

Groton Daily Independent

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Groton Community Calendar

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)

Tuesday, June 27

Senior Menu: Chicken Alfredo, broccoli and cauliflower, peaches, whole wheat bread.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

Food Pantry open 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Groton Community Center

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Jr. Teener at Clark, 6 p.m. (2); Softball at Britton (U8 at 5:30, U10 at 6:00, U12 at 7:00); U12BB hosts Doland, 8 p.m. (1); U110 B/W hosts Doland, 7 p.m. (1); U8 Red hosts Doland, 6 p.m. (1); T-Ball Black hosts Doland, 5 p.m.

Wednesday, June 28

Senior Menu: Salisbury steak, mashed potatoes, carrots and peas, Mandarin oranges, pineapple, whole wheat bread.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Project/Game Night, 7 p.m.

Legion hosts Clark, 6 p.m. (1); Jr. Legion hosts Clark, 8 p.m. (1)

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

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

by **Newsweek**

JUNE 26, 2023

World in Brief

support a 15-week federal abortion ban a year after the Supreme Court overturned Roe. Read below for more on abortion battle plans for 2024.

Parts of central Indiana were hit by severe weather, including tornados that leveled buildings, massive hail that pummeled the area, and powerful winds that uprooted trees and downed power lines.

Beyoncé and Latto were the big winners at The BET Awards, which celebrated 50 years of hip-hop, honoring legends like Busta Rhymes. Migos rappers Quavo and Offset also reunited in a tribute to their late bandmate, Takeoff.

Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Greece's conservative New Democracy party leader, won a second term as prime minister in a landslide victory.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russian propagandist Vladimir Solovyov has lamented a "tragedy" for the nation's air force after at least seven aircraft were lost fighting the internal rebellion, one of the worst the military has endured since the invasion began.

TALKING POINTS

"Every time the radical left Democrats, Marxist, communists and fascists indict me, I consider it a great badge of courage. I'm being indicted for you... and I believe the 'you' is more than 200 million people that love our country," Donald Trump said to a cheering crowd at the Faith and Freedom Coalition: Road to Majority Conference in Washington, D.C.

"If you put this in context 16 months ago, Putin was on the doorstep of Kyiv in Ukraine, looking to take the city in a matter of days and erase the country from the map. Now, he's had to defend Moscow, Russia's capital, against a mercenary of his own making," Secretary of State Antony Blinken reportedly said about Wagner Group's leader Yevgeny Prigozhin's revolt against Russian President Vladimir Putin and the military.

"Is there not a world in which one can be supportive of the transgender community and curious about the fairness of Trans athletes in sport yet not be labeled a transphobe or a bigot as we ask questions? Do we yet know the answers? And do we even want to know the answers?" Lance Armstrong spoke out after he was criticized for his comments regarding the "fairness" of transgender people competing in sports.

WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAY AHEAD

President Joe Biden is expected to introduce a "major" infrastructure announcement at the White House. Members of his administration will then kick off a three-week leg of Biden's recurring Investing in America tour.

About 2 million Muslims began their annual Islamic pilgrimage to Hajj in the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. It's the first time since the pandemic that people around the world will gather in full capacity.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis is expected to introduce his policy plan for the U.S.-Mexico border during a presidential campaign event in Eagle Pass, Texas.

The "Swan Lake Suite" necklace and earring set worn by Princess Diana at a ballet in 1997 will be auctioned off by Guernsey's in New York City. Proceeds from the sale will go toward rebuilding Ukraine.

Human remains were found near Mount Baldy where actor Julian Sands disappeared during a hike in January, Southern California authorities said.

More than 800 flights have been canceled, and 7,000 others were delayed on Monday as severe thunderstorms batter the East Coast.

The U.S. Coast Guard will lead an investigation into the cause of the underwater implosion of the tourist submersible Titan that killed five people on board while diving to the Titanic wreck.

Former Vice President Mike Pence is encouraging his fellow GOP presidential candidates to

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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.

Groton Locke Electric Clinches Lead in Extra Innings for Victory Over Miller

Groton Locke Electric took the lead late in the game in a 9-6 victory over Outlaws on Sunday in Miller. The game was tied at six with Groton Locke Electric batting in the top of the tenth when Garret Knebel doubled on the first pitch of the at bat, scoring three runs.

