amateurs at Miller, 6 p.m.

U12 Baseball Tourney in Groton: 10:00: Groton vs. Clark and Britton vs. Milbank; 11:30: Clark vs. Sisseton and Broge vs. Britton; 1:00: Groton vs. Sisseton and Borge vs. Milbank. Seeded games at 2:30 and 4:00.

### Monday, June 26

Senior Menu: Sloppy Joe on bun, oven roasted potatoes, mixed vegetables, ice cream sundae, whole wheat bread.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

Food Pantry open 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Groton Community Center

Senior Citizens meet at Community Center with potluck at noon.

Legion vs. Hamlin at Bryant, 6 p.m. (1); Jr. Legion vs. Hamlin at Bryant, 8 p.m. (1); Jr. Teener at Huron, 5 p.m. (2); Softball at Oakes (U8 at 5:30, U10 at 7:00); U10 R/B hosts Hannigan, 5:30 (2); H8 Blue hosts Hannigan, 5:30 p.m. (2)

**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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# Broton Daily Independent

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**BROWN COUNTY  
BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA  
REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY**

**June 27, 2023, 8:45 A.M.**

**COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS, COURTHOUSE ANNEX - 25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD**

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Opportunity for Public Comment
4. Second Reading & Possible Adoption of Ordinance #245 – Rezone; Ordinance # 246 – Temporary Fireworks
5. Approve & Authorize Chairman to sign the Memorandum of Governmental Liability Coverage with SDPAA
6. Paula Nelson, City of Aberdeen Code Enforcement Officer and Mike Scott, Landfill Manger discuss recent demolitions.
7. Discuss Bid for Surplus Property – 2914 Industrial Ave.
8. Approve & Authorize Chairman to sign Agreement with Titles of Dakota
9. Consent Calendar
  - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes from June 20, 2023
  - b. Claims
  - c. HR Report
  - d. Zoning Ordinances – Set Hearing Date/Authorize Advertising for Rezones
  - e. Township Bond
  - f. Travel Request
  - g. Claim Assignments
  - h. Lease Agreements
10. Other Business
11. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
12. Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

**Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet, or smartphone.**

<https://meet.goto.com/BrCoCommission>

**You can also dial in using your phone.** United States: [+1 \(872\) 240-3311](tel:+18722403311)

**Access Code:** 601-168-909 #

Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts: <https://meet.goto.com/install>

Public comment provides an opportunity for the public to address the county commission - Presentations may not exceed 3 minutes.

Public comment will be limited to 10 minutes (or at the discretion of the board)

Public comment will be accepted virtually when the virtual attendance option is available.

**Official Recordings of Commission Meetings along with the Minutes can be found at <https://www.brown.sd.us/node/454>**

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**2024 Budget Work Session following the Commission Meeting**

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11 A.M. – Department Head Meeting

## Moorlach returns to Groton Methodist Parish

by Dorene Nelson



**Rob Moorlach**

Rob Moorlach, the new pastor at the United Methodist Church in Groton, SD, was here fifteen years ago in 2008 and 2009. "While serving this church, I received an offer to work for the Kentucky Conference of the United Methodist Church," Moorlach explained. "Altogether I've served in six different places."

"I started my ministry in 1991 in North Dakota," he said. "After that I was in Howard, SD for twelve years, followed by Groton, (1 ½ years), Louisville, KY (3 years), Jackson, MN (8 years), and Oakes, ND (2 years)."

"I was born in the Netherlands to a Dutch father and an American mother," Moorlach stated. "My mother was from Glencoe, MN, and met the man who would become her husband when he was in the States, working in a flour mill in Fergus Falls, MN. I have three brothers, all living in the Midwest."

"I grew up near Brandon, SD, graduating from high school at Brandon Valley in 1983. Following my high school graduation, I enrolled in Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY," he said.

"I graduated from the seminary in 1991 and have been in church work ever since for a total of 32 years," Moorlach stated.

"Other than serving in the local church, I also worked in the area of administering the pension and health plans for the United Methodist Churches in the Dakotas," he explained. "Doing this work here led me to Kentucky for three years before returning back to the local church."

"I've had some health issues including an ankle fusion," he stated.

"The ankle surgery and recovery was at least a three month process!"

"I enjoy traveling and have been to all 50 states and a handful of foreign countries," Moorlach said. "I am a fan of Frank Lloyd Wright architecture and love to cheer on the local high school athletic teams."

"Spending time in the local community activities as I share the love of Jesus Christ is what I really love to do," he explained. "I would like to substitute for the Groton Area School District and will come equipped with dollar bills."

"I like to ask 'dollar questions' as I teach," Moorlach smiled. "The questions are related to the subject matter but are not necessarily part of the lesson. The surprise dollar reward keeps the students interested and eager to answer."

"I'm glad to be back in Groton again," he admitted. "My first time serving these fine people went smoothly, and I expect the second time around to be even better!"

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## THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE



*Laban said, "It's better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay here with me." So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.*

GENESIS 29:20

*Detail of "Leah and Rachel Catch Jacob" by Luba Lukova (2000)*

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email: waltersnork54@gmail.com

KIRK

## BIBBLE TRIVIA by Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of Numbers (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. In which Gospel did Jesus say, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth"? *Matthew, Mark, Luke, John*

3. From Mark 15:23, while on the cross Christ was offered wine mingled with ...? *Salt, Water, Myrrh, Speck*

4. In 2 Kings 5, who had his leprosy washed away in the Jordan? *Naaman, Zacchaeus, Elijah, Joshua*

5. From Psalm 46:1, "God is our refuge and ..."? *Light, Builder, Wisdom, Strength*

6. Who had a rod that God turned into a serpent? *Noah, Moses, Abraham, Isaac*

ANSWERS: 1) Old, 2) Mark 9:23, 3) Myrrh, 4) Naaman, 5) Strength, 6) Moses

*Sharpen your understanding of scripture with Wilson's Casey's latest book, "Test Your Bible Knowledge," available in bookstores and online.*

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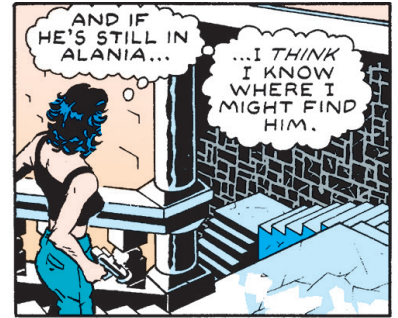
# HELP WANTED!

## 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.

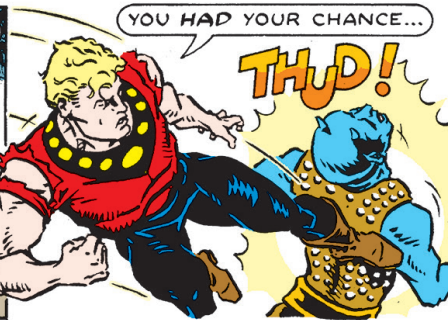
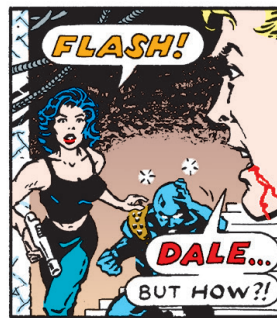
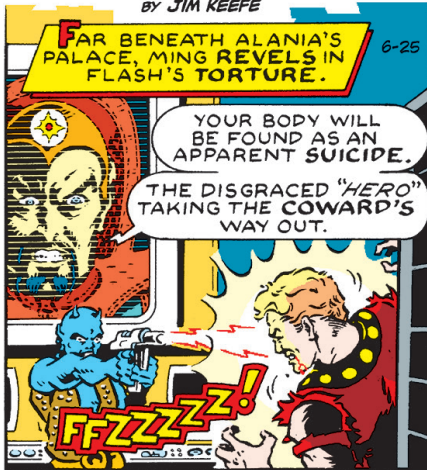
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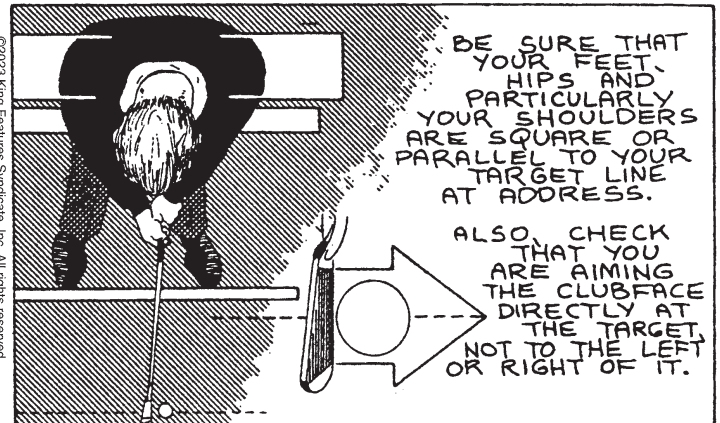
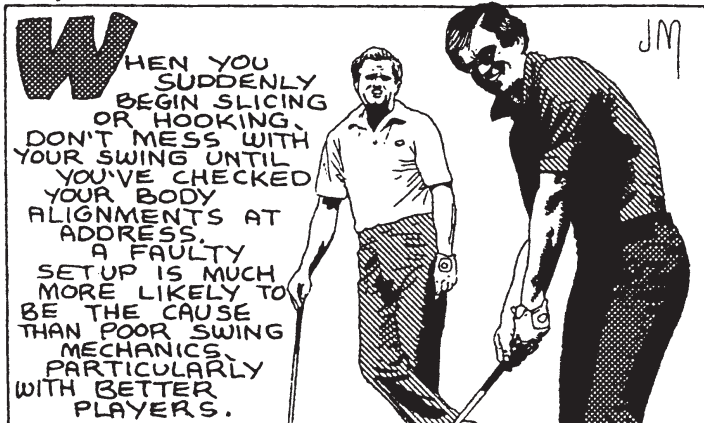


## FLASH GORDON

BY JIM KEEFE



## Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS





## High Blood Pressure Readings Call for Additional Medication

**DEAR DR. ROACH:** I am a 68-year-old female who was diagnosed with high blood pressure at 32. I am 5 feet, 5 inches tall and weigh 130 pounds. I've been taking 240 mg of verapamil for all of these years.

A few years back, my medication started coming in 120-mg dosages, so I started taking one in the morning and one at night. My blood pressure both at home and at the doctor's office is often higher than I think it should be, averaging 138/88.

Recently, I used a 24-hour blood pressure monitor, which showed that more than 50% of my daytime readings were above 140/90, while my nighttime readings averaged 118/82. I am still waiting to hear back from my doctor regarding the results of this test, but I wanted to get your thoughts. Should I be on some other type of medication? Should I alter the timing to get better daytime readings? — E.T.

**ANSWER:** In my opinion, these readings are not ideal. Twenty-four-hour, ambulatory blood pressure readings are usually 5 to 10 points lower than office blood pressure readings, so your average daytime readings are correspondingly higher.

There is strong evidence that in people at high risk for heart attack (such as those who are already known to have blockages), controlling blood pressure to an average of less than 120 systolic (the first or top number) and less than

those optimal numbers, as long as the medication does not cause side effects. In a situation like yours, I would consider additional daytime medicine. More verapamil might be reasonable, but many doctors might use a different medication, such as a diuretic, in the morning to try to get the optimal blood pressure with less risk of side effects.

Very often, the choice of blood pressure medication depends on any other medical issues a person may have. Only your doctor knows enough about your medical condition to make a personalized recommendation.

\*\*\*

**DEAR DR. ROACH:** Can you eat eggs if you have a severe allergy to them? I ask this because my grandson vomited after eating scrambled eggs for the first time, so my daughter-in-law took him to four doctors until she found one who agreed with her that he had a severe allergic reaction. (The first three said he did not.) Since then, he has eaten baked foods with eggs in them without getting a reaction. — G.A.

**ANSWER:** Egg allergies are among the most common childhood food allergies, second only to cow's milk. Symptoms of a severe egg allergy can start within minutes of eating an egg product, with skin changes (flushing, itching or swelling) and problems with the airway (swelling of the throat or a change in voice). Not all people — whether they're adults or children — get skin changes, and gastrointestinal symptoms are also common. Although vomiting may occur, other symptoms (looking pale, lethargy or diarrhea) commonly occur.

A single episode of vomiting is not strong evidence of a food allergy. Blood and skin testing are sometimes used to evaluate whether an allergy is truly present.

More importantly, repeated exposure without symptoms is evidence against the diagnosis of a food allergy (although it is possible there was not enough egg in what your grandson ate to trigger a reaction). I strongly recommend a consultation with an allergist.

*Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column*

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**Sarah Snook, left, and Lily LaTorre star in  
"Run Rabbit Run."  
Courtesy of Netflix**

"Run Rabbit Run" (TV-MA) -- Hot off the finale of the series "Succession," Sarah Snook has a new psychological thriller film premiering June 28. Snook plays a fertility doctor, also named Sarah, who has a 7-year-old daughter, Mia. Following the death of Mia's grandfather, the tone of Sarah and Mia's lives is melancholic and grim, which makes Sarah recall the mysterious disappearance of her 7-year-old sister, Alice, years ago. When a white bunny strangely appears in their home, a sinister air subsequently takes over Mia. Sarah becomes

increasingly terrified by Mia, who tries to convince her mother that she is a reincarnated version of Alice. Critics have compared Snook's performance in the film to Toni Collette's in "Hereditary" (2018). (Netflix)

"M3GAN" (PG-13) -- The Blumhouse sci-fi/horror success "M3GAN," which premiered in theaters earlier this year, is out on streaming June 27. Allison Williams ("Get Out") plays Gemma, a roboticist whose niece, Cady, comes to live with her following the death of her parents. Coincidentally, Gemma's latest work project included the development of a child-sized robot doll, nicknamed M3GAN (Model 3 Generative Android). Gemma lets Cady pair up with M3GAN and watches as Cady's emotional struggles dissipate. But since M3GAN's main purpose in her programming is protecting Cady, the robot doll quickly escalates her levels of protection to a deadly category for just about everyone else. A sequel to the film is expected in early 2025. (Amazon Prime Video)

"Hijack" (TV-MA) -- In this new thriller series (we're sticking with the horror genre this week!) releasing on June 28, the stakes have never been higher -- literally and figuratively. On an almost seven-hour flight from Dubai to London, with 200 passengers on board, a group of hijackers gain control over the plane right after takeoff. As the hijackers veer the plane off course and try to keep everyone subdued, business negotiator Sam Nelson (Idris Elba) attempts to do what he does best and negotiate with the hijackers to get everyone off the plane safe. But, in the event that his way with words doesn't pull off the job, Sam refuses to let the plane go down without a fight: "It's either us or them." (AppleTV+)

"Burial" (NR) -- Taking place in 1945 Berlin, this British war thriller film follows a female Soviet soldier named Brana (Charlotte Vega). A part of the Red Army unit, Brana and her fellow soldiers are assigned to carry, from Berlin to the Soviet Union, a casket of unknown contents that must be buried every night and dug up every morning. When they realize they're in pursuit by several Nazi loyalists, they realize the contents of the casket are none other than Adolf Hitler's remains. Critics have praised the performances of Vega, Harriet Walter ("Ted Lasso") and Tom Felton (the "Harry Potter" films), but also stated that the film lacks a certain vigor to make it all come together. "Burial" premieres June 30. (Hulu)



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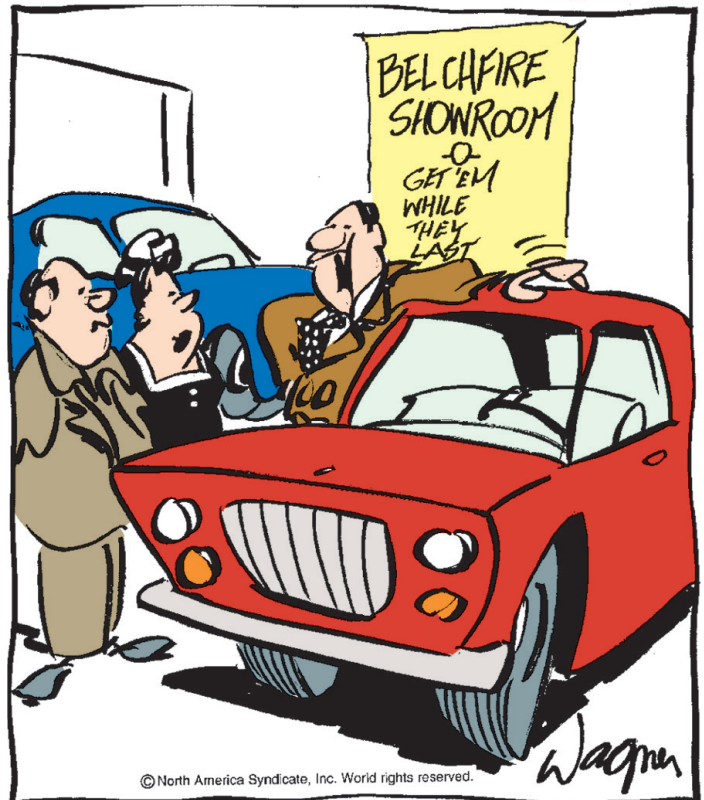
1. ABBA won the 1974 Eurovision contest with which song?
2. Name the group that released "Boogie Fever."
3. Who was "Sloopy" in "Hang On Sloopy"?
4. Which duo released "Lady Godiva"?
5. Name the song that contains these lyrics: "Stayed in bed all morning just to pass the time; There's something wrong here, there can be no denying."

## Answers

1. "Waterloo." Then, in 2005 at the 50th anniversary of the contest, the song was picked as the best song in the whole history of the contest, edging out "Nel blu, dipinto di blu" (aka "Volare") by Italian Domenico Modugno.
2. The Sylvers, in 1975. The group, consisting of nine of the 10 kids in the family, originally called themselves the Little Angels.
3. Legend says that Sloopy (born Dorothy Sloop Heflick in 1913) was a singer in Ohio and an Ohio University student. "Sloopy" is the fight song of the Ohio State University Buckeyes and was named the state's official rock song in 1985.
4. Peter & Gordon, in 1966.
5. "It's Too Late," by Carole King in 1971. The song snagged a Grammy for Record of the Year in 1972 and made it onto the Rolling Stone's list of greatest songs of all time.

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## GRIN and BEAR IT <sup>by Wagner</sup>



"We used all foreign parts to make the best domestic car available!"

## Just Like Cats & Dogs <sup>by Dave T. Phipps</sup>



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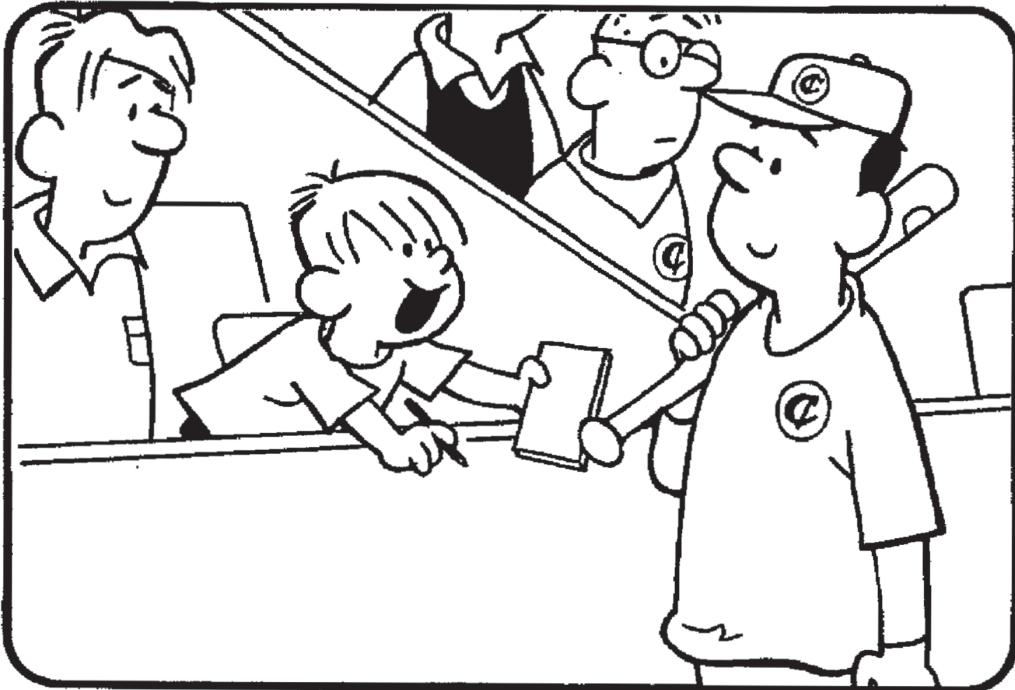
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## HOCUS-FOCUS

BY  
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Pocket is smaller. 2. Neckline is different. 3. Sign is missing. 4. Glasses are different. 5. Number is missing. 6. Bat is shorter.

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\* Save the rubber bands from broccoli. You can put them around the body of a drinking glass so that it will be less slippery as it condensates.

\* "I save the wrappers from my unsalted butter sticks in a baggie in my refrigerator. I use them to grease a pan when baking." -- M.M. in Wisconsin

\* Corn is best cooked within a day or two of being picked, so farm-stand corn is the best. Add a little bit of milk to the cooking water, and it will bring out the natural sweetness.

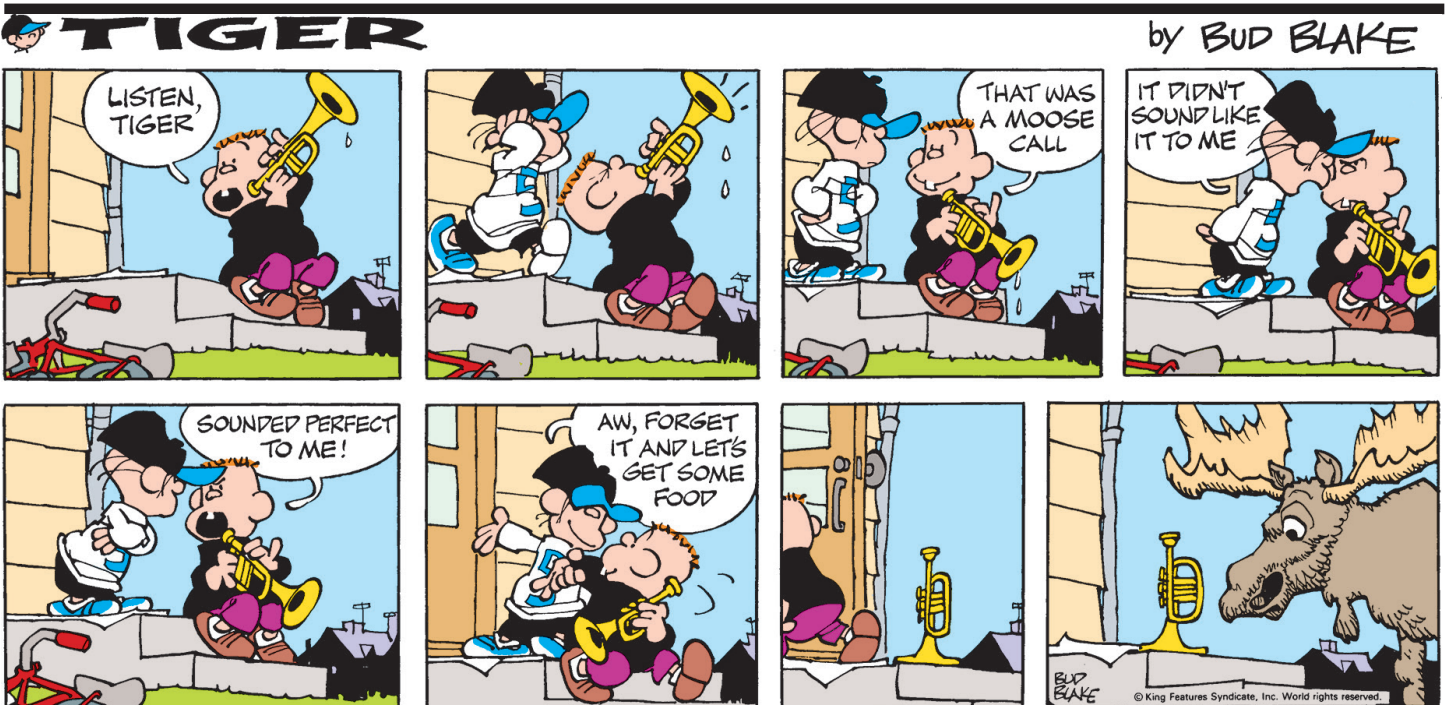
\* Cherries are in season! Much like strawberries, they need to be kept refrigerated but taste best at room temperature. Before eating your cherries, let them sit out for about a half-hour.

\* Mmmmm. Dried lentils don't need to be soaked prior to cooking like other dried beans. And they're packed with protein.

\* "If you lose a contact lens and can't find it right off, try turning out the lights and shine a flashlight across the ground. The lens might reflect the light and cause a flash. That will make it easier to find." -- T.L. in Texas

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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## King Crossword

### ACROSS

- 1 America's uncle
- 4 "Dracula" author Stoker
- 8 Leftovers recipe
- 12 Chinese chairman
- 13 Roof overhang
- 14 Arizona tribe
- 15 Samovar
- 16 On the rocks
- 17 Hurler Hershiser
- 18 "Syriana" Oscar winner
- 21 British ref. work
- 22 Caribou kin
- 23 Gold-loving king
- 26 "See ya!"
- 27 Scale abbr.
- 30 Privy to
- 31 "Of course"
- 32 Cheer (for)
- 33 Joke
- 34 Chic, to Austin Powers
- 35 Five dozen
- 36 Droop
- 37 Iota
- 38 1997 film starring Nicole Kidman and 18-Across
- 45 Only
- 46 Algeria's neighbor

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12				13					14			
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38	39	40				41				42	43	44
45					46				47			
48					49				50			
51					52				53			

- 47 Granada gold
- 48 "Mamma Mia" group
- 49 La Scala solo
- 50 Apprehend
- 51 Katy Perry hit song
- 52 Adolescent
- 53 Ninny
- 7 Musical mixes
- 8 Trembled
- 9 Undecided
- 10 Duel tool
- 11 Sly
- 19 Reddish horse
- 20 Flamenco cheer
- 23 "Top Gun" target
- 24 — jiffy
- 25 Pooch
- 26 Nap site
- 27 Bagel topper
- 28 Automaton, for short
- 29 Hog haven
- 31 Pad you bring
- to exercise class
- 32 Ms. Moreno
- 34 West of Hollywood
- 35 Ape
- 36 Asparagus unit
- 37 Prove untrue
- 38 Despot
- 39 Vagrant
- 40 Exile isle
- 41 Give a darn
- 42 Hawaiian coffee
- 43 Historic periods
- 44 Filches

### DOWN

- 1 Overconfident
- 2 Bern's river
- 3 Stereo alter-native
- 4 Linen shades
- 5 Sped
- 6 Opposite of "sans"

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## — King Crossword —

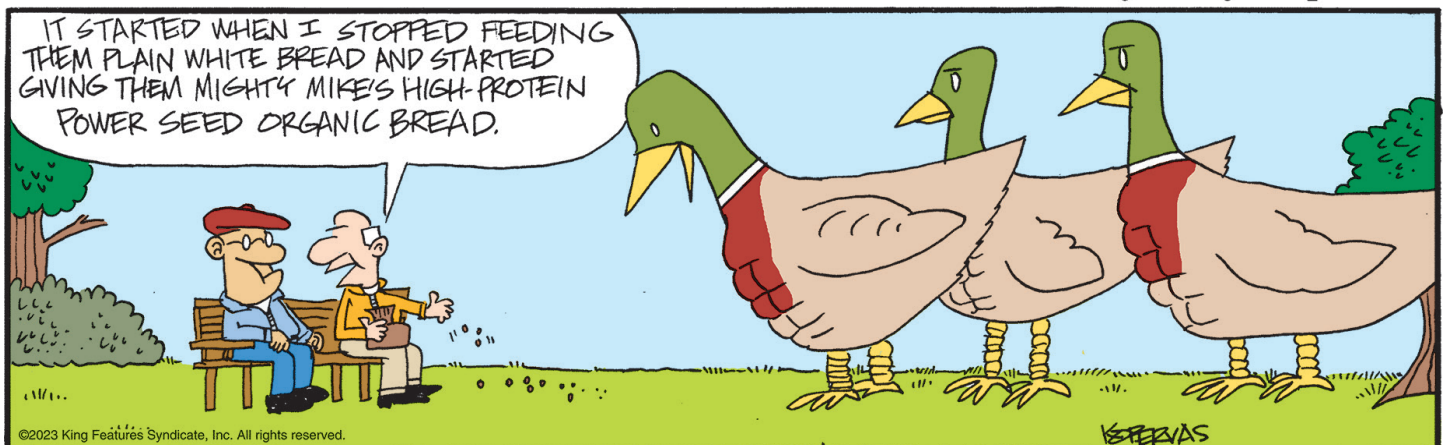
Answers

Solution time: 21 mins.

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M	A	O		E	A	V	E		H	O	P	I
U	R	N		I	C	E	D		O	R	E	L
G	E	O	R	G	E	C	L	O	O	N	E	Y
			O	E	D		E	L	K			
M	I	D	A	S		B	Y	E		L	B	S
I	N	O	N		Y	E	S		R	O	O	T
G	A	G		M	O	D		S	I	X	T	Y
			S	A	G		B	I	T			
T	H	E	P	E	A	C	E	M	A	K	E	R
S	O	L	E		M	A	L	I		O	R	O
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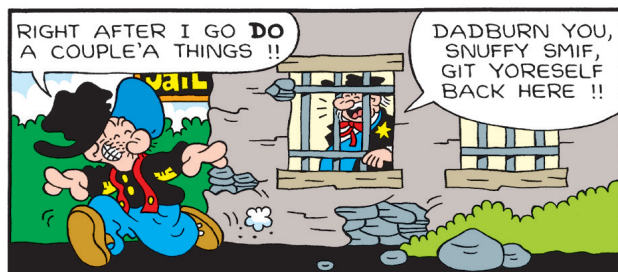
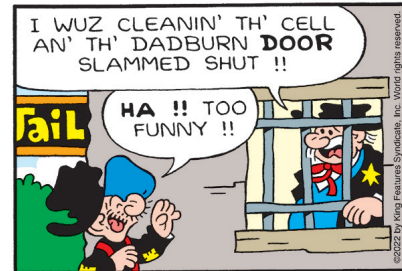
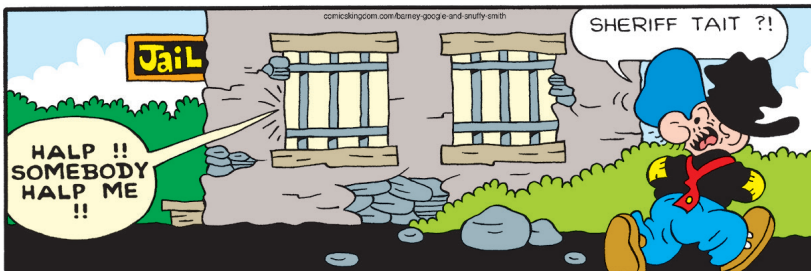
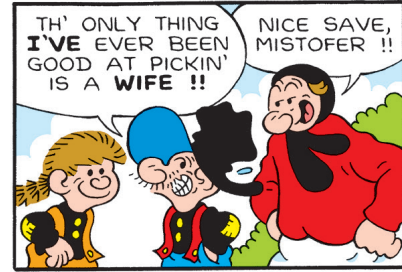
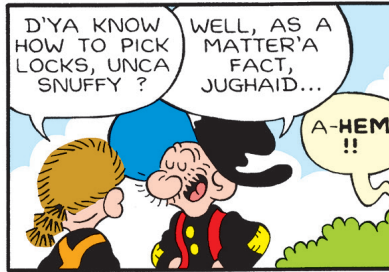
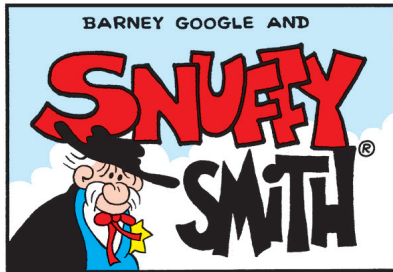
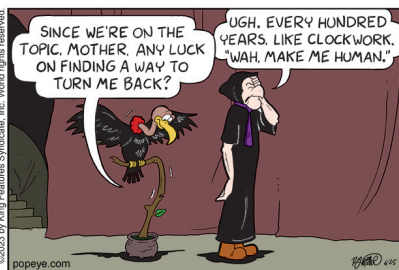
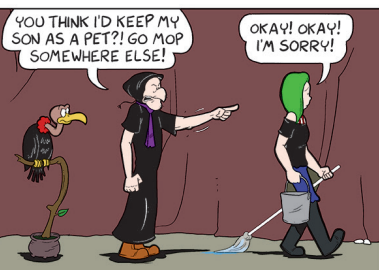
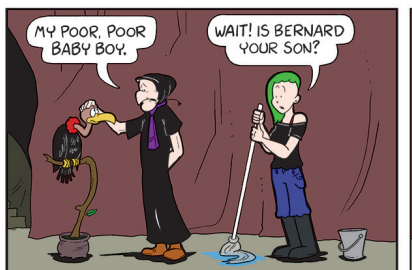
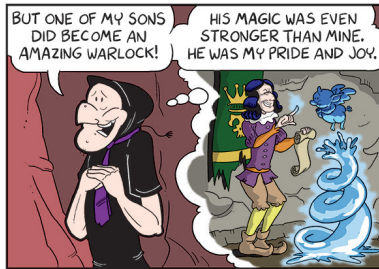
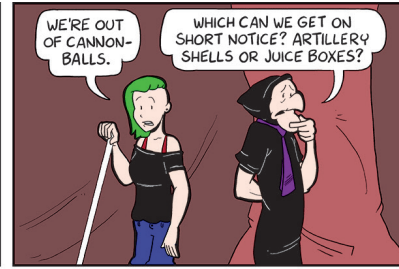
### Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



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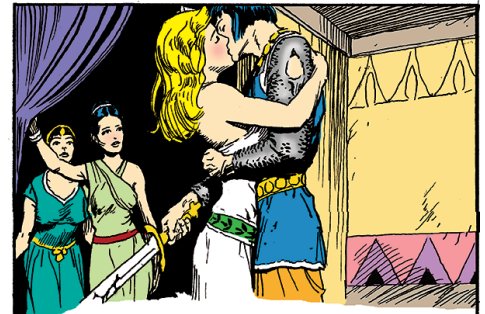
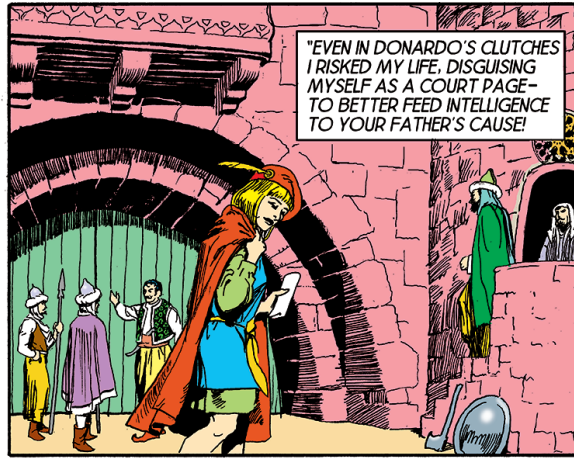
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Hal Foster's  
**Prince Valiant**  
BY SCHULTZ AND YEATES

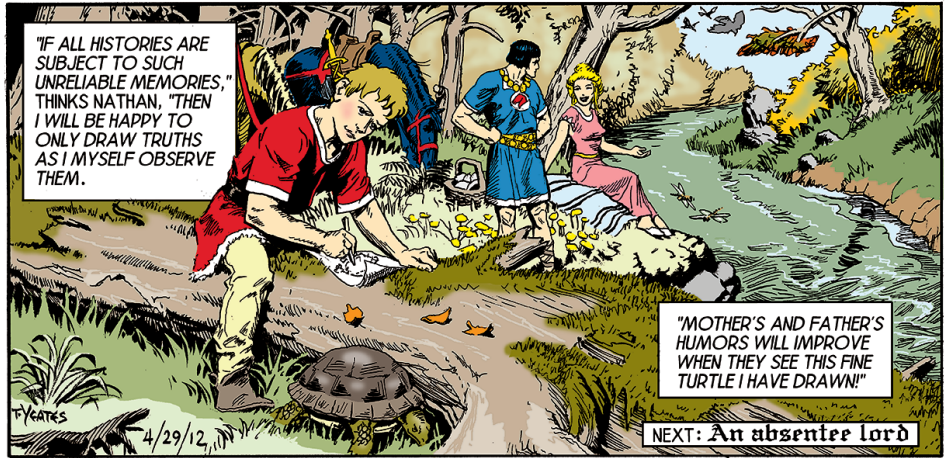


"IN THE END, WE WERE REUNITED AND HE WAS CURED — AND HE FOUND HE DID NOT WANT THE SPELL BROKEN! HE SAW THERE WAS NO SORCERY INVOLVED—THE SPELL WAS OF OUR OWN MAKING."



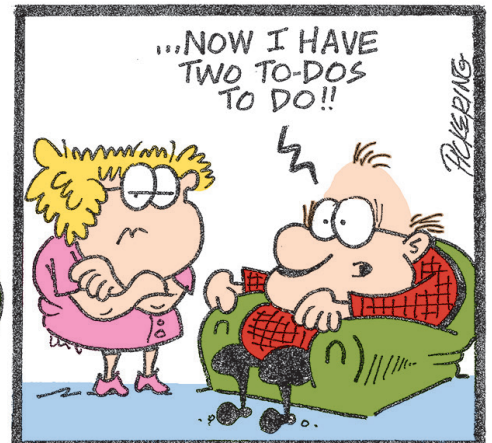
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AND SO TWO MEMORIES COLLIDE ...  
VAL: "THAT'S NOT HOW I REMEMBER ..."  
ALETA: "BUT YOUR HEAD WAS SO BADLY HURT ..."



## The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



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PICKERING

## SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

### Memory Aids We Can Use

There may come a time when you can no longer immediately remember the 25 telephone numbers that used to be easily recalled. I suspect it comes to us all. When it does, it's time to start making lists.

Having a cellphone is probably the easiest way to save all those numbers. But the problem comes when the phone is on its charger and can't be accessed. Written lists are a lifesaver then.

I made such a list for my father many years ago, not suspecting then that I would need the same type of list someday. I'd taped his list inside the cabinet door in his kitchen, the one right above the phone on the wall.

I now have a similar list taped to the inside of my own cabinet door, but in one other place as well: a slim piece of paper on the side of my computer monitor. Of the two, that's the most handy because I'm often at the computer.

I've also made a list for the other side of the monitor of important dates with items such as inspection and new tags for the car and the next date to pick up a three-month batch of prescriptions at the pharmacy.

One thing that was helpful for my father years ago when he was very senior and using his first computer: I made him a notebook of instructions. In a three-ring binder I put pages with one instruction per page, with titles like "How to Send Email," and I'd start each instruction with "Turn on the computer," because that's where his skill level was. Periodically, as his computer skills grew, he'd request additional instruction pages. It was a lot easier than trying to teach him by telephone.

Nowadays, if he were still living, I'm sure I'd be creating a "How to Use the Cellphone" notebook for him. I'd be happy to.

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1. What Australian basketball player scored a WNBA-record 53 points in a July 2018 game?

2. What European country hosts the annual Algarve Cup invitational women's soccer tournament?

3. R. Norris Williams, a two-time U.S. Open tennis singles champion, survived what 1912 disaster?

4. What UCLA Bruins running back was selected in the first round of the 1988 NFL Draft by the Los Angeles Rams?

5. Fast-food magnate Ray Croc purchased what Major League Baseball team in 1974?

6. What multi-sport event, featuring sports disciplines that are not in the Olympic Games, was first held in Santa Clara, California, in 1981?

7. The "keystone combination" is a baseball term for a play involving what two positions?



by Ryan A. Berenz

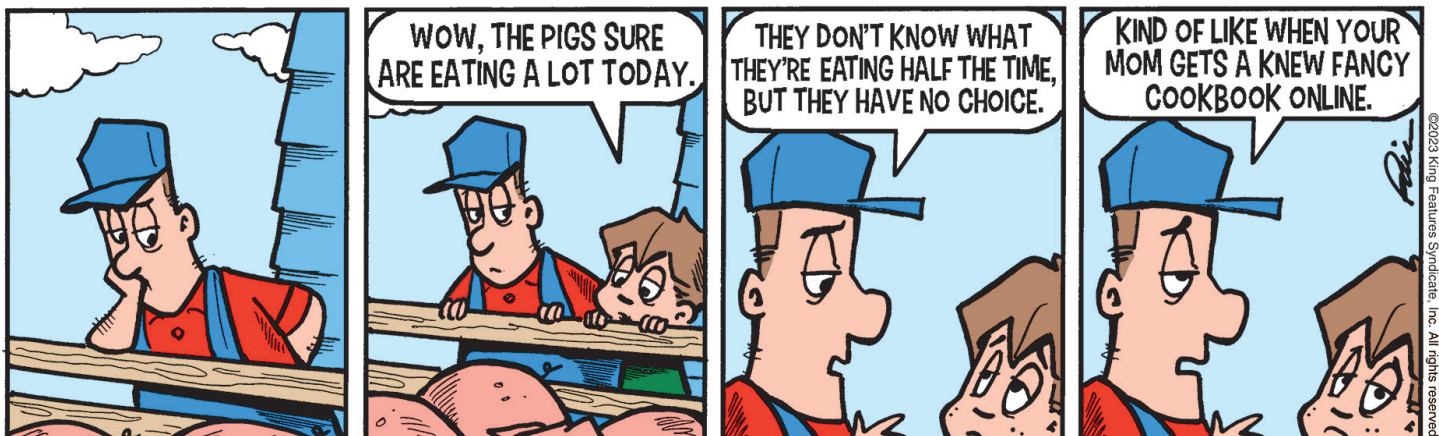
## Answers

1. Liz Cambage.
2. Portugal.
3. The sinking of the RMS Titanic.
4. Gaston Green.
5. The San Diego Padres.
6. The World Games.
7. The shortstop and second baseman.

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## Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





## Cat Reacts to Thunderstorms Poorly

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: Yesterday, we had a pretty big thunderstorm roll through. My 8-year-old cat, Sphinx, is normally never afraid of anything. But for the first time, he hid underneath the sofa, and even after the storm passed he stayed underneath the coffee table and wouldn't come out. Why would he suddenly be afraid when he wasn't before? -- Claire A., Utica, New York

DEAR CLAIRE: A sudden change in behavior may warrant a trip to the veterinarian. This can rule out any physical causes for the change in behavior, such

as a silent infection or a chronic condition.

Cats may seem aloof and resilient to us, but they are actually creatures of habit -- much more so than dogs, who thrive on applied structure, like walks at the same time each day. Cats develop their own daily routine: when they eat and drink, when they "patrol" the house, where they sleep at different times of the day.

Any change in that routine can be very upsetting to them, but most still won't let you know it. (Some will -- they might turn their back on you, meow incessantly, or even, when deeply aggrieved, leave a special present right where you can find it.)

Observe Sphinx as much as you can, and think about any changes to the home. Did you recently rearrange furniture or install new flooring? Did a family member leave or did a new person move in?

To reduce his anxiety, spend more time playing with Sphinx. When a storm rolls in, place one of your favorite old shirts next to him wherever he is hiding. Speak to him calmly during the storm. If his anxiety doesn't improve, or begins to get worse, talk to his veterinarian about temporarily giving him anti-anxiety medication.

Send your tips, comments or questions to [ask@pawscorner.com](mailto:ask@pawscorner.com).

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## Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

\* The largest volcano in the solar system is Olympus Mons, on Mars, standing at an impressive 13.6 miles high with a diameter of approximately 370 miles. That's nearly three times the height of Mt. Everest.

\* During World War II, a U.S. naval destroyer won a battle against a Japanese submarine by throwing -- wait for it -- potatoes at them. The Japanese thought they were grenades.

\* Lettuce is a member of the sunflower family.

\* Gennaro Pelliccia, a taster for Costa Coffee, had

his tongue insured for \$22 million.

\* To leave a party without telling anyone is called, in English, a "French exit." And in French? Appropriately enough, it's known as a "partir à l'anglaise," or, to leave like the English.

\* The rotund Buddha so commonly depicted in statues and pictures isn't at all an accurate representation. Instead, his real-life counterpart was actually quite thin, due to self-deprivation.

\* GPS may be free to use, but it still costs \$2 million per day to operate. The funds are supplied by American tax revenue.

\* No, the color red doesn't make bulls angry -- they're colorblind.


\* One of the World Trade Center towers was purposely built to a height of 1,776 feet to reference the year the Declaration of Independence was signed.

\* Want to generate electricity from mud? Crazy as the concept may sound, it is indeed possible, thanks to *geobacter sulfurreducens*, which belongs to a group of organisms known as electrogenic bacteria that are able to transfer electrons from organic matter to metals or other conductive materials.

\* According to a study done by French researchers, if you listen to loud music, you are more likely to drink more in less time.

\*\*\*

Thought for the Day: "Faith is the bird that feels the light and sings when the dawn is still dark." -- Rabi-ndranath Tagore



**The Garden Bug**

Also known as "tickseed" or "pot-of-gold," **Coreopsis** is easy to grow. Sprinkle the seeds over a prepared area of soil in a very sunny location, and cover lightly with soil. Keep this area watered until the seeds germinate in about 3 weeks. This plant tolerates heat, humidity, and drought. It is well suited to beds, borders and containers. Not only do bees and butterflies love its nectar, but also small birds like goldfinches love its seeds. It's an excellent cut flower in a mixed bouquet. - Brenda Weaver

Sources: [linnet.geog.ubc.ca](http://linnet.geog.ubc.ca), [www.gardeningknowhow.com](http://www.gardeningknowhow.com), [almanac.com](http://almanac.com)



by Freddy Groves

## Fraud and Theft

Not all the thefts and fraud the Office of Inspector General uncovers runs into the millions. But a stolen dollar is a stolen dollar, and the Department of Veterans Affairs OIG will go after it, no matter the size.

Take the perp who stole used precious metals that were supposed to be recycled. This dental tech at a VA facility nabbed the metals and sold them to a third party. He could get 10 years in prison and a possible fine of \$250,000 ... all for the \$17,000 he made passing along stolen metals.

Then there were the 44 doctors, who should have known better, who have to pay back \$5.7 million that they netted from a fraudulent self-referral program. The eye and ear clinic broke the law that bars them from referring patients to facilities where they have a vested interest and financial relationship. It's called the Stark Act, and it keeps physicians from sending their patients to places where they know they'll get a monetary return, instead of caring more about the patients' actual health.

Then there was the couple who, for seven years, submitted over 100 fictitious applications claiming that their company was providing services to veterans in need of aid and attendance. Aid and attendance is giving assistance to homebound veterans who need help with everyday basic functions, like eating, bathing and taking medications.

This couple hunted up veterans and surviving spouses and got the needed information, like DD-214s, bank docs and others. Over 70 veterans were approved for funds, and the couple took over \$2 million while the veterans themselves got only a portion of that. The couple could get a max of 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine ... each. As of this writing, their company web information still pushes the aid and attendance angle and describes how they will submit all the documents to the VA.

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## Wishing Well®

8	5	7	6	8	7	3	7	4	6	2	7	5
A	W	C	G	P	O	P	N	J	E	N	T	O
4	5	4	2	8	3	7	4	5	3	5	3	6
O	R	Y	E	P	R	E	I	K	O	E	B	T
8	5	3	5	4	7	3	8	3	5	8	6	5
L	F	L	F	S	N	E	Y	M	O	W	O	R
8	5	7	8	3	2	3	6	7	2	8	4	6
I	T	T	L	S	W	O	R	E	F	L	Y	G
8	2	7	5	2	5	7	3	8	5	2	8	3
P	O	D	P	U	A	L	L	O	Y	N	W	V
5	8	5	4	5	6	7	2	5	3	8	6	3
S	E	O	O	F	A	I	D	F	E	R	N	D
2	7	2	7	2	4	2	6	4	6	4	6	6
F	F	A	E	M	U	E	I	R	Z	S	E	D

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

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1. GEOGRAPHY: What is the tallest building in the world?
2. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: What does HTTP stand for in a website address?
3. LITERATURE: Which kind of animals are featured in the novel "Watership Down"?
4. HISTORY: When was the first iPhone released?
5. MOVIES: What kind of fish is Nemo in "Finding Nemo"?
6. GAMES: What is the final course on Mario Kart video games?
7. ASTRONOMY: How many planets in our solar system have moons?
8. U.S. PRESIDENTS: Which president was licensed as a bartender?
9. MEDICAL: What is a more common term for somniloquy?
10. TELEVISION: How many castaways are on "Gilligan's Island"?

### Answers

1. Burj Khalifa, Dubai, United Arab Emirates.
2. HyperText Transfer Protocol.
3. Rabbits.
4. 2007.
5. Clownfish.
6. Rainbow Road.
7. Six of the eight planets.
8. Abraham Lincoln.
9. Talking in your sleep.
10. Seven.

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South Dakota Governor

**Kristi Noem**



**South Dakota:** *Under God, the People Rule*

## Freedom Works Here

"South Dakota is hiring. As the first state to bounce back from the pandemic, we've got one of the nation's strongest economies – and more jobs than we can fill." That's my own line from one of our new nationwide workforce recruitment

ads, "Freedom Flows Here." I've been talking about South Dakota's "growing pains" for a while. They're the unique challenges that have come from our unique success. And the only way to get through these growing pains is to think outside of the box.

We're launching a new nationwide recruitment campaign, Freedom Works Here, to use that kind of out-of-the-box thinking to tackle our workforce challenges. Three years ago, we launched a nationwide tourism campaign, and we've consistently broken records ever since. I am confident that this campaign will have the same success.