Both pitching staffs had their hands full, frequently dealing with runners on base. Groton Locke Electric collected 14 hits and Outlaws had 16.

Groton Locke Electric opened up scoring in the first inning. Brian Hansen drew a walk, scoring one run.

Outlaws knotted the game up at six in the bottom of the ninth inning, when Rafael Clemente doubled on the first pitch of the at bat, scoring one run.

After Groton Locke Electric scored one run in the top of the third, Outlaws answered with one of their own. Groton Locke Electric scored when Johnny Celedonio singled on a 0-1 count, scoring one run. Outlaws then answered when Juan Martinez singled on a 1-1 count, scoring one run.

Alex Morris earned the victory on the mound for Groton Locke Electric. The pitcher allowed 15 hits and six runs over nine innings, striking out 11. Conner Thaler threw one inning in relief out of the bullpen. Thaler recorded the last three outs to earn the save for Groton Locke Electric.

Garrett Knox took the loss for Outlaws. The southpaw allowed 14 hits and nine runs over nine and a third innings, striking out 11.

Groton Locke Electric totaled 14 hits in the game. Celedonio, Nick Morris, Morris, Thaler, and Wyatt Locke each collected multiple hits for Groton Locke Electric. Celedonio led Groton Locke Electric with three hits in four at bats. Groton Locke Electric was sure-handed and didn't commit a single error. Celedonio made the most plays with 12.

Outlaws had 16 hits in the game. Martinez, Jay Winter, Clemente, and Peyton McDonnell each had multiple hits for Outlaws. Martinez went 4-for-5 at the plate to lead Outlaws in hits.

“Make the Change for Yourself. Prevent High Cholesterol”



Based on Science, Built on Trust



Marissia Schaefer, CNP

Many of us have likely been educated on how to be healthier, which includes the foods we should consume, and the exercise we should complete on a daily basis, so we can achieve being ‘healthy.’ This information is important to know, but have you ever been educated about the risks that your current diet and habits of daily living impose on your health?

An ‘unhealthy’ diet that is filled with excessive amounts of sugars, fast foods, fatty and processed foods, as well as alcohol can increase your risk of acquiring high cholesterol. Tobacco use or exposure to tobacco can also have a negative impact on your cholesterol, as well as a lack of physical exercise.

When your cholesterol is elevated to a certain level it can be known as hyperlipidemia, dyslipidemia, or hypercholesterolemia. Cholesterol is a fat found within your body. Though it is good to have this, too much of it can cause negative health effects.

Most people likely do not realize they have this until they are screened within a clinic setting with their primary care provider. Others may find out that they have this disease once a significant event occurs, such as a heart attack or stroke. These events in specific, can occur as a result of high cholesterol.

When your cholesterol is too high it can build up in your blood system and cause blockages making it hard for your blood to pass through, or even cause blood clots.

We commonly start screening for high cholesterol as young as the age of 9, and continue forward based on each individual’s risk.

For many people high cholesterol can be preventable, yet for some it is familial. To prevent high cholesterol, we recommend maintaining a healthy weight, daily physical exercise, avoiding tobacco, as well as a healthy diet.

For those that have been screened and are proven to have high cholesterol levels, we recommend the same lifestyle modifications mentioned above for initial treatment. Making these changes can be beneficial to many other disease states as well.

If these lifestyle modifications do not demonstrate benefit to your cholesterol level, there are medications that can be taken to help lower your risk of worsening condition and prevent poor health outcomes.

Get screened. Know your risk. Making these changes to your lifestyle now, can help prevent significant medical concerns later.

Marissia Schaefer, CNP Family Nurse Practitioner practicing in Arlington, SD at the Arlington Medical Center. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org and on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show based on science, built on trust for 21 seasons, streaming live on Facebook and SDPB most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.

Weekly Vikings Recap - Worst Moments in Metrodome History

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

Similar to the past few weeks, there has been no major news regarding the Minnesota Vikings. However, although not the most exciting topic, the Vikings did release their training camp schedule, which will hold 14 practices open to Vikings fans from July 29 - August 24. Fans will finally get to see what the offense will look like with newly acquired Jordan Addison and what the defense will look like with Brian Flores at the lead.

Because of the lack of news, we will continue our discussion of fun Vikings topics. This week we will discuss the worst Vikings moments in Metrodome History.