South Dakota has the lowest unemployment in American history. Our people are working. But even with our 1.9% unemployment rate, our state still has 25,000 open jobs. We need to recruit more workers to fill these positions. For folks interested in moving here, we will provide job search assistance to match them with the right career for themselves and their families.

The campaign includes television ads like "First Day," which emphasizes our openness to out-of-state occupational licenses. We'll also utilize direct marketing through digital ads and direct mail. We are up to 567 total inquiries from the workforce campaign in the first 48 hours. The top three states for inquiries have been California, New York, and Florida.

We are going to continue to build our winning workforce by welcoming new families to South Dakota. And we're not just welcoming these folks – we have done everything we can to make sure they will feel right at home. Earlier this year, I signed legislation to recognize out-of-state professional licenses for nearly every profession. This will allow our new South Dakotans to join our workforce as quickly and easily as possible. We are eliminating excessive red tape and helping families kickstart their new lives here.

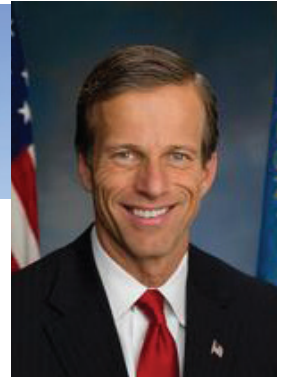
In 2022, South Dakota issued the most new building permits for houses of any state in the nation: 1,035 housing units per 100,000 residents. When families move to South Dakota, they are going to be able to find a place to live.

And we just passed new rules for child care licensing to make it easier for new South Dakotans to find child care for their kids. Families who decide to move to South Dakota will have the assurance that their children have access to safe, excellent, and affordable child care. We have always been focused on building strong families in our state, and now our new citizens will be able to start working without having to worry about the wellbeing of their kiddos.

I am so proud of how far South Dakota has come. We have taken the challenges that have been thrown at us over the last few years and come out stronger than ever before. But the thing I love most about South Dakotans is that we never say, "that's good enough." Instead, we set the bar – and then we raise it. That is exactly what we are doing with this national workforce recruitment campaign. We are showing America that we never settle. We are showing America that South Dakota is the best state in the nation to live, work, and raise a family.

We are showing America that Freedom Works Here.

**John Thune**  
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



## To Compete with China, Invest in National Security

Countering the threat from China has to be a priority for the United States. China has recently grown more aggressive not only toward those in its own backyard, but also against the United States. Earlier this year, a Chinese spy balloon traversed America attempting to collect intelligence from military bases. The Chinese military has also taken brazen actions against U.S. military assets in the Pacific. And recent reports indicate China is using Cuba as a base for intelligence gathering from the United States and may begin joint military exercises in Cuba as well.

We are in an era of competition with China, with the Chinese Communist Party intent on displacing U.S. leadership in the Indo-Pacific so that it may impose its economic and military will throughout the region and beyond. So, we need to make the right decisions now to ensure the United States is able to counter China from a position of strength. And the most important thing we can do is invest in a strong military that is capable of deterring aggression from China and our other adversaries.

The security of our nation is the precondition for everything else. I've often said that if we don't get national defense right, the rest is just conversation. Although the United States military has earned a reputation for being one of the strongest in the world, the fact of the matter is that our military readiness is not where it needs to be to stay ahead of modern threats. In 2018, the National Defense Strategy Commission warned that our readiness had eroded to the point that we might struggle to win a war against a major power like Russia or China. Although we've made some progress since then, recent war games have revealed serious deficiencies in some of our key capabilities. We cannot afford to ignore these warnings.

The president and Democrats in Congress, however, have consistently put national defense on the back burner and proposed inadequate funding for the military. This view is out of line with reality. Not only is our own readiness an issue, China has been ramping up its defense budget, which has doubled in the last 10 years. It should come as no surprise then that the Chinese military is outpacing ours in modern capabilities like hypersonic missiles and has amassed a significantly larger navy. And we cannot forget that Russia and rogue nations like Iran still pose threats to our security and national interests.

In an increasingly dangerous world, investing in a strong national defense capable of deterring and, if necessary, confronting threats to our peace and security remains one of my top priorities in the Senate. This includes supporting the B-1 bomber, which has been a workhorse for our military, as well as preparing for the B-21 Raider, which will be housed at Ellsworth Air Force Base. The B-21 represents a major advancement in our stealth and long-range strike capabilities, which will also have a deterrent effect on our adversaries. I'm working to ensure that Ellsworth and the surrounding community have the resources they need to accommodate this important new mission.

There's nothing more important than keeping our country safe and secure. We have work to do to improve the readiness and capabilities of our military in order to engage in this era of competition from a position of strength. I'll continue working to ensure that the men and women in uniform who work to keep our country safe have the resources they need to get the job done.



CONGRESSMAN  
**DUSTY JOHNSON**  
Representing **SOUTH DAKOTA** at large



## Containing Chinese Spyware

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is spying on ports across the globe. I suppose it isn't much of a shock, given their track record with spying through apps like TikTok, their spy base in Cuba, and CCP "police stations" around the world.

How are they spying on ports? Through Chinese state-sponsored software LOGINK that is used at dozens of ports around the world. This software gives the CCP access to shipping information, cargo valuations via customs clearance forms, destination, and routing information. Access to this information gives the CCP the opportunity to intercept these shipments, blocking our goods from getting to and from America and crippling our supply chain. Further, if the CCP gained access to our shipping data, they could outbid U.S. companies, increasing their advantage in the global supply chain.

I added a provision to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that prohibits the use of LOGINK at U.S. ports. The NDAA passed the House Armed Services Committee this week with my provision included. We know China doesn't play nice and we should take the necessary steps to prevent them from having access to critical and proprietary U.S. information.

China makes cranes which are used at our ports that have sensors to collect vital information of shipping containers. The cranes would also give the CCP access to disrupt the flow of goods.

More than 90% of traded goods are carried through ocean shipping. It is a vital way to transport large amounts of cargo to countries around the world. Protecting our shipments is critical to ensure national security and food security.

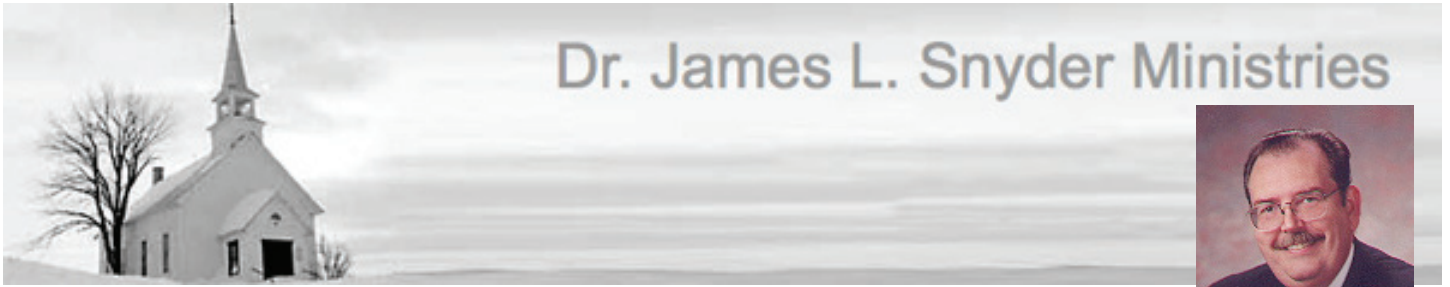
I've been cracking down on China's influence over U.S. ports for years. China's deceptive and unfair trade practices have been going on for far too long. My Ocean Shipping Reform Act (OSRA) became law in June 2022, which brought needed reform to the shipping industry and holds China accountable. While OSRA brought positive change, more can be done. I introduced the Ocean Shipping Reform Implementation Act to ban the LOGINK software and further investigate foreign shipping exchanges.

Restricting the CCP's access to critical shipping information is necessary. We can't trust the CCP with this information. We know they don't play nice.



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## I'm Too Smart to Be Stupid

After being married for over 50 years, my wife, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage, knows more about me than I know about myself. At least, that's the perception I get from her actions.

It must be true when she says something about me, and I won't challenge her with anything she says. I have a Ph.D. (Pretty Hard Dude) in the husbandology field. I can take anything she throws at me.

Recently we were watching TV, and the news had an outlandish story. Looking at my wife, I said, "I sure hope I'm not that stupid."

Of all the times to be stupid, I chose the right time.

Looking at me, she said, "Well, my dear, my opinion is that you are too smart to be that stupid."

I did not think I heard what I heard, so I asked her to repeat it.

"You heard me. You just want to hear it again," she said laughingly.

It was just the beginning of a new chapter, and I wasn't sure where it was going.

One day this past week, we drove across town, and the traffic was rather crazy. Cars were weaving in and out and racing down the street. Then a motorcycle passed, weaving in and out of the traffic.

Looking at me, my wife smiled and said, "At least you're too smart to be that stupid."

With a nod of agreement, I smiled as we continued our journey. I'm not sure what's happening, but that phrase is ringing in my head like no other phrase I've heard before. The fact that my wife of 50 years thinks I'm too smart to be stupid has to have some credibility.

I've been thinking of ways to use this to my advantage. I've never had such an advantage, so I need to be very careful about how to use it. For example, I need to be able to use it in such a way that The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage doesn't recognize my advantage.

I was smiling as I thought about this because I would have a great victory if I could pull this one over on my wife. The problem is, if I do have this victory, how can I celebrate it without giving myself away? After all, she said I was too smart to be stupid.

To process my plan, I needed to have her repeat what she said, so as we were driving, I pointed to one driver and said, "I hope I'm not that stupid."

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"Remember what I said," she chuckled, "you're too smart to be that stupid."

Smilingly I thanked her, and we continued driving while I looked for something stupid to call her attention. By the time we got to our destination, I had found about three incidences of stupidity, and for all three, I got her to tell me that she thought I was too smart to be that stupid.

I can't relay how wonderful it was to hear that phrase. I need to be able to develop more ways in which to hear her say that without showing my hand. I don't often get compliments like this, so I will try to plan it out carefully.

Just before we got home, we saw someone doing something more crazy than I had ever seen. Not thinking too much, I said, "I hope I'm not that crazy."

Smiling at me, she said, "My dear, I said you were too smart to be stupid but not crazy."

At the time, I didn't quite understand what she was saying, but as I thought about it, I was concerned about what she thought I was doing that was crazy. Now if I was in my right mind, and believe me, I have no mind left, I would ask her what she meant by being crazy.

If I asked that, I was sure she would tell me, and when she told me, I was sure I would not be a happy camper. It's very obvious through time that her idea of crazy and my idea of crazy are certainly not twins.

I think crazy is something people do that makes them look foolish. That's what I would think, but then if that's what she thinks, then she doesn't think I'm not smart enough to be crazy. As I was thinking about that, my brain went into an ultra-crazy mode. I had to be careful in case some of that crazy seeped out, and my wife saw it.

I thought maybe I could trick her into describing it to me, so I asked, "When have you seen me acting crazy?"

She laughed like I'd never heard her laugh in a long time. At the time, I didn't understand what she was laughing about, and then she told it.

"Oh my dear," she said, taking a deep breath, "when you are acting crazy, believe me, you are not acting."

I had to think about that for a long time. So if I had to choose between "crazy" and "stupid," my best choice would be crazy.

Later as I reflected on this I remembered what Solomon said. "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise. A fool's wrath is presently known: but a prudent man covereth shame" (Proverbs 12:15-16).

I'm going to commit myself to hearken unto some wise thinking to cover my shame.

## EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: Is it really a good idea to burn parcels of land on purpose in order to prevent the spread of actual wildfires?

-- C. Hudson, Mesa, CA

Burning parcels of land intentionally, known as controlled burning, has long been a controversial practice aimed at reducing the risk of larger, uncontrolled wildfires. The idea is to eliminate accumulated flammable material like dead vegetation, brush and smaller trees, before it can fuel a destructive wildfire. But the effectiveness and potential drawbacks are subjects of ongoing debate among experts.

Proponents argue that controlled burns can mimic natural fire cycles, which play a vital role in maintaining ecosystem health. Fire-adapted plant species have evolved to rely on periodic burns to clear out competition, recycle nutrients and promote new growth. By reintroducing fire in a controlled manner, proponents say that we can restore ecological balance and reduce the likelihood of catastrophic wildfires. Moreover, controlled burns can help mitigate the intensity and spread of wildfires by creating firebreaks, barriers to stop or slow down an approaching fire. By removing potential fuel sources, firefighters gain a tactical advantage in managing wildfires, allowing them to better suppress and contain the flames.

However, there are valid concerns and criticisms regarding the practice of intentional burning. One key concern is the potential for controlled burns to escape control and become uncontrolled wildfires themselves. Despite meticulous planning and execution, there is always a risk of fire spreading beyond the intended boundaries, especially under unpredictable weather conditions. Furthermore, some argue that prescribed burning may have unintended consequences for biodiversity. While certain fire-adapted species benefit from controlled burns, other sensitive or non-adapted species may suffer negative impacts. This is particularly concerning in areas with high levels of biodiversity, where the loss of rare or endangered species can have far-reaching ecological consequences.

Another consideration is air quality. Controlled burns release smoke and particulate matter into the atmosphere, which can pose health risks to nearby communities, especially individuals with respiratory conditions. Although measures are taken to minimize these impacts, the scale and frequency of prescribed burns must be carefully managed to avoid significant air pollution and subsequent health issues.

Additionally, there are concerns about the long-term effects of controlled burning on carbon emissions and climate change. While controlled burns release carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, some argue that the emissions are offset by the reduction in larger, uncontrolled wildfires. However, the overall carbon balance and net effect on climate change remain complex and subject to ongoing scientific study.

Given the complexity of the issue, it is crucial to consider local conditions, scientific research, and to involve stakeholders in the decision-making process to strike a balance between preventing wildfires and minimizing potential drawbacks. If wildfires are an issue in your region, your state probably has its own "prescribed fire council"—a group of local experts on forestry and fire—that may be able to help educate otherwise skeptical neighbors, planners and city/town councils on the merits of controlled burns.



**Caption: Setting and managing prescribed burns is one way to reduce the amount of "fuel" on the ground that a future wildfire could use to grow and spread.** Credit: Dane County Land & Water Resources

Dept, FlickrCC.

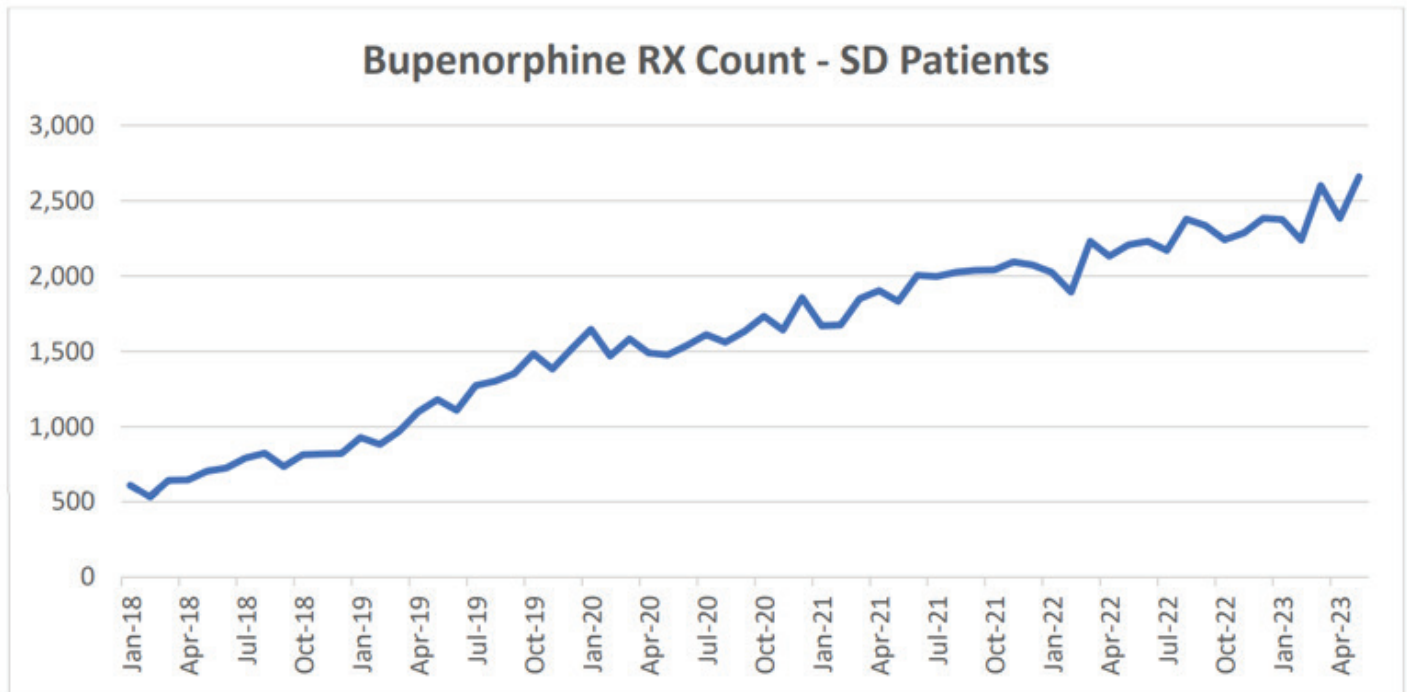


## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Opioid treatment prescriptions quadruple in SD over 5 years

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JUNE 24, 2023 9:00 AM



Data collected from the South Dakota prescription drug monitoring program shows the number of patients prescribed opioid dependency medication buprenorphine has nearly quadrupled in the last five years. (Courtesy of the South Dakota Board of Pharmacy)

The number of patients prescribed an opioid dependency medication has nearly quadrupled in South Dakota in the last five years, according to data collected by the state's prescription drug monitoring program.

Melissa DeNoon, director of the program, presented the data to the South Dakota Board of Pharmacy at its meeting on Friday. The increase in prescriptions shows an increased focus on opioid treatment in the state, DeNoon said.

The drug buprenorphine is a synthetic opioid that lessens withdrawal symptoms and cravings for opioids. The Food and Drug Administration approved it for addiction treatment more than two decades ago, making it the first medication to treat opioid use disorder that could be prescribed by a physician. Buprenorphine offers a measure of treatment without an opioid treatment clinic, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

The number of South Dakota patients actively prescribed buprenorphine increased from just over 500 prescriptions in January 2018 to more than 2,500 in April 2023. Over 100,000 prescriptions have been written for South Dakota patients since January 2018.

The data DeNoon presented also showed that most of the prescriptions are used by South Dakotans between the ages of 35 to 44, closely followed by South Dakotans aged 25 to 34.

Pennington County pharmacies dispensed the most buprenorphine over the last five years at over 26,600

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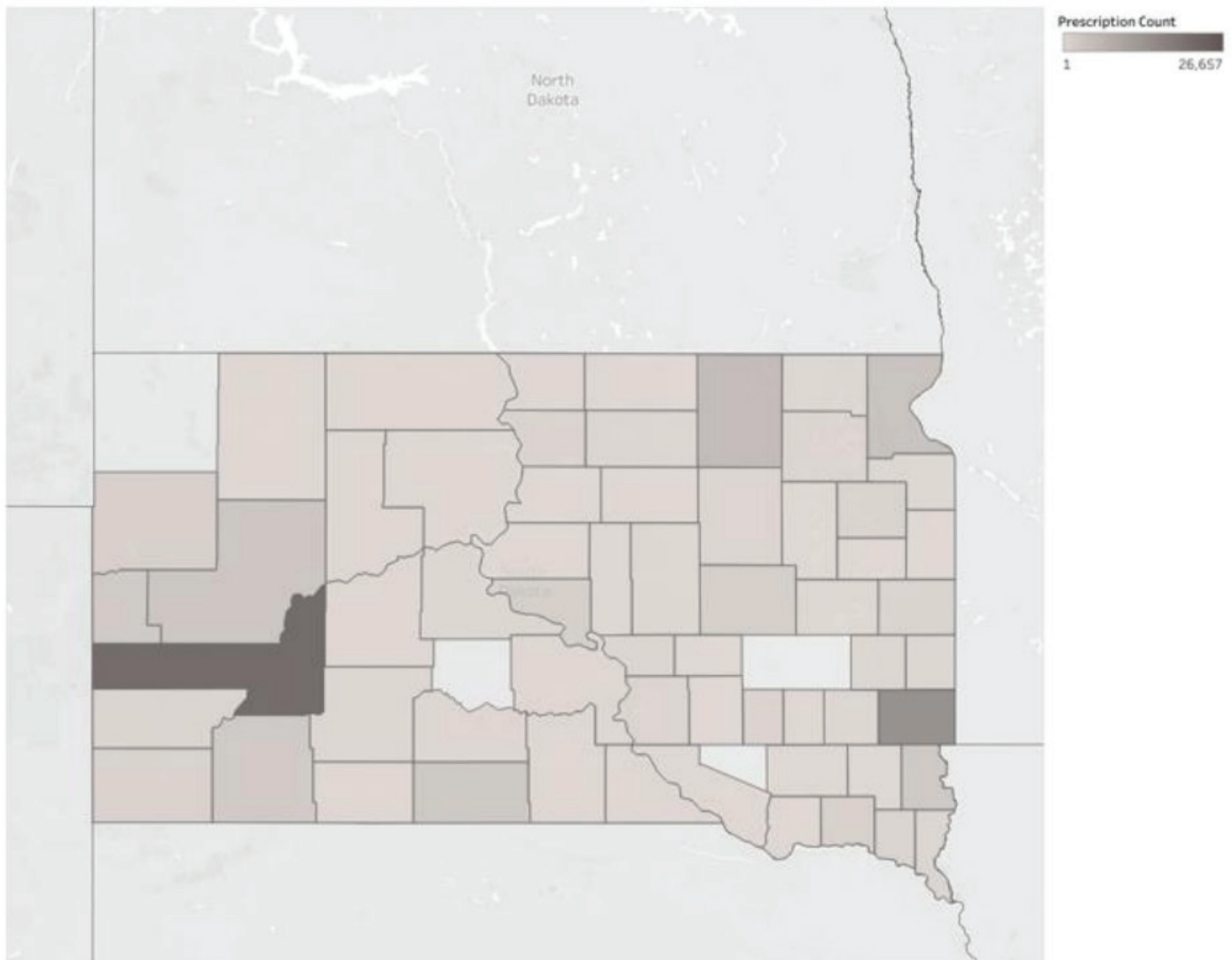
scripts, followed by Minnehaha pharmacies at more than 17,500 and Brown County at about 6,500.

A recent study released this year that tracked prescriptions from 2016 to 2019 showed that buprenorphine was drastically under-prescribed in the United States, especially for Black patients. Within six months of a high-risk event like an overdose, the study found, white patients filled buprenorphine prescriptions up to 80 percent more often than Black patients, and up to 25 percent more often than Latino patients. Rates of use for methadone, another addiction treatment medication, were generally even lower. The South Dakota data presented at the meeting did not break down patients by race.

Opioid overdoses have been the leading cause of drug deaths in South Dakota so far in 2023, with 13 opioid deaths, according to state data. Fentanyl has caused 11 of those deaths and methamphetamine has caused eight additional deaths.

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

Prescriptions by Patient County



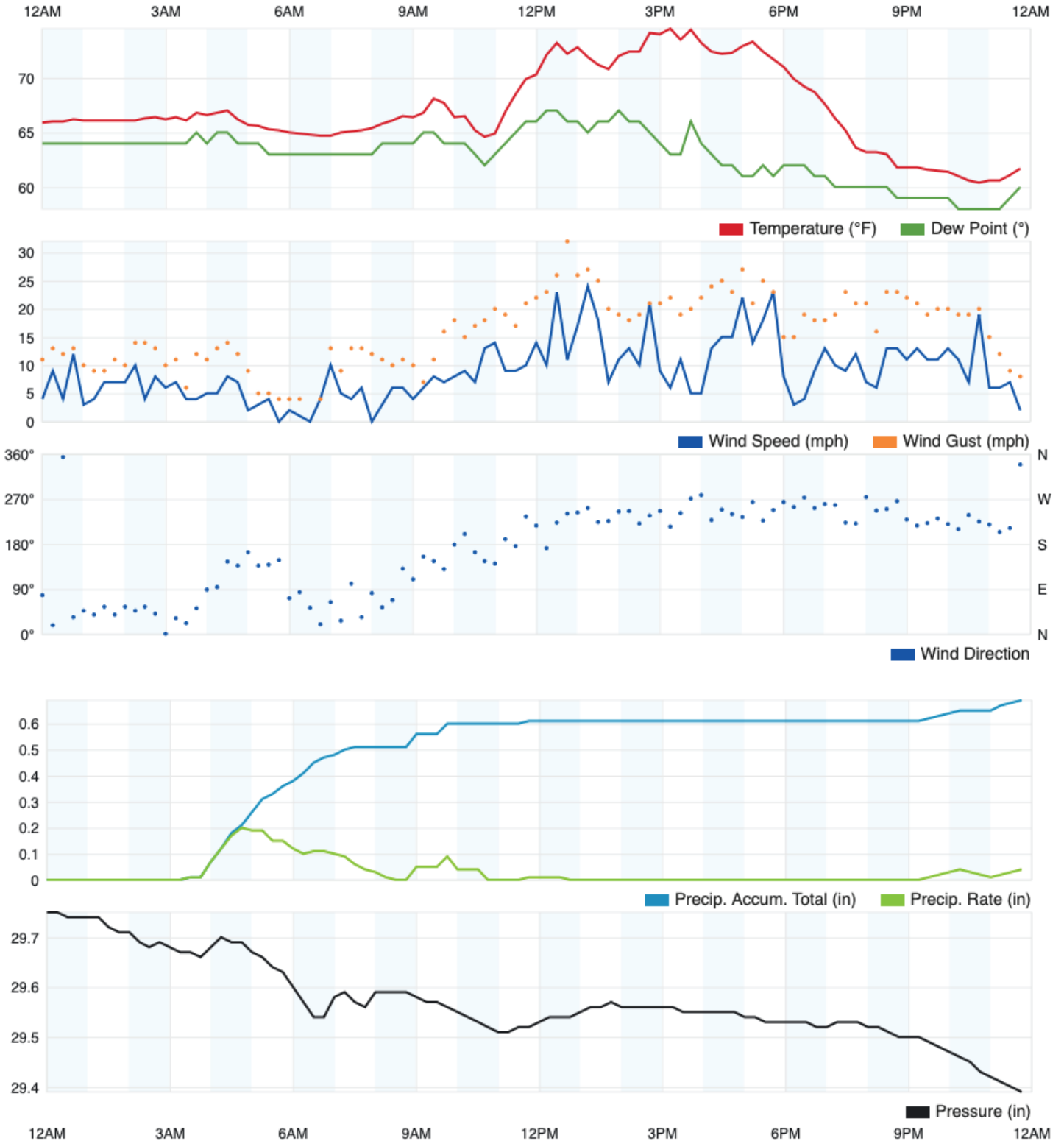
**Data collected from the South Dakota prescription drug monitoring program shows that Pennington County pharmacies have dispensed the largest amount of opioid dependency medication buprenorphine to patients in the state over the last five years.** (Courtesy of the South Dakota Board of Pharmacy)

Board of Pharmacy)

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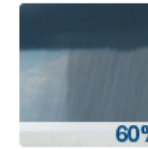
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs




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Today	Tonight	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
						
Breezy. Slight Chance Showers then Partly Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny then Slight Chance T-storms	T-storms Likely	Showers Likely
<b>High: 78 °F</b>	<b>Low: 55 °F</b>	<b>High: 84 °F</b>	<b>Low: 57 °F</b>	<b>High: 83 °F</b>	<b>Low: 62 °F</b>	<b>High: 81 °F</b>



Near Seasonal  
Average  
Temperatures




Decreasing winds  
Today!



Today  
Showers ending early this morning. Mostly dry today.  
Highs: 70 - 82°F

Tonight  
Clear skies  
Lows: 51- 58°F

Monday  
Mostly sunny  
Highs: 78 - 86°F



June 25, 2023 3:43 AM

An area of low pressure will push east today, with showers ending from west to east during the morning hours. Far eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota could see isolated showers and thunderstorms this afternoon. Dry conditions are expected elsewhere.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 75 °F at 3:09 PM

Low Temp: 60 °F at 10:36 PM

Wind: 32 mph at 12:41 PM

Precip: : Total 4-day rain: 2.12  
(.68 yesterday, +10 overnight)

## Today's Info

Record High: 106 in 1936

Record Low: 41 in 2017

Average High: 83

Average Low: 58

Average Precip in June.: 3.10

Precip to date in June.: 2.63

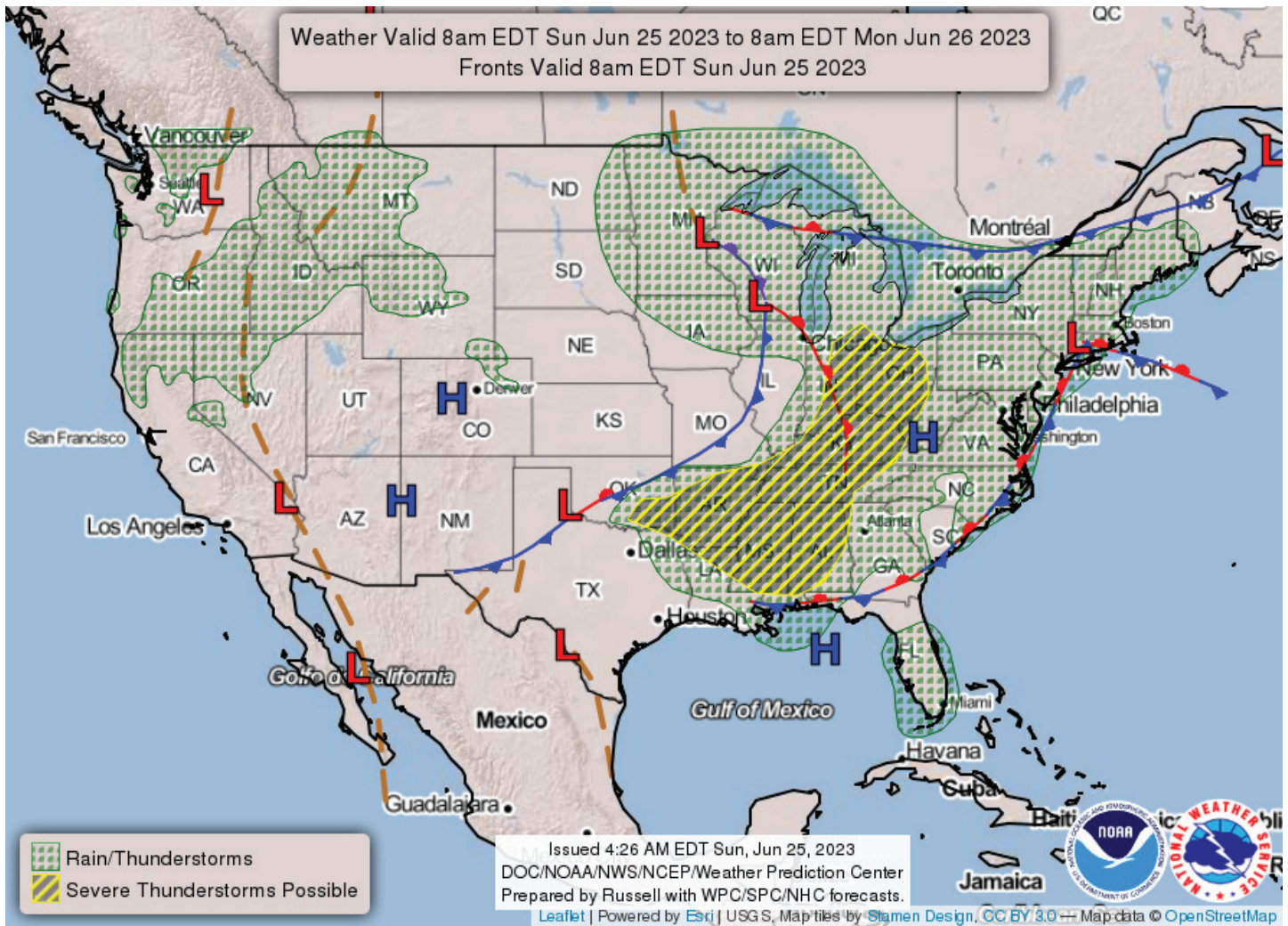
Average Precip to date: 10.35

Precip Year to Date: 10.54

Sunset Tonight: 9:26:53 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:43:39 AM

Day length: 15 hours, 43 minutes





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## Today in Weather History

June 25, 1914: An estimated F2 tornado moved east from 6 miles southeast of Isabel in Dewey County. Three small homes and two barns were destroyed. Twelve tons of hay was said to have vanished.

June 25, 1969: On the northeast side of Groton, an F2 to near F3 tornado destroyed a large grain elevator and uprooted huge trees. Four people were hospitalized. Estimated property damage was a quarter million dollars. Also, locally heavy rains caused flash flooding in Sully and Hughes Counties. A bridge near Harrold was washed out. Some rainfall amounts include; 5.34 inches at 23N of Highmore; 4.24 at 2N of Onaka; 4.14 at 12SSW of Harrold; 3.90 at 1NW of Faulkton; and 3.73 inches at Ipswich. Unofficial reports of 6 inches fell in and around Harrold.

1749 - A general fast was called on account of drought in Massachusetts. It was the year of the famous dry spring in which fields and villages burned. (David Ludlum)

1925 - The mercury hit 101 degrees at Portland, OR, their earliest 100 degree reading of record. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders)

1957: Hurricane Audrey moved northward, slowly strengthening until the 26th. At that time, a strong upper-level trough led to its acceleration and the hurricane deepened rapidly on its final approach to the Texas/Louisiana border. Audrey became the strongest hurricane on record for June upon landfall, as it reached category four strength. Its acceleration was unanticipated, and despite hurricane warnings in place, 418 people perished in the storm, mainly across southwest Louisiana.

1953 - The temperature at Anchorage soared to 86 degrees, their hottest reading of record. (The Weather Channel)

1967: Three, F3 tornadoes crossed the Netherlands on this day. The first tornado touched down at 4:17 PM in Oostmalle. This storm destroyed the church and the center of the village. More than half of the 900 homes in the community were damaged with 135 completely gone. The second tornado touched down near Ulicoten and tracked northward through woodlands area. This storm killed two people at a camping site near Chaam, Netherlands. The third tornado destroyed 50 houses in Tricht, killing five and injuring 32 others.

1987 - Afternoon highs of 97 degrees at Miami, FL, 107 degrees at Medford, OR, and 111 degrees at Redding CA were new records for the date. It was the third of six straight days of record heat for Miami. Thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 70 mph at Austin, and gusts to 75 mph at Tulsa OK. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Fifty-two cities in the central and eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Highs of 100 degrees at Erie, PA, and 104 degrees at Cleveland OH established all-time records for those two locations. Highs of 101 degrees at Flint, MI, 105 degrees at Chicago, IL, and 106 degrees at Fort Wayne, IN, equalled all-time records. Thunderstorms in Idaho produced wind gusts to 100 mph west of Bliss and north of Crouch, injuring 29 persons. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Tropical depression Allison, the remnants of what was earlier Cosme (a hurricane over the Pacific Ocean which dissipated as it crossed northern Mexico), began to spread heavy rain into southeast Texas and southwest Louisiana. (The National Weather Summary)

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Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### "DOING THE BEST I CAN"

Every now and then we meet someone who believes that they have been called to do something special - something that no one else can do. It makes their lives different, unique.

Charles Schultz created the world-famous comic strip, Peanuts. It grew from the pages of a newspaper to television specials and ultimately a movie. But success came slowly to him. When he was in art school, he barely earned a "C" in a course entitled "The Drawing of Children."

While serving in the armed forces, Schultz designed various cartoons on the letters his friends sent home to their loved ones. He wanted to help them make their letters special. After he returned to civilian life, he submitted a few of them to the Saturday Evening Post. At first, they were rejected, but he refused to give up. Eventually, they became the comic strip, Peanuts.

Once during an interview, he said, "I don't think I am a true artist. But I do think I am doing the best I can with whatever abilities I have been given."

Scripture promised us that "God has given gifts to each of you...manage them well...so His generosity can flow through you." All of us have been given unique gifts from God and He expects us to let them "flow through us" to honor Him, and bless and serve others.

Prayer: We thank You, Father, for the gifts You have given us to use to honor You and serve others. May we use them in ways that will please You and bless others. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. 1 Peter 4:10



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:  
06.23.23

13 62 65 67 69 14

MegaPlier: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$343,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.24.23

11 27 30 37 49 1

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$4,500,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.24.23

2 23 29 32 37 9

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 51 Mins 11 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.24.23

8 14 23 33 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$118,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.24.23

12 17 50 53 64 20

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

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.24.23

2 38 44 50 62 19

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$440,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### **Planned Parenthood to close some centers in Iowa while increasing services at others**

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Planned Parenthood plans to close three Iowa locations but provide more services at others in response to increasing demands for abortions, staff shortages and increasing costs.

The consolidation at Planned Parenthood North Central States, which provides abortions in Minnesota, Nebraska and Iowa, comes as states that provide abortions have seen a sharp increase in people coming from states that have prohibited or sharply restricted the procedure, The Des Moines Register reported.

Leaders of the organization say they've performed 9% more abortions since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade last summer.

"The shifting legal sands make it hard for patients to keep up, and that creates a chilling effect to accessing health care," said Ruth Richardson, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood North Central States. "This new landscape is unfair — but in all honesty, it's been unfair for quite some time for structurally marginalized communities."

Under the new plan in Iowa, some staff members will work at more than one location, which will prevent health centers from being routinely closed because of staff shortages, said Mazie Stilwell, spokesperson for the organization.

Abortion services will increase in Ames, Cedar Rapids, at the Susan Knapp Health Center in Des Moines, and in Omaha, Nebraska.

The Council Bluffs center will close sometime in the next year, with patients redirected to Omaha. The Rosenfield Health Center in south Des Moines will be phased out in favor of the Susan Knapp Health Center and the Ames location.

The Cedar Falls center, which has been closed because of staffing shortages, will permanently close.

"I must emphasize that, while the number of Planned Parenthood health centers will decrease, these changes will increase the number of patients that we can see," Stilwell said.

Abortion is currently legal in Iowa up to 20 weeks of pregnancy. On June 16, the Iowa Supreme Court declined to reinstate a law that would have banned abortions once cardiac activity can be detected, usually around six weeks of pregnancy and before many women know they are pregnant.

Iowa Republicans are widely expected to attempt to pass a new law during the next session to further restrict abortion.

### **Hollywood producer Arnon Milchan testifies at Netanyahu corruption trial over 'supply line' of gifts**

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Hollywood producer Arnon Milchan was testifying Sunday at Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's corruption trial to answer questions about an alleged "supply line" of champagne and cigars funneled to the Israeli leader and his wife said to have been in exchange for help with Milchan's personal and business needs.

Milchan, who appeared by videoconference from the English city of Brighton, near where he is based, is a key witness whose testimony is essential for prosecutors who are trying to prove that Netanyahu committed fraud and breach of trust in one of three cases brought against him.

Prosecutors hope Milchan's testimony, which extends through this week and next, will paint a picture of plush favors granted to Netanyahu and his wife that allegedly spurred the Israeli leader to use his position of power to advance Milchan's interests. The defense will try to lay out its case that Netanyahu wasn't acting in Milchan's personal interests and that the gifts were just friendly gestures.

Prosecution and defense lawyers are questioning Milchan in a hotel conference room in Brighton. While

no journalists are allowed to be present there, Netanyahu's wife Sara, on a private visit to Britain, will sit in.

Milchan's testimony, expected to last six hours a day, is being aired in a Jerusalem courtroom for judges and other lawyers — who can also ask questions of him — and for journalists and other attendees to watch.

Netanyahu, who has attended some of the hearings during his trial, arrived to the courtroom shortly after testimony began, flanked by his security detail and aides. Milchan, who is not charged in the case, greeted him in Hebrew using Netanyahu's nickname: "Shalom, Bibi!"

Israeli Channel 13 aired footage of Sara Netanyahu and Milchan, 78, walking separately up the stairs in the hotel. A screen was set up in the Jerusalem courtroom to air the testimony.

According to the indictment, Milchan, whose production credits include such hits as "Pretty Woman" and "12 Years a Slave," gave Netanyahu and his wife boxes of cigars and crates of champagne over a period of several years that, along with jewelry, amounted to a value of nearly \$200,000 — what the indictment describes as a "supply line" of lavish gifts.

The indictment accuses Netanyahu of using his influential perch to assist Milchan to secure a U.S. visa extension by drawing on his diplomatic contacts, among them former Secretary of State John Kerry. Prosecutors also accuse Netanyahu of working to push legislation that would have granted Milchan millions in tax breaks.

"Considering the many links between the defendant Netanyahu and Milchan, the defendant Netanyahu should have entirely avoided dealing with Milchan's affairs," the indictment says, adding that Netanyahu and Milchan, an Israeli citizen, have had ties since 1999.

Milchan is testifying in one of three cases being brought against Netanyahu. The other two, for which he is charged with bribery, fraud and breach of trust, accuse Netanyahu of exchanging regulatory favors with powerful media moguls for more positive coverage.

Netanyahu denies wrongdoing, claiming he is the victim of a witch hunt orchestrated by a liberal media and a biased justice system.

Netanyahu's legal woes have dogged him politically, putting his fitness to rule while on trial at the center of a political crisis that sent Israelis to the polls for five times in under four years.

They also have fueled accusations by critics that Netanyahu is pushing a contentious government plan to overhaul Israel's judiciary as a way to escape the charges. Netanyahu denies those charges.

The trial, which began in 2020 and has still not heard from Netanyahu himself, has featured more than 40 prosecution witnesses, including some of Netanyahu's closest former confidants who turned against the premier.

Witness accounts have shed light not only on the three cases but also revealed sensational details about Netanyahu's character and his family's reputation for living off the largesse of taxpayers and wealthy supporters. Milchan's aide, Hadas Klein, testified last year that the family "loves gifts."

The idea of a plea bargain has repeatedly surfaced, but prosecutors for now appear determined to see through the trial, despite reports last week that the judges warned them that the more serious crime of bribery will be hard to prove.

## **Russian mercenary leader's exile ends revolt but leaves questions about Putin's power**

By The Associated Press undefined

The greatest challenge to Russian President Vladimir Putin in his more than two decades in power fizzled out after the rebellious mercenary commander who ordered his troops to march on Moscow abruptly reached a deal with the Kremlin to go into exile and sounded the retreat.

The brief revolt, though, exposed vulnerabilities among Russian government forces, with Wagner Group soldiers under the command of Yevgeny Prigozhin able to move unimpeded into the Russian city of Rostov-on-Don and advance hundreds of kilometers (miles) toward Moscow. The Russian military scrambled to defend Russia's capital.

Under the deal announced Saturday by Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, Prigozhin will go to neighbor-

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ing Belarus, which has supported Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Charges against him of mounting an armed rebellion will be dropped.

The government also said it would not prosecute Wagner fighters who took part, while those who did not join in were to be offered contracts by the Defense Ministry. Prigozhin ordered his troops, many of whom had been fighting alongside Russian regular soldiers in Ukraine, back to their field camps.

By Sunday morning there were still no reports of Prigozhin arriving in Belarus. Many other questions remained unanswered, including whether Prigozhin would be joined in exile by any of Wagner's troops and what role, if any, he might have there.

Prigozhin, who sent out a series of audio and video updates during his revolt, has gone silent since the Kremlin announced that the deal had been brokered for him to end his march and leave Russia.

Video taken by The Associated Press in Rostov-on-Don showed people cheering Wagner troops as they departed. Some ran to shake hands with Prigozhin, who was riding in an SUV. The regional governor later said that all of the troops had left the city.

Putin had vowed earlier to punish those behind the armed uprising led by his onetime protege. In a televised speech to the nation, he called the rebellion a "betrayal" and "treason."

In allowing Prigozhin and his forces to go free, Peskov said, Putin's "highest goal" was "to avoid bloodshed and internal confrontation with unpredictable results."

The risk for Putin is whether he will be seen as weak, analysts said.

"Putin has been diminished for all time by this affair," former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine John Herbst said on CNN.

Early Saturday, Prigozhin's private army appeared to control the military headquarters in Rostov-on-Don, a city 660 miles (over 1,000 kilometers) south of Moscow, which runs Russian operations in Ukraine, Britain's Ministry of Defense said.

Moscow braced for the arrival of the Wagner forces by erecting checkpoints with armored vehicles and troops on the city's southern edge. About 3,000 Chechen soldiers were pulled from fighting in Ukraine and rushed there early Saturday, state television in Chechnya reported. Russian troops armed with machine guns put up checkpoints on Moscow's southern outskirts. Crews dug up sections of highways to slow the march.

Wagner troops advanced to just 200 kilometers (120 miles) from Moscow, according to Prigozhin. But after the deal was struck, Prigozhin announced that he had decided to retreat to avoid "shedding Russian blood."

A U.S.-based think tank argued that Prigozhin's rebellion "exposed severe weaknesses" in the Kremlin and the Ministry of Defense.

The Institute for the Study of War said that the Kremlin struggled to put up a coherent response to the rebellion, and that one reason was likely the impact of heavy Russian losses in Ukraine.

"Wagner likely could have reached the outskirts of Moscow if Prigozhin chose to order them to do so," the institute said.

On Sunday morning some restrictions were still in place along the main highway between Moscow and Rostov-on-Don though traffic restrictions were gradually being lifted in other places.

Prigozhin had demanded the ouster of Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, whom Prigozhin has long criticized in withering terms for his conduct of the 16-month-long war in Ukraine.

If Putin were to agree to Shoigu's ouster, it could be politically damaging for the president after he branded Prigozhin a backstabbing traitor.

The U.S. had intelligence that Prigozhin had been building up his forces near the border with Russia for some time. That conflicts with Prigozhin's claim that his rebellion was a response to an attack on his camps in Ukraine on Friday by the Russian military.

In announcing the rebellion, Prigozhin accused Russian forces of targeting the Wagner camps in Ukraine with rockets, helicopter gunships and artillery. He alleged that Gen. Valery Gerasimov, chief of the General Staff, ordered the attacks following a meeting with Shoigu in which they decided to destroy the military



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contractor.

The Defense Ministry denied attacking the camps.

Congressional leaders were briefed on the Wagner buildup earlier last week, a person familiar with the matter said. The person was not authorized to speak publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity. The U.S. intelligence briefing was first reported by CNN.

A possible motivation for Prigozhin's rebellion was the Russian Defense Ministry's demand, which Putin backed, that private companies sign contracts with it by July 1. Prigozhin had refused to do it.

"It may well be that he struck now because he saw that deadline as a danger to his control of his troops," Herbst wrote in an article for the Atlantic Council.

The Institute for the Study of War said the agreement that ended the crisis "will very likely eliminate Wagner Group as a Prigozhin-led independent actor in its current form, although elements of the organization may endure under existing and new capacities."

Russian media reported that several helicopters and a military communications plane were downed by Wagner troops. Russia's Defense Ministry has not commented.

Wagner troops and equipment also were in Lipetsk province, about 360 kilometers (225 miles) south of Moscow.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin declared Monday a non-working day for most residents as part of the heightened security, a measure that remained in effect even after the retreat.

Ukrainians hoped the Russian infighting would create opportunities for their army to take back territory seized by Russian forces.

"These events will have been of great comfort to the Ukrainian government and the military," said Ben Barry, senior fellow for land warfare at the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said late Saturday, shortly before Prigozhin announced his retreat, that the march exposed weakness in the Kremlin and "showed all Russian bandits, mercenaries, oligarchs" that it is easy to capture Russian cities "and, probably, arsenals."

The Kremlin's offer of amnesty to Prigozhin was negotiated by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, which might have raised his stature in his relationship with Putin.

The Institute for the Study of War wrote that the Belarusian leader's role was "humiliating to Putin and may have secured Lukashenko other benefits."

Wagner troops have played a crucial role in the Ukraine war, capturing the eastern city of Bakhmut, an area where the bloodiest and longest battles have taken place. But Prigozhin has increasingly criticized the military brass, accusing it of incompetence and of starving his troops of munitions.

The 62-year-old Prigozhin, a former convict, has longstanding ties to Putin and won lucrative Kremlin catering contracts that earned him the nickname "Putin's chef."

He and a dozen other Russian nationals were charged in the United States with operating a covert social media campaign aimed at fomenting discord ahead of Donald Trump's 2016 presidential election victory. Wagner has sent military contractors to Libya, Syria and several African countries, as well as Ukraine.

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Associated Press writers Danica Kirka in London, and Nomaan Merchant in Washington, contributed.

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

## Sao Paulo's downtown takes a turn for the worse, with wandering drug addicts harassing residents

By MAURICIO SAVARESE Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — The decline of the downtown area of Sao Paulo, Brazil has accelerated over the last year. Crack users seem to be everywhere, roaming the central streets of South America's biggest city. Shop owners worry about robberies and residents fret about muggings. And with a haphazard effort by the city to turn things around, it's no wonder that for the first time in years locals are moving out.

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Here are some of the people affected by the crisis:

## THE SHOP OWNERS

Balduino Alvares has worked for about three decades in Sao Paulo's city center. Recently, he has been forced to arrive at 6 a.m. — an hour earlier than before — so that he can clean the human waste from the curb outside his jewelry shop.

It is the worst hour of the 62-year-old's workday.

Alvares sprays a pressure washer, scatters powdered soap and sweeps intensely for about 20 minutes. He steps away to rest his tired back as the sickening result marinates. Then he returns with full energy for another 10 minutes. Those steps, he says, are key to washing away drug addicts' feces and urine and to removing the stench — until the next morning.