1998 NFC Championship Game (1998)

For the Minnesota Vikings, heartbreak is in the franchise's DNA. However, for all the heartbreaks this franchise has had, most of them did not occur inside the walls of the Metrodome. With that said, of all the heartbreaks in Vikings franchise history, the loss in the 1998 NFC Championship might be the worst of them all.

Coming into the 1998 NFC Championship, the Vikings were poised to win their first Super Bowl in franchise history. The team had a 15-1 record and had scored the most points ever by a team in a regular season. To make the loss even worse, the Vikings were huge 11-point favorites to beat the Atlanta Falcons in the game. In the Super Bowl era, there have been nine teams favored by 11 or more points in the conference championship game. Of those nine teams, the Vikings are the only ones to lose.

If you ask a Vikings fan about the 1998 NFC Championship game, the first player that will get brought up is Vikings' kicker Gary Anderson. Anderson, who had not missed a kick all season, had an opportunity to give the Vikings a 10-point lead late in the 4th quarter. However, as we all know, Anderson missed the kick, and the Falcons went down and scored to send the game to overtime, where they would upset the Vikings on a Morten Anderson field goal.

Of all the Vikings' 63 seasons, the 1998 Minnesota Vikings might be the best one. Sadly, they could not get the job done, and Vikings fans are still waiting for the purple and gold to hoist the Lombardi Trophy.

Tony Dorsett' 99-Yard Run (1982)

In the Vikings' first season in the Metrodome, the team hosted the Dallas Cowboys late in the season. With the Cowboys backed up on their one-yard line, the Cowboys decided to hand the ball off to their hall-of-fame running back, Tony Dorsett. Dorsett then did the rest as he took off and scored the longest rushing touchdown in NFL history. Thanks to Derrick Henry, who tied that rushing record in 2018 against the Jacksonville Jaguars, the Vikings now no longer have to be the only team to give up a 99-yard run in NFL history.

The Metrodome Roof Collapses (2010)

Many Vikings fans had high expectations for the team in 2010. The team had just come off a loss in the NFC Championship game the year prior and brought back nearly every starter from that team. However, the season quickly fell apart as the Vikings finished with a 6-10 record and fired their head coach, Brad Childress, midway through the season.

The most notable thing about that season was not the play on the field but the fact that the Metrodome roof collapsed during the middle of the night on December 12. The Vikings, who were fast asleep ready to play the New York Giants the next day, woke up to find out that just seven hours before kickoff, the blizzard outside had caused the Metrodome roof to completely collapse. With the game in question, the NFL acted quickly and sent the Vikings and Giants to Ford Field in Detroit to play the game the next day.

After 28 years of so many memorable Minnesota sports moments, December 12, 2010, was the day that the Vikings knew that this building did not have many years left. Less than 15 months later, the Vikings would announce the US Bank Stadium deal.

EARTHTALK ™

Dear EarthTalk: Can we mass produce heat pumps with the same effort as when the country retooled to make tanks for World War II?

-- Jan K., via email

Environmental advocates are bullish on heat pumps as a better choice for home heating than the traditional options. "Heat pumps use only about a third as much electricity as baseboard electric heaters and considerably less energy than gas or oil furnaces," reports Bob Schildgen in Sierra magazine. "You don't need gas or oil to operate a heat pump, as it relies only on electricity."



Environmentalists like heat pumps because they use a lot less energy than baseboard electric heat and oil or gas furnaces Credit: WFTU, FlickrCC.

Heat pumps were rare just a decade ago, but nowadays are now much more common. "The share of new homes using an air or ground source heat pump as the primary means of providing heat has increased, going from 23 percent in 2000 to 40 percent in 2021," reports the National Association of Home Builders. "Meanwhile, the share relying on a forced air systems has slipped, going from 71 to 58 percent in the same time frame." And in 2022, sales of heat pumps outpaced sales of gas furnaces for the first time ever.

While production is certainly ramping up on its own due to rising demand, the federal government could spearhead a more concerted effort to mandate a national switchover akin to retooling manufacturing for the WWII war effort. Of course, doing so would be no small task. During World War II, Americans mobilized their industrial capabilities to an unprecedented level, converting existing factories and building new ones to produce large numbers of tanks, planes and other military equipment. Similarly, to mass-produce heat pumps, it would require a substantial expansion of manufacturing capacity, including retooling existing factories or constructing new ones.