"Since last year it is like this. I hate this," Alvares told The Associated Press. "These people weren't here before. They used to stay in the same place a few blocks away. Now they wander around, they sleep anywhere and they do these things in the open."

Once limited to a few blocks around the Julio Prestes train station, the city's so-called "Crackland" has extended into surrounding neighborhoods, including the city's most popular district for electronics. Locals attribute that growth to a City Hall policy of having municipal police disperse addicts from places where they congregate. But there was seemingly no plan to cope with the aftermath, which included violent attacks on pedestrians plus ransacked stores and restaurants.

Several recent incidents, though not unprecedented, have made national news this year. In April, dozens of looters, some holding crack pipes, pillaged a drugstore. Earlier this month, a ride-share app driver had his car pelted with stones, and addicts swarmed him.

Daniel Bonfim, 58, had loved being a salesman in a vibrant area that for decades drew customers from all over Brazil. In 2018, he sold his apartment and his car to invest in a store of his own. Now he wonders how long he can stay.

"I can't work anymore. Everything I achieved I am losing over just one year," a tearful Bonfim said. "My entrance door is frequently taken by homeless people and drug addicts, day and night. I have to stand by the door all day long to wait for clients I have had for decades to come near. Now they don't come in; they ask me to go to them."

Locals say dozens of establishments — shops, restaurants and grocery stores — have closed since the beginning of the year.

## THE RESIDENTS

Italian language teacher Paulo Recife, 31, lives in an apartment close to one of Sao Paulo's key arteries. For the first time, he can hear addicts screaming in the morning and threatening those watching from their balconies.

"They have become crazier and crazier. One of them told me he was going to shoot me with his assault weapon if I didn't leave. I said, 'Bring it on.' I knew he didn't have anything, and he just started shouting at a wall," Recife said. "It is increasingly hard to live here."

Psychiatrist Flávio Falcone, a resident of downtown Sao Paulo who works with addicts, says things have gotten so much worse in the neighborhood partly because a former mayor dismantled a harm-reduction program aimed at helping addicts turn their lives around.

"It is not a nice place to be," Falcone said. "Of course my situation is different. I have contacts in the area, people know me. But others need to take extra care."

Once a week, Falcone dresses as a clown — a jocular means of approaching addicts. He is joined by a team that performs an act in Crackland every week. They invite addicts to sing karaoke, enter a competition for a \$10 prize or join the five-person jury. Participants are put in touch with health care professionals. Some eventually reduce their usage to levels that allow them to work or study, Falcone said.

## THE USERS

As Falcone's team rallied karaoke participants recently, one woman chewed her mattress and yelled at a wall. Many more ambled about distractedly, as if lost. Others joined in: jiggling, dancing and waving to

police officers parked nearby.

One addict giving grades to singers was Maria Creuza. Sitting in a beach chair and wearing a tank top that revealed scars from stab wounds, she awarded 10s to all candidates. Creuza and other users, who barely sleep at night in Crackland, dozed off between songs.

"Everyone here is great. They choose to leave the pack and come here to do something different. We can be nice people, too," Creuza told a couple dozen spectators, nearly all addicts like herself. "No one is happy to live out on the streets of Crackland, no one likes to depend on this thing."

Alessandra Bueno Barros sat on the curb and watched as hundreds of addicts like her walked away. She applauds initiatives to change the region's dynamics, but said the future looks bleak.

"There's no hope for anyone here, sir," Barros said.

During the act, one addict was stabbed in the shoulder by a rival, underscoring the challenge of helping addicts help themselves.

#### THE AUTHORITIES

Eduardo is a municipal policeman who has worked downtown the last two years. Speaking outside the nearby police station, he said he has felt the pressure of entering an area where addicts throw anything within their reach — rocks, pieces of wood, shards of glass — if officers get too close when seizing their drugs.

"The traffickers are mixed in with the addicts and they encourage the addicts to attack us many times," said Eduardo, who spoke on condition his last name not be published, for security reasons and because he wasn't authorized to talk with the press. "It is a risky place, even for police."

Crackland is expected to be one of the top issues in next year's mayoral race. Mayor Ricardo Nunes inherited the office when his predecessor died, and is seeking a second term despite low approval ratings in several polls.

Nunes' office declined multiple requests by AP to interview him or officials in charge of policy for areas occupied by addicts.

However, his City Hall has beefed up a program launched in 2019 called Redemption to address the problem.

Based on international experience, including the cities of Bogota and Zurich, it entails forcing addicts to circulate constantly and having workers approach addicts trying to persuade them to commit to treatment. It also calls for coordination among health care, social assistance and public security services.

Nunes' administration is also boosting security by installing cameras and assigning more officers.

## **A law that bans sex toys as obscene and morally harmful is being challenged by women in Zimbabwe**

By FARAI MUTSAKA Associated Press

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) — Sitabile Dewa was content with her sex life when she was married, but after her divorce, she found her prospects for erotic pleasure rather bleak.

In socially conservative Zimbabwe, divorced women and single mothers are often cast as undesirable partners for men, and in her frustration Dewa decided she wanted to use sex toys.

The problem is sex toys are against the law in Zimbabwe.

"I should not be deprived of self-exploration and indulgence in self-gratification," said Dewa, 35.

Part of Zimbabwe's "censorship and entertainments control" law makes the importation or possession of sex toys illegal as they are deemed "indecent" or "obscene" and harmful to public morals. Owning sex toys can put a woman in prison.

Dewa said the law is "archaic" and is challenging part of it in court on the basis that it is repressive and infringes on her freedom. She filed court papers in March suing the Zimbabwe government and seeking to have parts of the law repealed. The court is considering her case.

Her bold, open references to masturbation and women's sexuality are bound to make many Zimbabweans uncomfortable.

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But her crusade is significant, say women's rights campaigners, as part of a broader challenge to the nation's patriarchal outlook, where women's choices on a range of other issues that affect them and their bodies — including contraception, marriage and even what they wear — are scrutinized and often limited.

Dewa is a women's rights activist herself, and says she applied her own life experience in her stand against the ban on sex toys.

Proof that the law is actively enforced came last year when two women were arrested over sex toys.

One of them was running an online business selling sex aids to women and offering advice on their use. She spent two weeks in detention and was sentenced to six years in jail or 640 hours of unpaid community work.

The thing that appears to rile authorities the most on the sex toy issue is the sidelining of men, said Debra Mwase, a programs manager with Katswe Sistahood, a Zimbabwean group lobbying for women's rights. Sexually liberated women frighten the men who dominate Zimbabwe's political, social and cultural spaces, she said.

"Sex is not really seen as a thing for women," Mwase said. "Sex is for men to enjoy. For women, it is still framed as essential only for childbearing."

"Sex without a man becomes a threat," she added.

Dewa boils it down to this: "These laws would have been repealed a long time ago if the majority of users were men," she said.

Also significant is Zimbabwe's history. While untangling the effects colonialism might have had on women's rights in sub-Saharan Africa today, multiple studies have shown that African women were far more sexually expressive before European laws, culture and religion were imposed.

Prominent Ugandan academic Sylvia Ramale wrote in the introduction to a book she edited titled "African Sexualities" that pre-colonial African women were "relatively unrestrained" when it came to their sexuality. For one thing, they wore revealing clothing, Ramale said.

But colonialism and the foreign religion it carried with it "stressed the impurity and inherent sin associated with women's bodies," she said.

Mwase quips at what she sees as a great irony now in Zimbabwe, which has been independent and free of the oppression of white minority rule for 43 years and yet retains laws like the one that deals with sex toys, which is a carryover from colonial times.

"African societies still vigorously enforce values and laws long ditched by those who brought them here. It is in Europe where women now freely wear less clothing and are sexually liberal, just like we were doing more than a century ago," she said.

Dewa's campaign for access to sex toys falls into the bigger picture in Zimbabwe of women being "tired of oppression," and is clearly forward-thinking, she said. But there has recently been evidence of a throw-back to the past that might also be welcome.

Some parts of a pre-colonial southern African tradition known as "Chinamwari" are being revived, in which young women gather for sex education sessions overseen by older women from their families or community.

Advice on anything from foreplay to sexual positions to sexual and reproductive health is handed out, giving Chinamwari a risqué reputation but also the potential to empower young women.

In modern-day Zimbabwe, Chinamwari meetings are advertised on the internet. But they also now come with guarantees of secrecy, largely because of the prevailing attitudes toward sex and backlash from some men uncomfortable with the thought of women being too good at it.

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More Associated Press Africa news: <https://apnews.com/hub/africa>

## Greeks vote in second general election in 5 weeks and conservative party is favored to win majority

By ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

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ATHENS, Greece (AP) — Greeks headed to the polls for the second time in less than two months on Sunday, with the conservative party in power a strong favorite to win with a wide majority after a campaign focused on economic growth and security.

The vote is overshadowed by a major shipwreck just over a week ago that left hundreds of migrants dead or missing off the coast of western Greece. But the disaster is unlikely to significantly affect the overall outcome as Greeks are expected to focus on domestic economic issues.

Conservative leader Kyriakos Mitsotakis, 55, is eyeing a second term as prime minister after his New Democracy party won by a huge margin in May elections — but fell short of gaining enough parliamentary seats to form a government. With a new electoral law now favoring the winning party with bonus seats, he is hoping to form a strong majority in the 300-member parliament.

His main rival is Alexis Tsipras, 48, who leads the left-wing Syriza party and served as prime minister from 2015 to 2019 — some of the most turbulent years of Greece's nearly decade-long financial crisis.

Tsipras fared dismally in the May elections, coming a distant second, 20 percentage points behind New Democracy. He has since been trying to rally his voter base, a task complicated by splinter parties formed by some of his former associates.

Speaking after voting in a western Athens neighborhood, Tsipras seemed to accept his party would be in opposition for the next four years.

"This crucial election is not only determining who will govern the country, it is determining our lives for the next four years, it is determining the quality of our democracy," Tsipras said. "It is determining whether we will have an unchecked government or a strong opposition. This role can only be played by Syriza."

Sunday's vote comes after hundreds of migrants died and went missing in southern Greece when an overcrowded fishing trawler heading from Libya to Italy capsized and sank. The shipwreck drew criticism over how Greek authorities handled the rescue, as well as over the country's restrictive migration policy.

But the disaster, one of the worst in the Mediterranean in recent years, has done little to dent Mitsotakis' 20-point lead in opinion polls over Tsipras, with the economy at the forefront of most voters' concerns. As Greece gradually recovers from its brutal financial crisis, voters appear happy to return to power a prime minister who delivered economic growth and lowered unemployment.

"Our expectations are that the country will continue the path of development that it has had in recent years," said insurance company employee Konstantinos, who arrived early in the morning at a polling station in northern Athens with his newly-wed bride Marietta, still in her wedding dress, straight from their wedding reception. He asked that his surname not be used.

Another early morning voter, Sofia Oikonomopoulou, said she hoped the winning party on Sunday would have enough parliamentary seats to form a government "so that the country will not suffer any more."

"We hope for better days, for justice, a health system, education, that everything will go better and that the Greek truly will be able to live a better life through these elections," she said.

Mitsotakis, a Harvard graduate, comes from one of Greece's most prominent political families. His late father, Constantine Mitsotakis, served as prime minister in the 1990s, his sister served as foreign minister and his nephew is the current mayor of Athens. The younger Mitsotakis has vowed to rebrand Greece as a pro-business and fiscally responsible euro zone member.

The strategy, so far, has worked. New Democracy routed left-wing opponents in May, crucially winning Socialist strongholds on the island of Crete and lower-income areas surrounding Athens, some for the first time.

"We are voting so people can have a stable government for the next four years," Mitsotakis said after voting in northern Athens. "I am sure that Greeks will vote with maturity for their personal prosperity and the country's stability."

Trailing in opinion polls and on the back of his particularly poor showing in the May vote, Tsipras finds himself fighting for his political survival. His campaign in the runup to the previous elections was deemed by many as being too negative, focusing too heavily on scandals that hit the Mitsotakis government late in its term.

Despite the scandals, which included revelations of wiretapping targeting senior politicians and jour-

nalists, and a deadly Feb. 28 train crash that exposed poor safety measures, Tsipras failed to make any significant gains against Mitsotakis.

Whether the conservative leader will manage to form a government, and how strong it will be, could depend on how many parties make it past the 3% threshold to enter parliament. As many as nine parties have a realistic chance, ranging from ultra-religious groups to two left-wing splinter parties founded by top former members of the Syriza government.

In May elections, held under a proportional representation system, Mitsotakis' party fell five seats short, and he decided not to try to form a coalition government, preferring instead to take his chances with a second election.

Sunday's vote is being held under an electoral system that grants a bonus of between 25 and 50 seats to the winning party, depending on its performance, which makes it easier for a party to win more than the required 151 seats in the 300-member parliament to form a government.

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Associated Press journalists Theodora Tongas and Derek Gatopoulos contributed to this report.

## Freight train carrying hot asphalt, molten sulfur plunges into Yellowstone River as bridge fails

By MATTHEW BROWN and GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Mont. (AP) — A bridge that crosses the Yellowstone River in Montana collapsed early Saturday, plunging portions of a freight train carrying hazardous materials into the rushing water below.

The train cars were carrying hot asphalt and molten sulfur, Stillwater County Disaster and Emergency Services said. Officials shut down drinking water intakes downstream while they evaluated the danger after the 6 a.m. accident. An Associated Press reporter witnessed a yellow substance coming out of some of the tank cars.

David Stamey, the county's chief of emergency services, said there was no immediate danger for the crews working at the site, and the hazardous material was being diluted by the swollen river. There were three asphalt cars and four sulfur cars in the river.

The train crew was safe and no injuries were reported, Montana Rail Link spokesman Andy Garland said in a statement. The asphalt and sulfur both solidify quickly when exposed to cooler temperatures, he said.

Railroad crews were at the scene in Stillwater County, near the town of Columbus, about 40 miles (about 64 kilometers) west of Billings. The area is in a sparsely populated section of the Yellowstone River Valley, surrounded by ranch and farmland. The river there flows away from Yellowstone National Park, which is about 110 miles (177 kilometers) southwest.

"We are committed to addressing any potential impacts to the area as a result of this incident and working to understand the reasons behind the accident," Garland said.

The bridge collapse also took out a fiber-optic cable providing internet service to many customers in the state, the high-speed provider Global Net said.

"This is the major fiber route ... through Montana," a recording on the company's phone line said Saturday. "This is affecting all Global Net customers. Connectivity will either be down or extremely slow."

In neighboring Yellowstone County, officials said they instituted emergency measures at water treatment plants due to the "potential hazmat spill" and asked residents to conserve water.

The cause of the collapse is under investigation. The river was swollen with recent heavy rains, but it's unclear whether that was a factor.

The Yellowstone saw record flooding in 2022 that caused extensive damage to Yellowstone National Park and adjacent towns in Montana. Robert Bea, a retired engineering professor at the University of California Berkeley who has analyzed the causes of hundreds of major disasters, said repeated years of heavy river flows provided a clue to the possible cause.

"The high water flow translates to high forces acting directly on the pier and, importantly, on the river

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bottom," Bea said. "You can have erosion or scour that removes support from the foundation. High forces translate to a high likelihood of a structural or foundation failure that could act as a trigger to initiate the accident."

An old highway bridge that paralleled the railroad bridge — together, they were called the Twin Bridges — was removed in 2021 after the Montana Department of Transportation determined it was in imminent danger of falling. It wasn't immediately clear when the railroad bridge was constructed or when it was last inspected.

Bea said investigators would also want to look at whether there was wear or rust in bridge components as well as a record of maintenance, repair and inspections.

Federal Railroad Administration officials were at the scene working with local authorities.

"As part of our investigation, we have requested and will thoroughly review a copy of recent bridge inspection reports from the owner for compliance with federal Bridge Safety Standards," the agency said in a statement Saturday, noting that responsibility for inspections lies with bridge owners.

Kelly Hitchcock of the Columbus Water Users shut off the flow of river water into an irrigation ditch downstream from the collapsed bridge to prevent contents from the tank cars from reaching nearby farmland. The Stillwater County Sheriff's Office called the group Saturday morning to warn it about the collapse, Hitchcock said.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency notes that sulfur is a common element used as a fertilizer as well as an insecticide, fungicide and rodenticide.

Johnson reported from Seattle.

## **EXPLAINER: What is the Hajj pilgrimage and what does it mean for Muslims?**

By The Associated Press undefined

MECCA, Saudi Arabia (AP) — Over 2 million Muslims will take part in this week's Hajj pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia, as one of the world's largest religious gatherings returns to full capacity following years of coronavirus restrictions.

The Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam, and all Muslims are required to undertake it at least once in their lives if they are physically and financially able to do so. For the pilgrims, it is a profound spiritual experience that wipes away sins, brings them closer to God and highlights Muslim unity.

For the Saudi royal family, which captured Mecca in the 1920s, organizing the pilgrimage is a major source of pride and legitimacy. Authorities have invested billions of dollars in modern infrastructure, but the Hajj has occasionally been marred by tragedy, as in 2015, when over 2,400 pilgrims died in a stampede.

Here's a look at the pilgrimage, which begins on Monday, and its meaning.

**WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF THE HAJJ PILGRIMAGE IN ISLAM?**

The pilgrimage draws Muslims from around the world to Mecca, in Saudi Arabia, where they walk in the footsteps of the Prophet Muhammad and retrace the journey of Ibrahim and Ismail, or Abraham and Ishmael as they are known in the Christian and Jewish traditions.

As related in the Quran, Ibrahim is called upon to sacrifice his son Ismail as a test of faith, but God stays his hand at the last moment. Ibrahim and Ismail later are said to have built the Kaaba together. In the Christian and Jewish traditions, Abraham nearly sacrifices his other son, Isaac, on Mount Moriah, which is associated with a major holy site in Jerusalem.

The Kaaba was a center for polytheistic worship among pagan Arabs until the arrival of Islam in the 7th century, when the Prophet Muhammad consecrated the site and inaugurated the Hajj.

Muslims do not worship the Kaaba, a cube-shaped structure covered in a black, gold-embroidered cloth, but view it as their most sacred place and a powerful symbol of unity and monotheism. No matter where they are in the world, Muslims face toward the Kaaba during their daily prayers.

The Hajj has been held every year since the time of the prophet, even through wars, plagues and other

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turmoil.

In the Middle Ages, Muslim rulers organized massive caravans with armed escorts that would depart from Cairo, Damascus and other cities. It was an arduous journey through deserts where Bedouin tribes carried out raids and demanded tribute. A notorious Bedouin raid in 1757 wiped out an entire Hajj caravan, killing thousands of pilgrims.

In 2020, amid worldwide coronavirus lockdowns, Saudi Arabia limited the pilgrimage to a few thousand citizens and local residents. This is the first year it returns to full capacity.

## HOW DO MUSLIMS PREPARE FOR THE HAJJ?

Some pilgrims spend their whole lives saving up for the journey or wait years before getting a permit, which Saudi authorities distribute to countries based on a quota system. Travel agents offer packages catering to all income levels, and charities assist needy pilgrims.

Pilgrims begin by entering a state of spiritual purity known as "ihram." Women forgo make-up and perfume and cover their hair, while men change into seamless terrycloth robes. The garments cannot contain any stitching, a rule intended to promote unity among rich and poor.

Pilgrims are forbidden from cutting their hair, trimming their nails or engaging in sexual intercourse while in the state of ihram. They are not supposed to argue or fight, but the heat, crowds and difficulty of the journey inevitably test people's patience.

Many Muslims visit Medina, where the Prophet Muhammad is buried and where he built the first mosque, before heading to Mecca.

## WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE HAJJ?

The Hajj begins with Muslims circling the Kaaba in Mecca counter-clockwise seven times while reciting prayers. Then they walk between two hills in a reenactment of Hagar's search for water for her son, Ismail, a story that occurs in different forms in Muslim, Christian and Jewish traditions.

All of this takes place inside Mecca's Grand Mosque — the world's largest — which encompasses the Kaaba and the two hills.

The next day, pilgrims head to Mount Arafat, some 20 kilometers (12 miles) east of Mecca, where the Prophet Muhammad delivered his final sermon. Here, they stand in prayer throughout the day asking God for forgiveness of their sins in what many view as the spiritual high point of the pilgrimage.

Around sunset, pilgrims walk or take buses to an area called Muzdalifa, 9 kilometers (5.5 miles) west of Arafat. They pick up pebbles to use the next day in a symbolic stoning of the devil in the valley of Mina, where Muslims believe Ibrahim was tempted to ignore God's command to sacrifice his son. The pilgrims stay for several nights in Mina in one of the largest tent camps in the world.

The pilgrimage ends with a final circling of the Kaaba and further casting of stones at Mina. Men often shave their heads and women clip a lock of hair, signaling renewal. Many will assume the title of "hajj" or "hajja" — a great honor, particularly in more traditional communities. Some paint murals on their homes with images of airplanes, ships and the Kaaba to commemorate the journey.

The final days of Hajj coincide with Eid al-Adha, or the festival of sacrifice, a joyous occasion celebrated by Muslims around the world to commemorate Ibrahim's test of faith. During the three-day Eid, Muslims slaughter livestock and distribute the meat to the poor.

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Associated Press religion coverage receives support through the AP's collaboration with The Conversation US, with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

## **BET Awards return Sunday night, celebrating 50 years of hip-hop**

By MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The BET Awards return Sunday night, with a performance-filled show that promises to celebrate 50 years of hip-hop.

The show, which takes place at the Microsoft Theater in Los Angeles, will feature a tribute to hip-hop's most significant moments, as curated by Kid Capri. Patti LaBelle will also pay tribute to the late Tina Turner.



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of voluntary participation, states will soon need to make the programs mandatory.

"The impetus at this point is less about collecting revenue than about establishing these systems, working out the kinks, getting the public comfortable with it, expanding awareness around it," he said.

Electric car sales in the U.S. rose from just 0.1% of total car sales in 2011 to 4.6% in 2021, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. S&P Global Mobility forecasts they will make up 40% of the sales by 2030, while other projections are even rosier.

Patricia Hendren, executive director of the Eastern Transportation Coalition, said figuring out how to account for multistate trips is particularly important in the eastern U.S., where states are smaller and closer together than those in the West. Virginia's program, launched in 2022, is already the largest in the nation and will provide valuable lessons, she said.

Hendren's organization, a 17-state partnership that researches transportation safety and technology innovations, participated in one of the earliest pilot projects and eight others since. The biggest hurdle, she said, is to inform the public about the diminishing returns from the gas tax that has long paid for roads.

"This is about the relationship between the people who are using our roads and bridges and how we're paying for it," Hendren said. "We've been doing it one way for 100 years, and that way is not going to work anymore."

Eric Paul Dennis, a transportation analyst at the Citizens Research Council of Michigan, said the failure of states to convert years of research into even one fully functional, mandatory program by now raises questions about whether road usage charging can really work.

"There's no program design that I have seen that I think can be implemented at scale in a way that is publicly acceptable," he said. "That doesn't mean that a program can't be designed to do so, but I feel like if you can't even conceive of the program architecture that seems like something that would work, you probably shouldn't put too much faith in it."

Indeed, a chicken-and-egg dispute over how to proceed in Washington state has stymied road usage charging efforts there.

Lawmakers passed a bill last month that would have begun early steps toward a program by allowing collection of motorists' odometer readings on a voluntary basis. Democratic Gov. Jay Inslee vetoed the measure, though, arguing that Washington needs a program in place before starting to collect citizens' personal data.

States also must grapple with the social and environmental implications of their plans for replacing the gas tax, said Asha Weinstein Agrawal, director of the National Transportation Finance Center at San Jose State University's Mineta Transportation Institute.

The institute has conducted national surveys every year since 2010 and found growing support for mileage-based fees, special rates for low-income drivers and rates tied to how much pollution a vehicle generates, she said.

Weinstein Agrawal said public policy, and the way transportation is funded, often fails to reflect states' growing emphasis on curbing carbon emissions as a way to deal with climate change.

"To switch over to a system that makes it cheaper to drive a gas guzzler and more expensive to drive a Prius," she said, "seems both symbolically problematic and to be sending, in the most literal way, the wrong economic incentives to people."

Evan Burroughs said his 85-year-old father, Hank, who drives an electric car, avoids paying significant vehicle registration fees by participating in Oregon's program, while Burroughs himself has paid an extra dollar or two each month for his Subaru Outback.

"To me, that's worth it to be part of the experiment," he said, "and to know I'm paying my fair share for the roads."

**Party and protest mix as LGBTQ+ pride parades kick off from New York to San Francisco**

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By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Some of the world's biggest celebrations of LGBTQ+ pride are set to kick off Sunday, with thousands expected to march in New York, San Francisco and other North American cities in parades that will be part party, part protest.

Entertainers and activists, drag performers and transgender advocates are among the grand marshals in parades embracing a unity message this year, as new laws targeting the LGBTQ+ community take effect in several U.S. states.

The parades and marches are among a range of events the roughly 400 Pride organizations across the U.S. are holding this year, with many offering programs focused specifically on the rights of transgender people.

"The platform will be elevated, and we'll see communities across the country show their unity and solidarity through these events," said Ron deHarte, co-president for the U.S. Association of Prides.

Chicago, Minneapolis, Denver and Seattle are scheduled to hold their annual pride parades on Sunday. At the parade in Toronto, Canada, more than 100 groups are expected to march. In New York City, seven-time Grammy winner Christina Aguilera will headline a post-march concert in Brooklyn.

New York's march is held the last Sunday in June to commemorate the 1969 Stonewall uprising in New York City, where a police raid on a gay bar triggered days of protests.

Over the years, the annual observations have spread to other cities and grown to include bisexual, transgender and queer people, as well as other groups.

About a decade ago, when her 13-year-old child first wanted to be called a boy, Roz Gould Keith sought help but could find little to assist her family navigate their child's transition. They attended a Pride parade in the Detroit area but saw little transgender representation.

This year, she is heartened by the increased visibility of transgender people at marches and celebrations that have been held across the country this month.

"Ten years ago, when my son asked to go to Motor City Pride, there was nothing for the trans community," said Keith, the founder and executive director of Stand with Trans, a group formed to support and empower young transgender people and their families.

This year, she said, the event was "jam-packed" with representation of transgender people.

One of the grand marshals of New York City's parade this year is nonbinary activist AC Dumlao, chief of staff for Athlete Ally, a group that advocates on behalf of LGBTQ+ athletes.

"Uplifting the trans community has always been at the core of our events and programming," said Dan Dimant, a spokesperson for NYC Pride.

Many of this year's parades served as calls to action for LGBTQ+ communities to unite against dozens, if not hundreds, of legislative bills now under consideration in statehouses across the country.

Lawmakers in 20 states have moved to ban gender-affirming care for children and at least seven more are considering doing the same, adding increased urgency to coalesce around the transgender community, its advocates say.

"We are under threat. Prides are under threat," Pride event organizers in New York, San Francisco and San Diego said in a statement joined by about 50 other pride organizations nationwide. "The diverse dangers we are facing as an LGBTQ community and Pride organizers, while differing in nature and intensity, share a common trait: they seek to undermine our love, our identity, our freedom, our safety, and our lives."

Some parades, including the event in Chicago, are planning to beef up security amid the upheaval.

The Anti-Defamation League and GLAAD, a national LGBTQ+ organization, found 101 anti-LGBTQ+ incidents just in the first three weeks of this month, about twice as many as in the full month of June last year.

Sarah Moore, who analyzes extremism for the two civil rights groups, said many of the June incidents coincide with Pride events.

AP writers Geoff Mulvihill in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, and Susan Haigh in Hartford, Connecticut, contributed to this report.

## With record heat and drought-stricken woods, Spain's Catalonia faces perfect wildfire conditions

By JOSEPH WILSON Associated Press

SOLSONA, Spain (AP) — Surveying the hills covered with near bone-dry pines stretching to the Pyrenees in the distance, Asier Larrañaga has reason to be on guard.

This part of northeast Spain is, like large swaths of the Mediterranean country, braced for wildfires due to the lethal combination of a prolonged drought, record-high temperatures and increasingly dense woods unable to adapt to a fast-changing climate.

Larrañaga is one of the top fire analysts for the firefighters of Catalonia charged with safeguarding the region's homes and landscapes. While grateful that some desperately needed rain has finally fallen in recent weeks, he is ready for the worst — unless July and August buck Spain's historic trend of being the hottest and driest months of the year.

"If we have a normal summer ... and conditions of low humidity combined with high temperatures, then we will see fires that quickly expand beyond our extinction capacity. And for areas where it has not rained in May and this month, we could see these types of fires as early as next week," Larrañaga told The Associated Press in the rural town of Solsona, some two hours north of Barcelona.

Spain suffered the biggest losses from wildfires of any European Union country last year amid a record-hot 2022. Four people, including one firefighter, died in blazes that consumed 306,000 hectares. And with Spain sweltering under a record-hot spring, it is again leading the continent in 2023 with 66,000 hectares turned to ashes. Now firefighters like Larrañaga across Spain are preparing for a potential scorcher of a summer.

The fires coincide with Catalonia and a large part of Spain's south bearing the brunt of a drought that started last year and has only recently been somewhat alleviated by rain. The central reservoirs for Catalonia, which provide water for some six million people including Barcelona, are still only at 29% of capacity and water restrictions remain in place.

Climate change is playing a direct role in propagating these fires, experts agree. The increasing temperatures have made the plants that are used to more mild weather vulnerable to both plagues and fire. Spain, like the rest of the Mediterranean, is forecast to heat up faster than the global average. Spain saw fires that showed the virulence of a summer outbreak break out as early as March. Northern Europe is also battling blazes spurred by drought.

The 52-year-old Larrañaga is a member of Catalonia's GRAF, its elite wildfire fighting unit. Members of the Catalan firefighters are currently helping in Canada as part of a Spanish contingent sent to combat the massive fires that have sent smoke over the United States and as far as Europe.

Larrañaga was in Solsona to oversee a training session by the local fire brigade. Practice included simulating a last-resort protection maneuver used in cases when firefighters are trapped by the flames. They clear an area of vegetation and take refuge in their truck, which is equipped with sprinklers. The firefighters said that they hope it is a maneuver they will never have to use.

The Solsonès county, home to Solsona and its 9,000 residents, does not normally have large fires thanks to storms generated by the Pyrenees. But the downside is that its forests build up vegetation, or "fuel" for potential fires, that become vulnerable to a lightning strike, a spark from farm machinery, or arson. In 1998 a fire consumed 27,000 hectares in the country. Now Larrañaga is concerned that the landscape is primed to ignite again.

"The fires in these conditions can be very intense like the enormous ones we are seeing in Canada," he said. Larrañaga added that his worst-case scenario is "a situation where you have people, in a panic, trying to flee, who put themselves in danger because the access roads cross wooded areas," stirring up memories of a tragedy in neighboring Portugal when over 60 people perished in a fire disaster in 2017.

Catalonia's firefighters were tested last year by fires that erupted just when the official fire season started in mid-July.

That close call, fire chief David Borrell said, motivated their decision to increase the fire campaign to

four months from three and start it a month earlier. That means more manpower and more aircraft for a longer period of time.

Borrell said that this new generation of more powerful fires has led to two changes in how they are fought. First, it is no longer possible to just "attack" a fire, firefighters have to wait for it, and, if need be, sacrifice unfavorable terrain – whether due to its position related to the wind, access or vegetation – if it means keeping the firefighters from wearing themselves out or even risking their lives.

"The second change is how to deal with simultaneous fires without getting overwhelmed," Borrell told the AP at the Catalan firefighters' high-tech headquarters near Barcelona. "If you go all out against a fire, then you won't be able to handle a second one, and with a third fire you collapse. So to avoid that, we consider everything in one process. That is a potent strategy change we began last year. And for me it is a game changer."

The challenge, however, is still daunting with summer now here.

In addition to turning the terrain into a tinderbox, drought is complicating the firefighters' ability to work: some of Catalonia's reservoirs have been ruled unusable for water-dumping aircraft due to their lack of their low levels of water.

"If we hadn't had the rain we saw in May, we would now already be in a campaign of large fires," Jordi Pagès, a wildfire expert for the Pau Costa Foundation, a Barcelona-based nonprofit organization for fire awareness.

"But we still had a spring with below average rainfall, so we can expect an intense summer."

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## Russian mercenary group revolt against Moscow fizzles but exposes vulnerabilities

By The Associated Press undefined

The greatest challenge to Russian President Vladimir Putin in his more than two decades in power fizzled out after the rebellious mercenary commander who ordered his troops to march on Moscow abruptly reached a deal with the Kremlin to go into exile and sounded the retreat.

The brief revolt, though, exposed vulnerabilities among Russian government forces, with Wagner Group soldiers under the command of Yevgeny Prigozhin able to move unimpeded into the Russian city of Rostov-on-Don and advance hundreds of kilometers (miles) toward Moscow. The Russian military scrambled to defend Russia's capital.

Under the deal announced Saturday by Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, Prigozhin will go to neighboring Belarus, which has supported Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Charges against him of mounting an armed rebellion will be dropped.

The government also said it would not prosecute Wagner fighters who took part, while those who did not join in were to be offered contracts by the Defense Ministry. Prigozhin ordered his troops back to their field camps in Ukraine, where they have been fighting alongside Russian regular soldiers.

Putin had vowed earlier to punish those behind the armed uprising led by his onetime protege. In a televised speech to the nation, he called the rebellion a "betrayal" and "treason."

In allowing Prigozhin and his forces to go free, Peskov said, Putin's "highest goal" was "to avoid bloodshed and internal confrontation with unpredictable results."

Some observers said Putin's strongman image has taken a hit.

"Putin has been diminished for all time by this affair," former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine John Herbst said on CNN.

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Moscow had braced for the arrival of the Wagner forces by erecting checkpoints with armored vehicles and troops on the city's southern edge. About 3,000 Chechen soldiers were pulled from fighting in Ukraine and rushed there early Saturday, state television in Chechnya reported. Russian troops armed with machine guns put up checkpoints on Moscow's southern outskirts. Crews dug up sections of highways to slow the march.

Wagner troops advanced to just 200 kilometers (120 miles) from Moscow, according to Prigozhin. But after the deal was struck, Prigozhin announced that he had decided to retreat to avoid "shedding Russian blood."

Prigozhin had demanded the ouster of Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, whom Prigozhin has long criticized in withering terms for his conduct of the 16-month-long war in Ukraine. On Friday, he accused forces under Shoigu's command of attacking Wagner camps and killing "a huge number of our comrades."

If Putin were to agree to Shoigu's ouster, it could be politically damaging for the president after he branded Prigozhin a backstabbing traitor.

The U.S. had intelligence that Prigozhin had been building up his forces near the border with Russia for some time. That conflicts with Prigozhin's claim that his rebellion was a response to an attack on his camps in Ukraine on Friday by the Russian military.

In announcing the rebellion, Prigozhin accused Russian forces of attacking the Wagner camps in Ukraine with rockets, helicopter gunships and artillery. He alleged that Gen. Valery Gerasimov, chief of the General Staff, ordered the attacks following a meeting with Shoigu in which they decided to destroy the military contractor.

The Defense Ministry denied attacking the camps.

Congressional leaders were briefed on the Wagner buildup earlier last week, a person familiar with the matter said. The person was not authorized to speak publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity. The U.S. intelligence briefing was first reported by CNN.

Early Saturday, Prigozhin's private army appeared to control the military headquarters in Rostov-on-Don, a city 660 miles (over 1,000 kilometers) south of Moscow, which runs Russian operations in Ukraine, Britain's Ministry of Defense said.

Russian media reported that several helicopters and a military communications plane were downed by Wagner troops. Russia's Defense Ministry has not commented.

After the agreement de-escalated tensions, video from Rostov-on-Don posted on Russian messaging app channels showed people cheering Wagner troops as they departed. Prigozhin was riding in an SUV followed by a large truck, and people greeted him and some ran to shake his hand. The regional governor later said that all of the troops had left the city.

Wagner troops and equipment also were in Lipetsk province, about 360 kilometers (225 miles) south of Moscow.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin declared Monday a non-working day for most residents as part of the heightened security, a measure that remained in effect even after the retreat.

Ukrainians hoped the Russian infighting would create opportunities for their army to take back territory seized by Russian forces.

"These events will have been of great comfort to the Ukrainian government and the military," said Ben Barry, senior fellow for land warfare at the International Institute for Strategic Studies. He said that even with a deal, Putin's position has probably been weakened.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said late Saturday, shortly before Prigozhin announced his retreat, that the march exposed weakness in the Kremlin and "showed all Russian bandits, mercenaries, oligarchs" that it is easy to capture Russian cities "and, probably, arsenals."

Wagner troops have played a crucial role in the Ukraine war, capturing the eastern city of Bakhmut, an area where the bloodiest and longest battles have taken place. But Prigozhin has increasingly criticized the military brass, accusing it of incompetence and of starving his troops of munitions.

The 62-year-old Prigozhin, a former convict, has longstanding ties to Putin and won lucrative Kremlin catering contracts that earned him the nickname "Putin's chef."

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The show begins at 8 p.m. EDT and will be broadcast on BET, BET HER and numerous Paramount channels including Comedy Central, MTV, Nickelodeon and VH1. It was also livestream on BET.com

Drake leads the nominations, with seven: He's up for best male hip-hop artist and male R&B/pop artist, as well as a few shared titles, including best collaboration and viewer's choice with Future and Tems for their song "Wait for U." Drake is also nominated for album of the year and best group for his collaboration with 21 Savage, "Her Loss," and viewer's choice for their hit "Jimmy Cooks."

Lizzo and 21 Savage are tied for the second-most noms, with five each.

Busta Rhymes will take home the Lifetime Achievement Award — one of the highest honors at the ceremony, given to Sean "Diddy" Combs at last year's ceremony. The 12-time Grammy Award nominated rapper, producer, and pioneering hip-hop figure is widely regarded as one of the great MCs, with seven Top 10 Billboard Hot 100 hits to his name.

Bia, Coi Leray, Cutty Ranks, Dexta Daps, M.O.P., Rah Digga, ScarLip, Spice, Supercat, and Swizz Beatz are scheduled to pay tribute to Rhymes.

It's one of several moments that will honor the legacy of hip-hop, which BET has supported for decades through shows like "Rap City" and "106 & Park."

Other performers at the 2023 BET Awards include Chief Keef, DJ Unk, E-40, Fast Life Yungstaz & Easton (F.L.Y.), Fat Joe, Soulja Boy, The Sugarhill Gang, Tyga, Ying Yang Twins and Yo-Yo.

## As fuel taxes plummet, states weigh charging by the mile instead of the tank

By JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Evan Burroughs has spent eight years touting the virtues of an Oregon pilot program charging motorists by the distance their vehicle travels rather than the gas it guzzles, yet his own mother still hasn't bought in.

Margaret Burroughs, 85, said she has no intention of inserting a tracking device on her Nissan Murano to record the miles she drives to get groceries or attend needlepoint meetings. She figures it's far less hassle to just pay at the pump, as Americans have done for more than a century.

"It's probably a good thing, but on top of everybody else's stress today, it's just one more thing," she said of Oregon's first-in-the-nation initiative, which is run by the state transportation department where her son serves as a survey analyst.

Burroughs' reluctance exemplifies the myriad hurdles U.S. states face as they experiment with road usage charging programs aimed at one day replacing motor fuel taxes, which are generating less each year, in part due to fuel efficiency and the rise of electric cars.

The federal government is about to pilot its own such program, funded by \$125 million from the infrastructure measure President Biden signed in November 2021.

So far, only three states — Oregon, Utah and Virginia — are generating revenue from road usage charges, despite the looming threat of an ever-widening gap between states' gas tax proceeds and their transportation budgets. Hawaii will soon become the fourth. Without action, the gap could reach \$67 billion by 2050 due to fuel efficiency alone, Boston-based CDM Smith estimates.

Many states have implemented stopgap measures, such as imposing additional taxes or registration fees on electric vehicles and, more recently, adding per-kilowatt-hour taxes to electricity accessed at public charging stations.

Last year, Colorado began adding a 27-cent tax to home deliveries from Amazon and other online retailers to help fund transportation projects. Some states also are testing electronic tolling systems.

But road usage charges — also known as mileage-based user fees, distance-based fees or vehicle-miles-traveled taxes — are attracting the bulk of the academic attention, research dollars and legislative activity.

Doug Shinkle, transportation program director at the nonpartisan National Conference of State Legislatures, predicts that after some 20 years of anticipation, more than a decade of pilot projects and years

He and a dozen other Russian nationals were charged in the United States with operating a covert social media campaign aimed at fomenting discord ahead of Donald Trump's 2016 presidential election victory. Wagner has sent military contractors to Libya, Syria, several African countries and eventually Ukraine.

Associated Press writers Danica Kirka in London, and Nomaan Merchant in Washington, contributed.

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

## **Assistant Josh Eilert picked as interim coach at West Virginia, replacing Hall of Famer Bob Huggins**

By JOHN RABY AP Sports Writer

Assistant Josh Eilert has been selected as the interim coach at West Virginia, punctuating a hectic week after Bob Huggins resigned following a drunken driving arrest.

Eilert, who has no previous head coaching experience, emerged as athletic director Wren Baker's choice to shepherd the team through a challenging offseason stretch. Baker stayed in-house and chose not to hire a full-time coach given the limited options of conducting a nationwide search in June and the urgency of finding someone — anyone — with the start of practice only four months away.

"I spoke with knowledgeable basketball people around the country over the last week, including coaches, professional basketball executives and others of whom I trust to identify a strong group of candidates to speak with," Baker said in a statement announcing the move Saturday night. "Ultimately what I came to recognize, was that conducting this search in late June was difficult for many of our candidates and also it put our talented student-athletes at a real disadvantage. With that said, we will conduct our national search at the conclusion of the 2023-24 season."

Under NCAA rules, West Virginia's players have a 30-day window to enter the transfer portal, and several apparently have chosen to do so, although they have the option to return. Eilert could be the glue that keeps together an upper class-heavy roster built largely through transfers.

"Josh Eilert is the right person to lead our men's basketball program next season," Baker said. "He has been an important part of our success, and he has displayed great integrity, work ethic and dedication. He has been involved in all facets of our program during his time on the basketball staff, and he has earned this opportunity to coach our team on an interim basis for the 2023-24 season."

The 43-year-old Eilert first joined Huggins as a graduate assistant at Kansas State in 2006, then followed him to West Virginia in 2007. Eilert has had a variety of roles with the Mountaineers, including video coordinator and director of basketball operations, before being named an assistant coach in July 2022.

"I would like to thank Wren Baker, President Gee, Rob Alsop, Steve Uryasz and the rest of our administration for believing in me and giving me the opportunity to lead our storied Mountaineer basketball program," Eilert said. "I would also like to thank Coach Huggins for retaining me on his staff at K-State in 2006 and for bringing me to West Virginia in 2007. I've learned so much from Coach Huggins, and it was an honor to work for a Hall of Fame coach for the last 17 years."

Among others who were linked to the opening were UAB coach and former Huggins assistant Andy Kennedy, and former West Virginia and Michigan coach John Beilein.

Huggins had assembled arguably one of the better recruiting classes in the country from the portal for next season, including Syracuse center Jesse Edwards, Arizona guard Kerr Kriisa, Manhattan guards Jose Perez and Omar Silverio, and Montana State guard RaeQuan Battle.

Huggins' 16-year run as West Virginia's coach ended with his resignation on June 17. The day before, he was charged with driving under the influence in Pittsburgh. According to a criminal complaint, Huggins initially believed he was in Columbus, Ohio. A breath test determined Huggins' blood alcohol content was more than twice the legal limit. He has a preliminary hearing scheduled for Aug. 3 in Pittsburgh.

Huggins also pleaded no contest in 2004 to driving under the influence when he was the coach at Cincinnati. He was fired a year later amid a power struggle with the school's president as well as the aftermath

of the DUI arrest.

His resignation at West Virginia came a month after the university suspended him for three games for using an anti-gay slur while also denigrating Catholics during a radio interview.

The 69-year-old Huggins was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame last September.

AP college basketball: <https://apnews.com/hub/college-basketball> and <https://apnews.com/hub/ap-top-25-college-basketball-poll> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Top25](https://twitter.com/AP_Top25)

## Argentine dictatorship's 'death flight' plane returned home for a historical reckoning

By DANIEL POLITI Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — Flying from Florida to Buenos Aires usually takes about 10 hours, but the turboprop landing in Argentina on Saturday was no normal plane. It had been en route for 20 days, and many Argentines eagerly refreshed flight tracking software to keep tabs on its progress.

The Short SC.7 Skyvan carried no crucial cargo nor VIP passengers. Rather, the plane will be another means for Argentines to reckon with the brutal history of their country's 1976-1983 military dictatorship.

The plane, which was discovered in the U.S., is the first ever proven in a court to have been used by Argentina's junta to hurl political detainees to their deaths from the sky, one of the bloody period's most cold-blooded atrocities.

Argentina's government will add the plane to the Museum of Memory, which is in what was the junta's most infamous secret detention center. Known as the ESMA, it housed many of the detainees who were later tossed alive from the "death flights" into the ocean or river.

One of the victims linked to the returned plane was Azucena Villaflor, whose son Néstor disappeared and presumably was murdered early in the dictatorship. After he went missing, she founded the group Mothers of Plaza de Mayo to demand information about disappeared children, and then was herself detained and killed.

"For us, as family members, it's very important that the plane be part of history, because the bodies as well as the plane tell exactly what happened," Cecilia De Vincenti, Villaflor's daughter, told The Associated Press.

The plane's return was enabled by Italian photographer Giancarlo Ceraudo, who spent years seeking out "death flight" planes. This one had later delivered mail in Florida and more recently carried skydivers in Arizona.

Throughout his quest, Ceraudo said, countless people failed to understand why he remained steadfastly focused on finding the junta's aircraft, especially since the bodies of many of the dictatorship's victims are still undiscovered.

"The planes had to be recovered because they were an important piece, like the (Nazi) gas chambers, a terrible tool," Ceraudo said in an interview.

Argentina's junta is widely considered the most deadly of the military dictatorships that ruled much of Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s. It detained, tortured and killed people suspected of opposing the regime. Human rights groups estimate 30,000 were slain, many of whom disappeared without a trace.

Some of them vanished aboard the "death flights."

During an extensive 2012-2017 trial, survivors testified that the flights took place at least weekly. According to witnesses, prisoners often were told that they were being released and sometimes were forced to dance to loud music in celebration. Then they received a supposed vaccination that was in fact a strong sedative. As the drug took effect, they were hooded, bound and loaded aboard a plane.

The trial, at which 29 former officials were sentenced to life in prison, proved that the dictatorship used death flights as a systematic mode of extermination. It specified that the Skyvan just returned to Buenos Aires was used to kill Villaflor and 11 other detainees.



Prosecutors say it is impossible to know how many detainees in all were thrown from the planes. But at least 71 bodies of suspected death flight victims washed up along the coast — 44 in Argentina and 27 in neighboring Uruguay, according to the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team, a non-governmental group.

Between December 1977 and February 1978, the bodies of five women, including Villafior, two other members of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo and two French nuns who were helping mothers search for their loved ones washed up. They were buried without identification, and their bodies were not identified until 2005.

Ceraudo teamed up with Miriam Lewin, a journalist and ESMA survivor, in the search for the planes.

The pilots of the flight that carried Villafior to her death were convicted in part due to flight logs that Ceraudo and Lewin were able to find after tracking down the PA-51 Skyvan in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in 2010.

"The records led us to the pilots, and from those names, we were able to locate them within the repressive structures that operated in the service of the systematic extermination plan," said Mercedes Soiza Reilly, who was prosecutor in the 2012-2017 trial.

Through a painstaking search that included deep dives into websites in which plane spotter hobbyists kept track of aircraft, Ceraudo and Lewin were able to locate the planes.

Of the five Skyvan planes known to have been used in death flights, two had been destroyed in the 1982 war with Britain over the Falkland Islands. The three others were sold in 1994 to CAE Aviation, a Luxemburg-based firm. One of those planes was sold to GB Airlink, which used it to provide private mail services to the Bahamas from Florida.

This year, after Argentina's government decided to buy the plane after a campaign by De Vincenti and other human rights activists, it was located in a skydiving outfit in Phoenix.

"What an incredible story, right?" said De Vincenti. "Because they were thrown out without a parachute, and now they're using it for that, for parachuting."

Getting such an old plane back was not easy. It was stuck in Jamaica for two weeks after its engine broke shortly after takeoff from the island. It was also stuck for a few days in Bolivia due to inclement weather.

In seeking justice for the junta's victims, Argentina has held 296 trials relating to dictatorship-era crimes against humanity since 2006, after amnesty laws were struck down. In those, 1,115 people have been convicted, according to the Public Prosecutor's Office.

Putting the plane on display will help Argentines understand the reality of the dictatorship, activists say.

"It is very important, because there are generations upon generations who were born and lived in democracy and did not suffer the terror of those years," Lewin said.

## Guatemalans worry about security, unimpressed by leading candidates ahead of election

By CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN Associated Press

SAN JUAN COMALAPA, Guatemala (AP) — Just days away from electing a new president, many Guatemalans remain undecided, unimpressed by the leading candidates and even considering casting a protest vote to express their disapproval.

Concerns about extortion and violent crime cross class lines, and rural and urban communities, perhaps explaining why candidates leading the polls are promising heavy-handed security tactics, including reinstating the death penalty or hammering criminal gangs into submission.

The machinations of electoral authorities keeping some popular candidates out of the race and cancelling others drew headlines in the capital and expressions of concern abroad. But for the average Guatemalan the controversies surrounding the election are nowhere near as concerning as the rising cost of feeding their families and protecting their loved ones.

Ahead of Sunday's election, the AP interviewed Guatemalans in rural San Juan Comalapa about 50 miles (80 kilometers) northwest of the capital and in Chimaltenango, a chaotic city of 100,000, 30 miles (50

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kilometers) west of Guatemala City. These are some of their thoughts.