Another hurdle to overcome would be building up the supply chain. Heat pumps require various components and materials, including compressors, heat exchangers, motors and refrigerants. Ensuring a consistent and reliable supply of these components would be essential to meet production demands. Finding large numbers of skilled workers to be trained in the intricacies of producing heat pumps would be yet another challenge to ramping up production World War II-style.

Perhaps the largest impediment of all to ramping up heat pump production way above current rates is mustering the political will to bring federal and other subsidies to bear in funding the effort. Similar to wartime efforts, substantial government support and coordination would be essential to drive the mass production of heat pumps. This support would include financial incentives, regulatory measures and collaboration between government agencies, manufacturers and research institutions. Such an endeavor could contribute significantly to addressing climate change and transitioning to more sustainable energy systems.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Congressional Roundup: Johnson aims for national consistency in pesticide labeling

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JUNE 25, 2023 10:00 AM

U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, and Jim Costa, D-California, have introduced a bill that would prevent states such as California from putting their own labels on pesticides and herbicides.

In a news release, Johnson said "political agendas" in certain states, such as California, have driven labeling decisions that are unsupported by scientific evidence.

Johnson emphasized the need for labeling standards grounded in what he called sound science, rather than unfounded claims that may instill fear in consumers. The proposed legislation would establish a single national standard for pesticide labeling to avoid inconsistencies.

Several agricultural organizations expressed support for the bill, according to the news release, including the National Corn Growers Association and the American Soybean Association. The groups say an inconsistent patchwork of state or local labels could restrict growers' access to pesticides and herbicides.

Under current law, the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act governs the use, sale, and labeling of pesticides. States have the power to regulate the sale or use of pesticides, but they are prohibited from imposing their own labeling requirements that differ from the EPA, according to the press release. Despite the EPA's explicit authority, some states have implemented additional labeling requirements beyond the EPA-approved labels.

The press release from Johnson cites an example of California's application of a warning label to glyphosate, despite the EPA calling it safe.

Bipartisanship for Medicare recipients

Sen. John Thune, R-South Dakota, is leading a bipartisan group of lawmakers who want the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to expedite improvements to the delivery of care to seniors on Medicare.

The CMS proposal would:

- Make it easier for Medicare Advantage plan managers to use electronic approval instead of paperwork.
- Speed up decisions about whether a treatment or service is approved.
- Decrease paperwork and other tasks for health care providers and health plans.
- Share more information about what's needed for approval and why certain decisions are made.
- Add more safeguards for patients.

"We urge CMS to promptly finalize and implement these changes to increase transparency and improve the prior authorization process for patients, providers, and health plans," wrote the 61 senators and 233 members of the House of Representatives in a letter.

CCP shipping software, military spending

Rep. Johnson added a provision to the proposed 2024 military budget that prohibits a Chinese Communist Party-owned shipping platform from being used at U.S. ports.

The CCP software, LOGINK, is used at various ports around the world and provides extensive information about global shipping container flows.

"More than 90% of traded goods are carried through ocean shipping," Johnson said in a news release. "LOGINK provides massive amounts of monitoring, data, and logistics infrastructure to the CCP. It's imperative we keep LOGINK out of American ports. China already competes unfairly in the global shipping arena. Blocking their access to American port data is one small step to keep this advantage to a minimum."

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The broader bill to which Johnson's amendment is attached, the National Defense Authorization Act, awaits a vote on the House floor.

In March, President Joe Biden unveiled an \$842 billion military budget request for fiscal year 2024 — \$26 billion more than Congress appropriated in 2023, and nearly \$100 billion more than in 2022.

Sen. John Thune, R-South Dakota, delivered a speech on the Senate floor last week pushing for a higher military budget than Biden's proposal calls for, one with more funding for the B-21 bomber that will be housed at bases including Ellsworth Air Force Base near Rapid City.

"And I hope the markup will produce a strong bill that helps address the shortfalls in our readiness," Thune said.

Thune said countries such as China, Russia and Iran pose threats to the U.S. He also critiqued his Democratic colleagues, who he said prioritize other initiatives over national defense.