María Rosita Yoc Suruy is a 56-year-old homemaker from a hamlet called Cruz de Piedra, nestled in the mountains northwest of Guatemala City. On a recent day, she had taken a number of buses with her mother to a street market in larger San Juan Comalapa, a town of 30,000 inhabitants.

Both women wore the traditional huipils – brightly colored embroidered blouses – as they rested in front of the town's main church with their bags of purchases beside them.

Yoc Suruy, animated and chatty, said she planned to vote Sunday in the presidential race. Though she said she had not entirely decided, only one candidate's name came to mind: Zury Ríos Sosa, the candidate for the far-right Valor party and daughter of the late dictator José Efraín Ríos Montt.

Keeping her family safe is a priority for Yoc Suruy.

"We need a new president who will be tough on crime because there's a lot of kidnapping, crime, killings and they rob a lot of people," Yoc Suruy said. She recalled her eldest son who works in a pharmacy coming home upset recently because an organized crime group had demanded \$100 per week in extortion payments. She said her daughter was pickpocketed in a market.

Yoc Suruy wants the next president to implement the death penalty in Guatemala, something Ríos Sosa has pledged to do. Guatemala's highest court abolished the death penalty for civil crimes in 2017.

First grade teacher Ingrid Jhanet Simón Perén admits that with her 20-plus students to look after and a new baby at home she has not had enough time to learn much about all of the 22 candidates seeking Guatemala's presidency.

The 39-year-old San Juan Comalapa native is mostly concerned by ever-rising prices for basic foodstuffs, Guatemala's deep inequality and a lack of jobs that could dim the future prospects of her rural students.

"The country is supposedly developing, but the truth is that it's not like that," Simón Perén said. "There's a lot of crime, there's a lot of poverty and society is divided in different levels. It's always going to be that way if we, the people with limited resources, don't prepare ourselves to deeply understand our society, our economy and above all to study and know our country's history."

She did not always want to be a teacher. The youngest in her family, Simón Perén had wanted to be a secretary, but her older siblings warned her the job could be fleeting and suggested she either go into teaching or accounting.

Simón Perén mentioned two candidates for the presidency: Ríos Sosa and Sandra Torres, both of whom have sought the post before. She said a friend recently tried to convince her to support Torres, a former first lady who also has a conservative platform and an evangelical preacher for a running mate. The teacher said she was interested in Guatemala having its first female president, but needed to do more research before deciding her vote.

Her choice would be someone who seeks "the welfare (of all) and not the welfare of themselves."

Aníbal Simón is worried about his country's future. The soft-spoken 29-year-old call center worker cites a lack of investment in education, courses that haven't kept up with a rapidly changing world and young people who study but give in to the conformism promoted in schools.

"They don't investigate why we have the problems we have," Simón said. "It's like they're all indifferent to the situation. So I think we're to blame for being a poor country, for not being able to get ahead."

Simón does not consider himself to be very political. He's grateful for the remote call center job that allows him to work from rural San Juan Comalapa rather than making the arduous commute to the capital. He said he has been robbed and is unnerved by the level of crime.

He said he was still deciding between two candidates.

Bernardo Arévalo, candidate for the centrist Seed Movement, is the son of former President Juan José Arévalo Bermejo, Guatemala's first democratically elected president who served from 1945 to 1951, and was inspired by U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt's progressive New Deal. The other candidate is Giovanni Reyes, a university professor and Fulbright scholar running for president with the conservative BIEN party.

Simón said he believes the two men's proposals most closely track with Guatemala's reality. But at the end of the day, he says, "a president isn't Superman; he's not the only one who makes changes. The changes start with us."

In the central square of Chimaltenango, a bustling department capital west of Guatemala City, Herbert Gudiel Pemech Estrada waited with a camera slung across his chest. Beside him stood a toy horse and a selection of gaudy sombreros for children to wear astride the spotted steed.

The 30-year-old followed in his father's footsteps as a children's photographer. He remembers his dad bringing him along to work in the plaza since the age of 10.

With only a few days before voters go the polls, Pemech Estrada was leaning toward casting a null vote, essentially a protest vote.

Pemech Estrada wasn't impressed by any of the candidates leading the polls. He thinks the government party is also somehow manipulating the parties in this election and that real change will be unattainable through any of them.

As a father of three, he worries about his children's future and whether they will be able to find jobs and stay out of trouble.

But he said he was still wrestling with the decision.

"If you vote, you're contributing your grain of sand so that all of this stays the same," he said.

## Ford Explorer recall prompts Transportation Department investigation

By DAVID HAMILTON AP Business Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is investigating a Ford Motor Co. recall of more than a quarter-million Explorer SUVs in the U.S. after receiving complaints about repairs intended to prevent the vehicles from unexpectedly rolling away even while placed in park.

The problem, ascribed to fractures of a rear axle mounting bolt that could lead the drive shaft to disconnect, was addressed by a Ford software update designed to apply the electronic parking brake if the drive shaft failed, the agency said. But according to two complaints from vehicle owners, their SUVs behaved erratically following the repair.

In one of those cases, the Explorer would reportedly slam to a complete stop at speeds of up to 30 or 40 miles per hour. In the other, it would reportedly lurch into motion while the driver was attempting to disengage the electronic brake. No injuries were reported in these cases, although the first driver reported striking a utility pole when the Explorer started rolling downhill following an abrupt stop, seemingly because the drivetrain was disengaged.

The original recall covered certain 2020 through 2022 Explorers with 2.3-liter engines, as well as 3-liter and 3.3-liter hybrids, and the 3-liter ST. Also included were 2020 and 2021 Explorer Police hybrids and those with 3.3-liter gas engines. Both of the reported incidents involved 2021 Explorers.

A Ford representative said the company is working with the NHTSA on the matter.

## Want a climate-friendly flight? It's going to take a while and cost you more

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

When it comes to flying, going green may cost you more. And it's going to take a while for the strategy to take off.

Sustainability was a hot topic this week at the Paris Air Show, the world's largest event for the aviation industry, which faces increasing pressure to reduce the climate-changing greenhouse gases that aircraft spew.

Even the massive orders at the show got a emissions-reduction spin: Airlines and manufacturers said

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the new planes will be more fuel-efficient than the ones they replace.

But most of those planes will burn conventional, kerosene-based jet fuel. Startups are working feverishly on electric-powered aircraft, but they won't catch on as quickly as electric vehicles.

"It's a lot easier to pack a heavy battery into a vehicle if you don't have to lift it off the ground," said Gernot Wagner, a climate economist at Columbia University.

That means sustainable aviation fuel has become the industry's best hope to achieve its promise of net zero emissions by 2050. Aviation produces 2% to 3% of worldwide carbon emissions, but its share is expected to grow as travel increases and other industries become greener.

Sustainable fuel, however, accounts for just 0.1% of all jet fuel. Made from sources like used cooking oil and plant waste, SAF can be blended with conventional jet fuel but costs much more.

Suppliers are "going to be able to kind of set the price," Molly Wilkinson, an American Airlines vice president, said at the air show. "And we fear that at that point, that price eventually is going to trickle down to the passenger in some form of a ticket price."

With such a limited supply, critics say airlines are making overly ambitious promises and exaggerating how quickly they can ramp up the use of SAF. The industry even has skeptics: Nearly one-third of aviation sustainability officers in a GE Aerospace survey doubt the industry will hit its net zero goal by 2050.

Delta Air Lines is being sued in U.S. federal court by critics who say the carrier falsely bills itself as the world's first carbon-neutral airline, and that Delta's claim rests on carbon offsets that are largely bogus. The Atlanta-based airline says the charges are "without legal merit."

Across the Atlantic, a consumer group known by its French acronym, BEUC, filed a complaint this week with the European Union's executive arm, accusing 17 airlines of greenwashing.

The group says airlines are misleading consumers and violating rules on unfair commercial practices by encouraging customers to pay extra to help finance development of SAF and offset future carbon emissions created by flying.

In one case, the group's researchers found Air France charging up to 138 euros (\$150) for the green option.

"Sustainable aviation fuels, they are indeed the biggest technological potential to decarbonize the aviation sector, but the main problem ... is that they are not available," said Dimitri Vergne, a senior policy officer at BEUC.

"We know that before the end of the next decade — at least — they won't be available in massive quantities" and won't be the main source of fuel for planes, Vergne added.

Producers say SAF reduces greenhouse gas emissions by up to 80%, compared with regular jet fuel, over its life cycle.

Airlines have been talking about becoming greener for years. They were rattled by the rise of "flight shaming," a movement that encourages people to find less-polluting forms of transportation — or reduce travel altogether.

The issue gained urgency this year when European Union negotiators agreed on new rules requiring airlines to use more sustainable fuel starting in 2025 and rising sharply in later years.

The United States is pushing incentives instead of mandates.

A law signed last year by President Joe Biden will provide tax breaks for developing cleaner jet fuel, but one of the credits will expire in just two years. Wilkinson, the American Airlines executive, said that was too short to entice sustainable fuel producers and that the credit should be extended by 10 years or longer.

The International Air Transport Association, an airline trade group, estimates that SAF could contribute 65% of the emissions reductions needed for the industry to hit its 2050 net-zero goal.

But very few flights are powered by SAF because of the limited supply and infrastructure.

Just before the Paris Air Show opened, President Emmanuel Macron announced that France would contribute 200 million euros (\$218 million) toward a 1 billion euro (\$1.1 billion) plant to make SAF.

Many airlines have touted investments in SAF producers such as World Energy, which has a plant in Paramount, California, and Finland's Neste.

United Airlines plans to triple its use of SAF this year, to 10 million gallons — but it burned 3.6 billion gallons of fuel last year.

Some see sustainable fuel as a bridge to cleaner technologies, including larger electric planes or aircraft powered by hydrogen. But packing enough power to run a large electric plane would require a fantastic leap in battery technology.

Hydrogen must be chilled and stored somewhere — it couldn't be carried in the wings of today's planes, as jet fuel is.

"Hydrogen sounds like a good idea. The problem is the more you look into the details, the more you realize it's an engineering challenge but also an economics challenge," Richard Aboulafia of AeroDynamic Advisory, an aerospace consultancy, said at the Paris Air Show. "It's within the realm of possibility, (but) not for the next few decades."

This story has been corrected to note that Wagner is at Columbia University, not New York University. Koenig reported from Dallas. AP journalists Jade Le Deley and Tristan Werkmeister in Le Bourget, France, and Kelvin Chan in Toronto contributed.

## In 'No Hard Feelings,' Jennifer Lawrence relishes playing a 'messy and chaotic' character

By KRYSTA FAURIA Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — It's a beloved rom-com trope: an irresponsible, irreverent and seemingly irredeemable man falls in love with a woman, setting him on the path to finally get his act together.

But in "No Hard Feelings," which hits theaters Friday, director Gene Stupnitsky sought to subvert those gendered expectations, with Jennifer Lawrence instead playing his dirtbag protagonist.

"We always described her as someone who cuts corners, who is lazy, doesn't have great nutrition, likes to smoke pot and drink and doesn't take anything too seriously," he said of the character he and co-writer, John Phillips, created. "A guy doing it, that is well-trodden territory. It's not very interesting."

"No Hard Feelings" follows Lawrence's Maddie as she conspires with the parents of an awkward 19-year-old (Andrew Barth Feldman) to have sex with him before he leaves for college in exchange for a car. He's left in the dark about the scheme, leaving Maddie to try to seduce the shy brainiac more than a decade her junior.

Lawrence said the "messy and chaotic" character's appeal were one of the things that drew her to the film. "She was just so determined and there was no way to really stop her from achieving what she was going to achieve."

The film is based on an actual Craigslist post the producers stumbled upon years ago. In the film a similar message becomes the catalyst for Maddie — desperate to continue working as a Uber driver as a last-ditch effort to keep the house her late mother left her — to respond.

Stupnitsky said the post, in addition to being very funny, was ripe for exploring a host of timely topics.

"Helicopter parents are a real thing. And I think sex workers were in the news a lot. And just all these ideas were coming together, you know, class differences, all of it," Stupnitsky, an Emmy-nominated writer on "The Office" who directed 2019's "Good Boys" and co-wrote the R-rated Cameron Diaz comedy "Bad Teacher," said. "It's more just asking questions and bringing up these different ideas. I don't even know how I feel about everything, but I think my favorite comedies usually go someplace deeper."

Although not quite a romcom, the film employs many of the genre's cliches, including raunchy humor, awkward date scenarios and even some nudity, although not in the way audiences might expect.

"I didn't have any reservations," Lawrence said laughing when asked about her feelings toward nude scenes, something she was candidly reluctant about when her role in the 2018 thriller, "Red Sparrow" required it. "Once you do it, then that's done."

Flurries of surprise and anticipation for the Oscar winner's raunchy comedy debut abounded after the first "No Hard Feelings" trailer dropped, betraying a subtle assumption that perhaps this kind of movie

would be beneath her.

"I don't know," she said of why people might not expect her to do a comedy. "You go about it the same way. It wouldn't be funny if you were like, 'I'm gonna make a joke now.' You have to really believe what you're saying, so the process is the same."

Lawrence has long wanted to do a comedy and has received no shortage of scripts, but said she found none of them funny enough — that is until Stupnitsky handed her this one.

"I've known her socially over the years and I know how funny she is, and I know how much she loves comedy," Stupnitsky said. "She's done satire and comedy dramas, but a pure, straight up R-rated comedy, I just selfishly wanted her for myself."

## **Analysis: Donald Trump's war on truth confronts another test with voters**

By DAVID KLEPPER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The cherry tree folklore is too good to be true, but it's no lie that George Washington had a thing for the truth. "I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs, that honesty is the best policy," he wrote in his farewell address.

A few decades later, another future president's reputation for veracity earned him a well known nickname: Honest Abe Lincoln.

Then there's Donald Trump, who during his presidency faced questions about business dealings in Moscow. "I have nothing to do with Russia," he said in 2016. He switched stories when the facts of his decades-long effort to build a luxury tower there emerged. "Everybody" had always known about the project, according to Trump, who suggested only a sucker would drop such a proposal just because they wanted to serve their country as president.

"Why should I lose lots of opportunities?" Trump said.

America has had prevaricators in the Oval Office before, but never one who has been at war with the truth as regularly, on so many different subjects. As a candidate and as president, Trump demonstrated a keen ability to use broadcast and social media to amplify his distortions, and found remarkable success in convincing large chunks of the American public.

As Trump seeks a second term while fighting federal and state charges, the nation faces the prospect of another campaign riddled with falsehoods and misinformation, and the possibility that he could be returned to the White House by an electorate that either believes his falsehoods, or doesn't care.

"This is a test moment. We haven't been in a situation like this," said Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania. Jamieson said that before Trump, the assumption was that certain lies — lies that undermine faith in democracy or the courts, for instance — would be disqualifying for a person seeking public office. "If saying the election was rigged doesn't fall into that category, then what does?"

As a candidate, Trump made misinformation a major campaign tactic, routinely using falsehoods to demean his rivals, as he did when he bizarrely asserted that Ted Cruz's father may have played a role in the Kennedy assassination. Cruz is now an unapologetic Trump supporter.

As a president, Trump misled Americans about economic indicators, about a hurricane, about climate change and about his past actions and meetings with foreign leaders. While leading the nation through the pandemic he underplayed the severity of coronavirus while endorsing fake cures.

In today's fragmented information ecosystem, efforts by journalists to fact-check the president didn't always reach those who accepted his words as truth. That may be changing, according to one Republican strategist who said he thinks his party is waking up to Trump's alternative fact universe.

"To me, he's sort of a tragic 77-year-old individual who is totally out of touch with reality, sort of creates his own reality," said Craig Fuller, who served in the administrations of Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. Fuller said he believes the relatively large field of Republicans vying with Trump for the GOP endorsement is a sign that many voters want a more honest alternative, even as a large field also improves

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Trump's chances of winning.

"I think it's almost too dangerous to contemplate," Fuller said when asked to imagine a second Trump term.

A message seeking comment from Trump's campaign was not immediately returned on Friday.

During his presidency, Trump lied so often — in person, on TV, on Twitter — that tallies of his falsehoods quickly crested 100, then 1,000, then 10,000 and then 30,000. An entire wikipedia page was created dedicated to keeping track.

Elections and voting have long been the most frequent target of Trump's mistruths. He won the 2016 race but claimed that it was rigged anyway because he lost the popular vote. He declared the 2020 race rigged even before Election Day, and said before the vote that the only way he could lose the election was due to cheating. Proof was never offered, and after the election, Trump's claims were rejected by dozens of courts, including ones overseen by Trump-appointed judges.

It was Trump's lies about democracy, and about the integrity of elections and the courts, that worry experts on voting, politics and history the most.

"It's not the first step, it's the 100th step on the road to despotism," Jeffrey Engel, director of the Center for Presidential History at Southern Methodist University, said of Trump's attacks on judicial independence and law enforcement. "What's shocking to me is how open Trump is about it."

Conflicts between presidents, Congress and the courts are a fundamental part of American government, Engel said, and plenty of presidents have shaded the truth about failings personal and public. But none have openly defied another branch in the way that Trump has.

For months before the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol, Trump implored supporters with a steady stream of false claims about rigged elections, voting by mail and stuffed ballot boxes. He then did little to disperse the violent crowd that soon descended on the Capitol. The congressional investigation into the attack concluded that Trump engaged in a conspiracy to overturn the election.

To activists working to strengthen American democracy, the deadly riot showed what happens when lies are allowed to take the place of truth.

"On Jan. 6 we re-learned how fragile our democracy is," said Nathan Empsall, an Episcopal priest who leads Faithful America, a nonprofit religious organization that has criticized efforts to rewrite the history of Jan. 6. "If we don't remember that, if we forget what happened, we may not be able to hold the line next time."

While Trump didn't create the factors that led to our current era of polarization and misinformation, he did exploit those factors, said Julian E. Zelizer, a Princeton University historian and political scientist.

"I don't know if Donald Trump is the chicken or the egg but I know he's part of the scramble," Zelizer said. "He entered politics in an age of social media and growing issues of distrust and he catalyzed them. He poured gasoline on the smoldering flames, and the statements he makes apparently don't need to be tethered to reality because his believers like his version better."

When Trump was arraigned in April in New York on charges that he falsified business records to obscure hush money payments in an effort to influence the 2016 election, many of his online supporters openly compared the scandal-plagued thrice-married tycoon to Jesus Christ, who Christians believe rose from the dead following his crucifixion.

His vocal online supporters have stayed just as supportive following his federal indictment this month.

Trump may be emblematic of our current era of misinformation, but distrust and political polarization can't be ascribed to one individual and typically arise from deep societal fissures and economic pressures, according to Nealin Parker, executive director of Common Ground USA, a nonprofit that studies ways to bridge America's political divide.

"Often people are looking for a silver bullet: if only we didn't have this one political leader we'd be fine," Parker said. "But that's not how it works."

—

EDITOR'S NOTE — David Klepper has covered misinformation for The Associated Press since 2019.

## Previous passengers recall ill-fated Titan: 'I 100% knew this was going to happen'

By BEN FINLEY and HOLLY RAMER Associated Press

Talk to someone who rode on the Titan submersible, and they're likely to mention a technological glitch: the propulsion system failed or communications with people on the surface cut out. Maybe there were problems balancing weights on board.

They are also likely to mention Stockton Rush, the OceanGate Expeditions CEO who died on the fatal trip this week. He has been described by past passengers as both a meticulous planner and an overconfident pioneer.

In the wake of the Titan's fatal implosion near the Titanic shipwreck on Sunday, some people who embarked on the company's deep-sea expeditions described experiences that foreshadowed the tragedy and look back on their decision to dive as "a bit naive."

But others expressed confidence and said that they felt they were "in good hands" nearly 13,000 feet (3,962 meters) below the ocean's surface.

'LIKE PLAYING RUSSIAN ROULETTE'

"I 100% knew this was going to happen," said Brian Weed, a camera operator for the Discovery Channel's "Expedition Unknown" show, who has felt sick to his stomach since the sub's disappearance Sunday.

Weed went on a Titan test dive in May 2021 in Washington state's Puget Sound as it prepared for its first expeditions to the sunken Titanic. Weed and his colleagues were preparing to join OceanGate Expeditions to film the famous shipwreck later that summer.

They quickly encountered problems: The propulsion system stopped working. The computers failed to respond. Communications shut down.

Rush, the OceanGate CEO, tried rebooting and troubleshooting the vessel on its touch screens.

"You could tell that he was flustered and not really happy with the performance," Weed said. "But he was trying to make light of it, trying to make excuses."

They were barely 100 feet (30 meters) deep in calm water, which begged the question: "How is this thing going to go to 12,500 feet — and do we want to be on board?" Weed said.

Following the aborted trip, the production company hired a consultant with the U.S. Navy to vet the Titan.

He provided a mostly favorable report, but warned that there wasn't enough research on the Titan's carbon-fiber hull, Weed said. There also was an engineering concern that the hull would not maintain its effectiveness over the course of multiple dives.

Weed said Rush was a charismatic salesman who really believed in the submersible's technology — and was willing to put his life on the line for it.

"It was looking more and more like we weren't going to be the first guys down to film the Titanic — we were going to be maybe the 10th," Weed said of the possible Titan expedition. "I felt like every time (the vessel) goes down, it's going to get weaker and weaker. And that's a little bit like playing Russian roulette."

For work projects, Weed has swum with sharks, rappelled into remote caves and snowshoed through Siberia. But he and his colleagues pulled out of the dive to the Titanic.

"I didn't have a good feeling about it," he said. "It was a really hard choice to make."

'I ALWAYS FELT I WAS IN GOOD HANDS'

Mike Reiss, a writer for "The Simpsons" television show, said he had positive experiences on the dives he made with OceanGate, including to the Titanic wreck site.

"When my wife first came to me with this (idea), I said to her, 'Well, this sounds like a fun way to get killed,'" Reiss said. "I knew (the risks) going in there. I always felt I was in good hands."

Reiss said he went on three trips with OceanGate in waters near New York City — and that the company took safety seriously.

"Mostly it was just breathtaking how well it all went," Reiss said of his 2022 dive to the Titanic. "It's a 10-hour trip. And I went from sea level to two and a half miles down, and then back to sea level. And at



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no time did the pressure change in my ears. I didn't get the same feeling I get in the New York elevator. To me that's a remarkable achievement."

Reiss said he was in a "different state of mind" on the expedition because he was so engaged.

"You're never hungry. You're never thirsty. They have a bathroom on board. It has never been used," he said. "You just become a different kind of person. You even know you could die and it doesn't bother you."

Reiss said he did notice some issues with the Titan, although he wasn't sure everything was a glitch.

For instance, the communications didn't always work, like a cellphone losing service. The Titan's compass also started "acting frantically" when they got to the ocean floor near the sunken Titanic.

"I don't know if that's an equipment failure or because magnetism is different two and a half miles down," he said.

'THE FATAL FLAW IS WHAT HE WILL BE REMEMBERED FOR'

Arnie Weissmann, editor in chief of Travel Weekly, never rode in the Titan despite spending a week aboard its support ship in late May, waiting for the weather to clear. He briefly climbed into the submersible, but the dive was ultimately canceled.

Wind, fog and waves were the stated reasons, but Weissmann wondered whether the submersible's readiness was also a factor.

Over cigars one night, Rush told Weissmann that he got the carbon fiber for the Titan's hull at a big discount because it was past its shelf-life for use in airplanes, Weissmann said. But Rush reassured him it was safe.

"I really felt there were two Stockton Rushes," Weissman said. "There was the one who was a good team leader and efficient and getting the work done. And there was this cocky, self-assured, others be damned, 'I'm going to do it my way' sort of guy. And that's the one I saw when we went out the back of the boat and had our cigars."

But he also was a strong leader, said Weissmann, who recalled Rush leading lengthy planning meetings and urging anyone who was interested to read a book called "The Checklist Manifesto: How to Get Things Right" that he left in the ship's lounge. If a repair was complex, Weissmann said Rush would tell those assigned to it to pause for five minutes after completing it to make sure it was done correctly.

Looking back, Weissmann believes Rush had a fatal flaw: overconfidence in his engineering skills and the perception that he was a pioneer in an area that others weren't because they were sticking to the rules.

"But in the end, for sure, the fatal flaw is what he will be remembered for — even though he was a three-dimensional human being like everybody else," Weissmann said.

'I WAS A BIT NAIVE'

Arthur Loibl, a retired businessman and adventurer from Germany, was among OceanGate's first customers to dive to the sunken ocean liner.

"You have to be a little bit crazy to do this sort of thing," he said.

His submersible mates included Rush, French diver and Titanic expert Paul-Henri Nargeolet and two passengers from England.

"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," Loibl said. "You can't be claustrophobic."

During the 2.5-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 10.5 hours.

He described Rush as a tinkerer who tried to make do with what was available to carry out the dives, but in hindsight, he said, "it was a bit dubious."

"I was a bit naive, looking back now," Loibl said.

**Israeli military kills Palestinian gunman as settlers rampage through Palestinian town**

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By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — A Palestinian assailant opened fire at an Israeli military checkpoint in the West Bank on Saturday before being shot and killed, Israeli police said. Elsewhere in the occupied territory, settlers rampaged through a Palestinian village, hurling stones, spraying bullets and setting fire to homes, the latest in a series of settler attacks this week.

The Palestinian gunman approached Israeli troops stationed at the Qalandiya checkpoint outside Jerusalem early in the morning, pulled out an M16 rifle and opened fire, the Israeli police said.

Israeli security forces said they shot back, killing the suspected assailant. According to the Israeli rescue service, two security guards in their 20s were hospitalized with minor wounds — at least one from bullet fragments. There was no immediate word on the attacker's identity.

Later on Saturday, residents of the Palestinian village of Umm Safa said that some 50 Israeli settlers armed with rifles and flammable liquid stormed through the streets and tried to set fire to at least five homes with people inside. The Israeli military said it sent security forces to the scene and arrested an Israeli citizen.

Palestinian rescue teams said they evacuated small children who were suffocating and trapped inside a burning house.

Some settlers also opened fire at civilians and medics. A local station, Palestine TV, said settlers fired at Mohammed Radi, its correspondent covering the attacks, shattering his camera. The Palestinian Red Crescent said that one of its medics was wounded by gunfire.

Another two medics were wounded when settlers threw a large rock at an ambulance, which crashed through the windshield.

Israeli settlers also shot and killed a horse in the village, said resident Ibrahim Ebiat. "This is pure terror," he said. "People are scared and angry."

Young Palestinians threw rocks at Israeli security forces who opened fire and unleashed tear gas at them, witnesses said. The Israeli military said it was "working to disperse the friction." One soldier was wounded by a thrown stone, it said, denouncing the violence.

The head of the Israeli opposition, Yair Lapid, called on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to "condemn this disgrace and deal with it properly."

"Settler violence has crossed every line," he said.

Top Israeli security officials condemned the settler violence late Saturday.

"They constitute, in every way, nationalist terrorism, and we are obliged to fight them," Israel's military chief, police chief and the head of the Shin Bet internal security agency said in a joint statement. They said the army will divert security forces to prevent further rampages while the Shin Bet will carry out an increased number of arrests.

"We call on the leaders and educators in the communities to publicly denounce these acts of violence and to join the effort to fight against them," they said. Defense Minister Yoav Gallant issued a separate statement condemning the settler violence.

The events capped a bloody week in the West Bank that left 16 Palestinians and four Israelis dead.

An hourslong gun battle between Israeli security forces and Palestinian militants in the northern Jenin refugee camp killed seven Palestinians and wounded eight Israeli soldiers earlier this week. Two Palestinian gunmen then killed four Israeli civilians at a gas station before being shot and killed.

Then, a rare Israeli airstrike by a pilotless drone killed three Palestinian militants in a car. Israeli settler attacks in revenge for the deadly Palestinian shooting left one Palestinian dead, many wounded and a trail of destruction through Palestinian towns.

The settler violence has drawn international criticism, including from Israel's closest ally, the United States. In a conversation with his Israeli counterpart, White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan expressed "deep concern" over the settler violence, the White House said. "He reiterated the importance of holding accountable those responsible for such acts of violence."

On Saturday, Palestinian health officials also said that a 39-year-old man, Tariq Idris, died of wounds

sustained in confrontations with Israeli security forces in the northern city of Nablus the day before. The Israeli military had raided Nablus to arrest three suspected Palestinian militants and fired at residents who shot at them and threw Molotov cocktails, it said.

The spiraling violence has increased pressure on Netanyahu's far-right government, with its hard-liners calling for a broad military operation against Palestinian militants, as well as on the Palestinian Authority, which has come under criticism for failing to protect Palestinian civilians.

This year has been one of the deadliest for Palestinians in the West Bank in years. At least 137 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire in the West Bank and east Jerusalem so far in 2023, according to a tally by The Associated Press, nearly half of them affiliated with militant groups. As of Saturday, 24 people on the Israeli side have been killed in Palestinian attacks, most of them civilians.

Israel captured the West Bank, along with east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians seek those territories for a future independent state.

## **'Rage giving' prompted by the end of Roe has dropped off, abortion access groups say**

By THALIA BEATY and GLENN GAMBOA Associated Press

The "rage giving" did not last. Abortion access groups who received a windfall of donations following the Supreme Court's overturning of Roe v. Wade one year ago say those emergency grants have ended and individual and foundation giving has dropped off.

After the Dobbs decision, some major funders of abortion access also have ended or shifted funding from organizations working in states where abortion is now banned, said Naa Amisshah-Hammond, senior director of grantmaking with Groundswell Fund, which funds grassroots groups organizing for reproductive justice.

Women's health and foster care nonprofits, who expected increased demand in areas where access to abortion has been eliminated or restricted, say they also haven't seen increased support.

Holly Calvasina said her experience as director of development at the reproductive health clinic CHOICES in Memphis, Tennessee, might provide an explanation. Like many working in the reproductive rights sector, Calvasina said she tried to prepare for the increase in need, even before a draft of the Supreme Court decision was leaked in May last year. While some funders saw the writing on the wall and stepped up support, others wanted to wait and see.

"I think (that) really speaks to kind of a fundamental issue with philanthropy and responding to an emergent crisis," Calvasina said. "Philanthropy moves really slowly and human rights crises unfold quickly."

The rollercoaster of giving also showed up for CHOICES in the \$150,000 in donations to their annual spring appeal last year. That's up from \$2,000 in 2021. This year, the appeal raised \$40,000.

Organizations in states where abortion has been banned or limited have needed to pivot, said Marsha Jones, executive director of The Afiya Center, based in Dallas. Her organization used donations received after the Dobbs decision to expand its birthing center, but she said funders are less interested in supporting maternal health than they were in supporting advocacy and practical support for abortions. She argues, as she has for years, that supporting reproductive justice is more than supporting abortion access.

"It is literally people wanting to choose full bodily autonomy," she said of those choosing to carry a pregnancy to term and others who do not.

Data on last year's charitable giving to any sector is hard to come by. The pandemic has slowed the public release of donor reports to the IRS, though a delay of up to two years was typical even before COVID-19 hit.

Donations to human services and public society benefit organizations, sectors that could include abortion access nonprofits, both declined in 2022, while donations to health organizations increased 5%, which is actually a decline when adjusted for inflation, according to the Giving USA report released last week.

But a special layer of opacity exists around funding for abortion access. Many donors fund anonymously, sometimes requiring grantees not to publicly disclose the source.

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The largest historic funder, The Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation, eventually makes gifts public through tax filings, but the organization does not comment on support for abortion access and did not respond to questions about whether or how its funding strategy changed in response to the Dobbs decision.

Another large funder, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, said it is shifting or ending grants to organizations in most states where abortion is now illegal or significantly restricted. The foundation also allocated an additional \$14.1 million in funding last year in part to "shore up providers in safe haven states," and said it is considering funding maternal health, among other areas, in these states instead.

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation said it provides steady support to grantees in all states to fund abortion care where it remains legal or advocacy against bans.

In general, giving to organizations specifically serving women and girls represents less than 2% of all donations, according to a research project of the Women's Philanthropy Institute at Indiana University's Lilly Family School of Philanthropy.

Calvasina thinks anonymous funding, especially from the largest foundations, perpetuates inequality within the movement. Others in the sector said donors have many reasons for wanting to be anonymous, including to avoid being targeted by groups opposing abortion.

One measure of the potential amount of funding available to reproductive health organizations is the extent of gifts from donor-advised funds hosted by the Silicon Valley Community Foundation to Planned Parenthood affiliates across the country. Those donations exceeded \$98 million in 2022, according to data from Candid, a nonprofit that compiles information about charitable giving. The foundation declined to speak about the gifts, citing its policy not to comment on DAF grants.

Seeing a drop in giving after a major event is not that unusual, said Una Osili, associate dean for research and international programs at the Lilly Family School.

"If you think about the decision to give, whether it's to a natural disaster or crisis, people hear about it and they want to participate to make a difference," Osili said.

Danielle Gletow, founder and executive director at One Simple Wish, a nonprofit connecting donors with foster children who have specific requests, said people are seeking out groups like hers offering direct support. But she worries that abortion access restrictions may further strain the foster care system.

In Texas, where the state's child welfare program is so overwhelmed that children sometimes sleep in office buildings, foster care workers fear the state's strict laws on abortion may force women to have children for whom they cannot care, adding to the foster children population.

"I don't think it's possible to break anything worse when it's already broken, if I'm being honest," Gletow said. "This is a system that's incredibly broken."

Philanthropic support has surged to states such as New Mexico, which passed laws protecting access to abortion and shielding abortion providers while bordering Texas and Oklahoma, where abortion is now banned. A coalition of local groups publicly asked incoming funders and groups to coordinate with them as recently as February.

Charlene Bencomo, executive director of Bold Futures, a leader of the coalition, said they ask new providers to accept Medicaid, which can cover abortion in the state, and to offer reproductive health services outside of abortion care.

"We continue to look for a higher quality of care, a better quality of care for our folks in New Mexico and for those who need to come here to access care that they cannot in their home state," Bencomo said.

Amissah-Hammond, of the Groundswell Fund, said she's waiting to see if funders who responded with emergency or one-time grants last year will continue to fund abortion access over the long term. For funders concerned about legal liabilities, she suggested they offer general operating support, rather than project-based grants, and accept updates over the phone.

"We're learning a lot from our peer funders who have been funding in global contexts," she said. "Where work for reproductive rights, health and justice has been criminalized for a long time and where LGBTQ rights has been criminalized and work, frankly, for democracy has been criminalized."

Associated Press coverage of philanthropy and nonprofits receives support through the AP's collaboration with The Conversation US, with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. The AP is solely responsible for this content. For all of AP's philanthropy coverage, visit <https://apnews.com/hub/philanthropy>.

## **Packages from China are surging into the United States. Some say \$800 duty-free limit was a mistake**

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Conservatives anxious to counter America's leading economic adversary have set their sights on a top trade priority for labor unions and progressives: cracking down on the deluge of duty-free packages coming in from China.

The changing political dynamic could have major ramifications for e-commerce businesses and consumers importing products from China valued at less than \$800. It also could add to the growing tensions between the countries.

Under current U.S. law, most imports valued at less than \$800 enter duty-free into the United States as long as they are packaged and addressed to individual buyers. It's referred to as the de minimis rule. Efforts to lower the threshold amount or exclude certain countries altogether from duty-free treatment are set to become a major trade fight in this Congress.

"De minimis has become a proxy for all sorts of anxieties as it relates to China and other trade-related challenges," said John Drake, a vice president at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, who argues that the current U.S. law should be preserved.

The rule speeds the pace of commerce and lowers costs for consumers. It also allows U.S. Customs and Border Protection to focus its resources on the bigger-ticket items that generate more tariff revenue for the federal government.

The volume of products coming into the U.S. that benefit from the de minimis rule has soared in recent years. Congress raised the U.S. government's threshold for expedited, duty-free treatment from \$200 to \$800 in 2016.

The volume of such imports has since risen from about 220 million packages that year to 771 million in 2021 — with China accounting for about 60%, according to the government — and 685 million last year.

"I think everybody's got to kind of wrap their head around what kind of mistake this was," Robert Lighthizer, the former U.S. trade representative during the Trump administration, told a House panel last month. "Nobody dreamt this would ever happen. Now we have packages coming in, 2 million packages a day, almost all from China. We have no idea what's in them. We don't really know what the value is."

Lighthizer urged Congress to get rid of the de minimis rule altogether, or take it to a much lower amount, say \$50 or \$100. He said foreign companies are taking advantage of the "loophole" and "putting people out of work in stores, they're putting people out of work in manufacturing."

Last year, House Democrats pushed to prohibit Chinese-made goods from benefiting from the special treatment for lower-cost goods. That move was part of a larger measure that boosted investments in semiconductor manufacturing and research.

In the rush to get a bill passed before the 2022 elections, the Biden administration and Democratic leaders jettisoned provisions without bipartisan buy-in. The trade provision was opposed by important U.S. business groups and key Republican members of Congress, so it didn't make the final bill.

Fast forward just a few months and it's clear the political dynamic has shifted — and quickly.

In its first set of recommendations, a new House committee focused exclusively on China called for legislation that would reduce the threshold for duty-free shipments into the U.S. with a particular focus on "foreign adversaries, including the (People's Republic of China.)"

The Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party said that exploiting the \$800 threshold may be a major avenue through which Chinese companies selling directly to American consumers can circumvent U.S. law designed to prevent the sale of goods made with forced labor. The committee also said Customs and Border Protection "could not reasonably scrutinize" goods sent under the \$800 threshold for forced

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labor concerns because of the sheer amount of products coming in.

The committee is most concerned about retailers Temu and Shein, which ship directly to consumers in the U.S. In a report released Thursday, it said the two companies alone are likely responsible for more than 30% of all de minimis shipments entering the U.S. each day, or nearly 600,000 a day last year.

The committee also has competitiveness concerns. It points out that U.S. retailers such as Gap and H&M paid \$700 million and \$205 million in import duties, respectively, in 2022. In contrast, virtually all of the goods sold by Temu and Shein are shipped using the de minimis exception in which the importer pays no duty.

Committees with jurisdiction over trade are also signaling a new mindset. Last year, the top Republican on the House Ways and Means Committee, Texas Rep. Kevin Brady, since retired, warned against what he called "hasty changes in reasonable de minimis limits."

But the Republican now leading the House Ways and Means Committee, Rep. Jason Smith of Missouri, said he wants to "have a lot of conversations" about the \$800 threshold.

"Basically, when you're looking at \$800 or less, that's a free-trade agreement with anyone. And you're looking at millions of products that come in per day. We need to look at it," Smith said.

Meanwhile, the Senate has some bills on the issue, which were just introduced this month.

One, from Sens. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, and Marco Rubio, R-Fla., would prevent the expedited, tariff-free treatment of imports from certain countries, most notably China and Russia.

The other, from Sens. Bill Cassidy, R-La., and Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis., not only similarly targets China and Russia, but would affect other trade partners. It would do so by reducing the threshold for duty-free treatment to the amount that other nations use.

For example, if another country, say Belgium, which uses the European Union threshold of 150 euros, or about \$165 currently, then the U.S. would reciprocate and use that same amount when determining whether goods coming in from Belgium get duty-free and expedited treatment.

Cassidy said it was former President Donald Trump who "really reframed the argument" for Republicans when it comes to trade with China.

"He pointed out that, through a variety of mechanisms, they are taking jobs, not because they are out-competing us, but because they are subsidizing, because they using forced labor, that sort of thing," Cassidy said.

In early 2022, when Congress was considering putting the de minimis trade provision in the semiconductor bill, several business groups led by the Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers wrote congressional leaders urging them to keep it out. They said the changes would "impose sweeping costs on American businesses, workers and consumers, add new inflationary pressures on the U.S. economy, and exacerbate ongoing supply chain disruptions at U.S. ports."

Drake said that cutting back the threshold not only would represent a big tax increase for many U.S. small businesses, but many would have to hire a customs broker to process their shipments.

"There's a reason Congress raised the level back in 2016," Drake said. "They knew in addition to it being a competitive advantage for the U.S. business community, they also recognized that collecting duties on these low-value shipments, you know, really wasn't worth the trouble."

## Mix of bravado and access to guns contribute to mass shootings by teens in St. Louis, other cities

By MICHAEL TARM AP Legal Affairs Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — A 1 a.m. shooting at a party in downtown St. Louis kills one and injures nearly a dozen. Gunmen open fire during a fight near Florida's Hollywood Beach, injuring nine, including a 1-year-old. Bursts of gunfire at a Sweet 16 party in Dadeville, Alabama, kill four and wound more than 30.

What these and other recent mass shootings share in common is they all involve suspects in their teens, highlighting what can be a deadly mix of teenage bravado and impulsiveness with access to guns.

The days when many teens opted to fight out disagreements with fists seem quaint by comparison.

"I remember when I was a child and we had fights — somebody got a black eye or a broken nose and

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(they) lived to tell about it," St. Louis Mayor Tishaura Jones told reporters after Sunday's shooting.

Reaching for a gun is the default these days for some teens who are as quick to take offense as to pull a trigger, agreed Rodney Phillips, a 50-year-old former Chicago Black Disciples leader who works with gang members nationwide to tamp down festering beefs.

"Now, the first thing out of their mouths is, 'I'm gonna kill you.' It's the brazenness of (the shootings), the reckless abandon, doing it in public places," Phillips said. "It wasn't like that when I came up."

The aunt of 17-year-old Makao Moore, who died in the St. Louis shooting, said teens too often express anger with a gun.

"If we don't figure it out, it's going to continue to happen," Sharonda Moore told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

Among the solutions to reducing teen violence, Jones said, was to keep expanding programs offering young people activities in safe spaces, including movie and music nights.

More firearms, and even more powerful firearms, have enabled teens, or anyone wielding a gun, to maim and kill more people in single incidents.

A handgun fired at the April Sweet 16 party — in a dance studio crammed with up to 60 people — had been altered to shoot more rapidly, Alabama Special Agent Jess Thornton told a court hearing.

"Witnesses said it sounded like a machine gun," the investigator said. Afterward, 89 bullet casings littered the scene and there was "blood everywhere."

Bullets riddled walls and shattered glass at the shooting in a fifth-floor office in St. Louis. Police released photos of two young men clutching apparent AK-style rifles. One detained suspect was 17.

In many cities, illegal guns are never too far out of reach.

In areas with high gang activity, some guns are stolen from homes, gun stores or trains. To lower the risk of being stopped by police while in possession of guns, gang members typically hide them nearby, tucking the weapons into walls and inside tire rims, he said.

Powerful firearms became more readily available starting in the 1980s, before which knives and low-caliber pistols were often the weapons of choice by teens who killed, said James Alan Fox, a professor of criminology, law and public policy at Northeastern University in Boston.

"With guns, teenagers tend to be trigger happy," he said. "They'll pull the trigger without fully thinking about the consequences."

According to FBI data, around 90% of homicides in 2019 by teens 15 to 17 involved firearms, up from around 60% in 1980. Fox, though, said the rise in homicides by teens hasn't correlated directly with the rising numbers of guns.

Just how many guns are around and available to teens is impossible to know. The Switzerland-based Small Arms Survey estimated in 2018 that there were some 390 million guns held by civilians in the U.S., more than those held by civilians in the other top 25 countries combined.

Mayor Jones said causes of the kind of violence that occurred Sunday are complex. Among the problems she highlighted was a trend of teenagers spilling into downtown St. Louis for late-night parties, with parents sometimes dropping them off.

"Downtown is not a 1 a.m. destination for your 15-year-old," she said. "It's not a place to drop children off unsupervised."

Investigators in St. Louis, Alabama and Florida didn't immediately suggest motives for the respective shootings. But indications are tensions rose suddenly in each.

Donna Rhone, whose son's face was grazed by a bullet in the St. Louis shooting, told KTVI-TV that partygoers had been well-behaved before the shooting.

"Then immediately, that's when everything shifted," Rhone said, citing her son. "It goes from being so lighthearted to pure terror."

When a music speaker fell with a bang at the Alabama party, one person lifted their shirt to display a gun, Thornton said. Shooting began after an announcement telling those with guns to leave. At least three shooting suspects were teens.

Pushing and shoving between two groups preceded the Memorial Day shooting in Florida, when mem-

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bers of one group pulled guns and fired at the other and at bystanders, an affidavit alleged. Among those charged: a 15-year-old, a 16-year-old and an 18-year-old.

For 2020, the first year of the pandemic, numbers of homicides by teens 12 to 17 jumped by nearly 40% compared to the previous year, from 974 to 1,336, according to FBI data. There was a total of around 18,000 homicides in the U.S. in 2020.

Homicides by teens 12 to 17 soared between 1984 and 1994, from 958 to a historic high of 2,800, according to the FBI. After falling to a low of 700 in 2013, numbers crept up, though they remain below mid-90s' numbers.

When teens kill, their victims are often young.

The St. Louis victims were between 15 and 19. Those killed in the Alabama shooting were 17, 18, 19 and 23, while most of more than two dozen others injured ranged in age from 14 to 19.

Homicide in 2019 was the third leading cause of death for those between ages 12 and 17, behind accidents and suicide, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Homicide is now the leading cause of death among African American youth.

Philips said social media is another factor driving teen violence. Feuds fanned in cyberspace with exchanges of insults can spill into the real world with exchanges of gunfire.

In the heat of the moment, peer pressure can contribute to a minor dispute spinning out of control. Fox said around a third of homicides by teens involve two or more people.

"Sometimes, no one individual wants to do the crime but everyone thinks everyone else wants to do it," he said. "No one wants to be ostracized by the group."

## Today in History: June 25, Anne Frank's diary published

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, June 25, the 176th day of 2023. There are 189 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 25, 1876, Lt. Col. George A. Custer and his 7th Cavalry were wiped out by Sioux and Cheyenne Indians in the Battle of the Little Bighorn in Montana.

On this date:

In 1938, the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 was enacted.

In 1942, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower was designated Commanding General of the European Theater of Operations during World War II. Some 1,000 British Royal Air Force bombers raided Bremen, Germany.

In 1947, "The Diary of a Young Girl," the personal journal of Anne Frank, a German-born Jewish girl hiding with her family from the Nazis in Amsterdam during World War II, was first published.

In 1950, war broke out in Korea as forces from the communist North invaded the South.

In 1962, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that recitation of a state-sponsored prayer in New York State public schools was unconstitutional.

In 1973, former White House Counsel John W. Dean began testifying before the Senate Watergate Committee, implicating top administration officials, including President Richard Nixon as well as himself, in the Watergate scandal and cover-up.

In 1990, the U.S. Supreme Court, in its first "right-to-die" decision, ruled that family members could be barred from ending the lives of persistently comatose relatives who had not made their wishes known conclusively.

In 1993, Kim Campbell was sworn in as Canada's 19th prime minister, the first woman to hold the post.

In 1996, a truck bomb killed 19 Americans and injured hundreds at a U.S. military housing complex in Saudi Arabia.

In 2009, death claimed Michael Jackson, the "King of Pop," in Los Angeles at age 50 and actor Farrah Fawcett in Santa Monica, California, at age 62.

In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld nationwide tax subsidies under President Barack Obama's health



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care overhaul in a 6-3 ruling that preserved health insurance for millions of Americans.

In 2016, Pope Francis visited Armenia, where he recognized the Ottoman-era slaughter of Armenians as a genocide, prompting a harsh rebuttal from Turkey.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama declared the debate over climate change and its causes obsolete as he announced at Georgetown University a wide-ranging plan to tackle pollution and prepare communities for global warming. Russian President Vladimir Putin confirmed the whereabouts of National Security Agency leaker Edward Snowden at a Moscow airport, but promptly rejected a U.S. plea to turn him over. Democratic Texas State Senator Wendy Davis began a one-woman filibuster to block a GOP-led effort to impose stringent new abortion restrictions across the nation's second-most populous state. (Republicans voted to end the filibuster minutes before midnight, sparking a chaotic scene with demonstrators who succeeded in forcing lawmakers to miss the deadline for passing the bill.)

Five years ago: Facing rising costs from new tariffs, Harley-Davidson announced that it would begin shifting the production of motorcycles sold in Europe from the U.S. to factories overseas; President Donald Trump accused the company of waving a "White Flag" in the tariff dispute between the U.S. and the European Union. Britain's Prince William arrived in Israel for the first-ever official visit there by a member of the British royal family, ending the monarchy's mostly hands-off approach to one of the world's most sensitive regions.

One year ago: Americans took part in protests, prayer vigils and reflection, a day after the Supreme Court overturned a woman's constitutional right to an abortion, as states began implementing their own bans and abortion supporters and foes mapped out their next moves. President Joe Biden signed the most sweeping gun violence bill in decades, an unlikely bipartisan compromise brought on by a recent series of mass shootings, including the massacre of 19 students and two teachers at a Texas elementary school. Houston Astros pitchers Cristian Javier, Héctor Neris and Ryan Pressly combined on the first no-hitter against the New York Yankees in 19 years in a 3-0 victory.

Today's Birthdays: Actor June Lockhart is 98. Civil rights activist James Meredith is 90. R&B singer Eddie Floyd is 86. Actor Barbara Montgomery is 84. Actor Mary Beth Peil (peel) is 83. Singer Carly Simon is 78. Actor-comedian Jimmie Walker is 76. Actor-director Michael Lembeck is 75. Rock singer Tim Finn is 71. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor is 69. Rock musician David Paich (Toto) is 69. Actor Michael Sabatino is 68. Actor-writer-director Ricky Gervais (jer-VAYZ') is 62. Actor John Benjamin Hickey is 60. Actor Erica Gimpel is 59. Basketball Hall of Famer Dikembe Mutombo (dih-KEHM'-bay moo-TAHM'-boh) is 57. Rapper-producer Richie Rich is 56. Actor Angela Kinsey is 52. Rock musician Mike Kroeger (KROO'-gur) (Nickelback) is 51. Rock musician Mario Calire is 49. Actor Linda Cardellini is 48. Actor Busy Philipps is 44. Jazz musician Joey Alexander is 20.