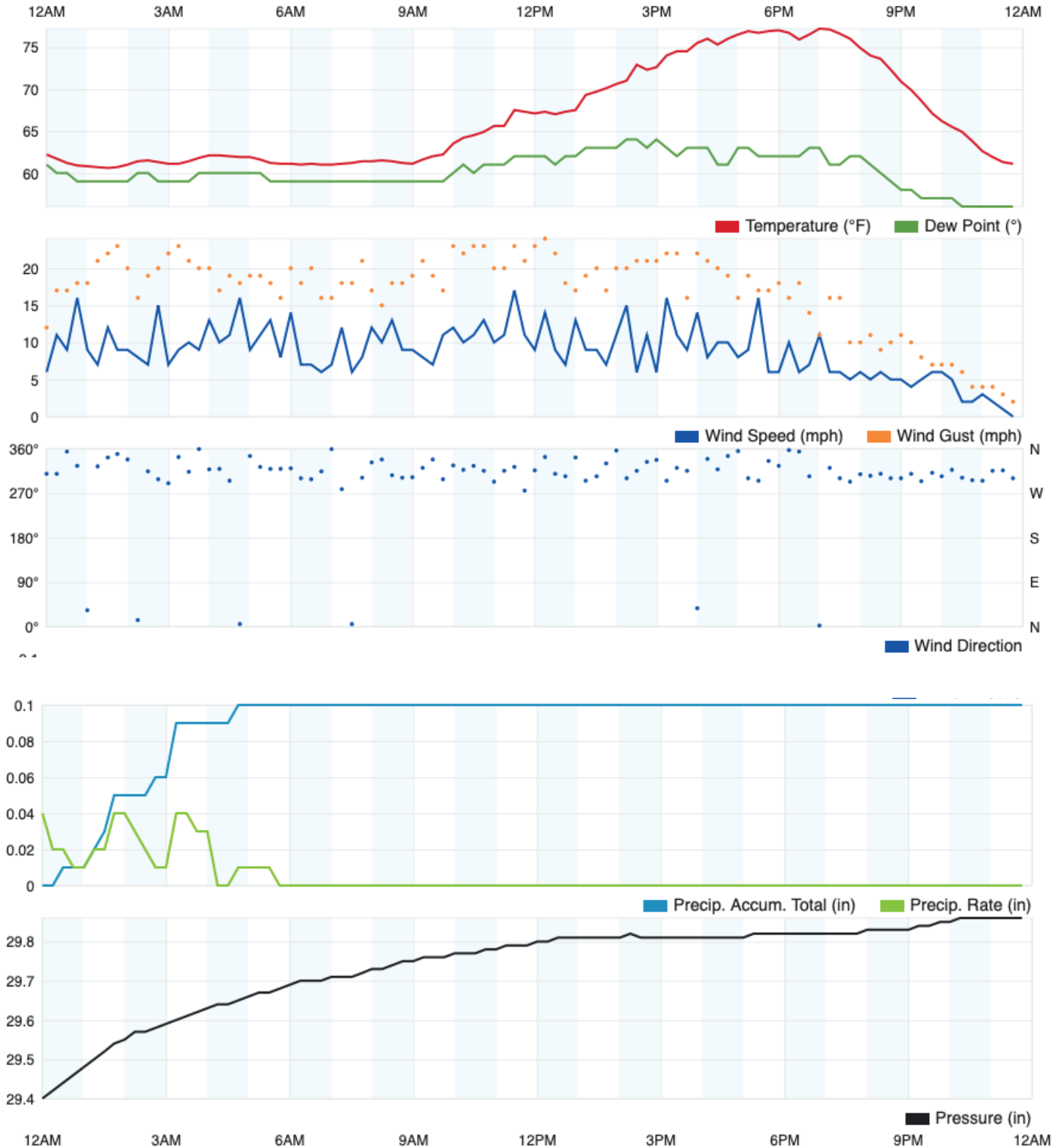
"But that betrays a fundamental lack of understanding of reality," Thune said. "We live in a fallen world, Mr. President, and as long as we live in a fallen world, there will be evil men bent on aggression."

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

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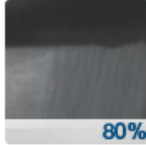



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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
						
Patchy Smoke	Partly Cloudy	Partly Sunny then Slight Chance T-storms	Showers	Chance T-storms	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny then Slight Chance T-storms
High: 84 °F	Low: 58 °F	High: 83 °F	Low: 61 °F	High: 83 °F	Low: 61 °F	High: 85 °F

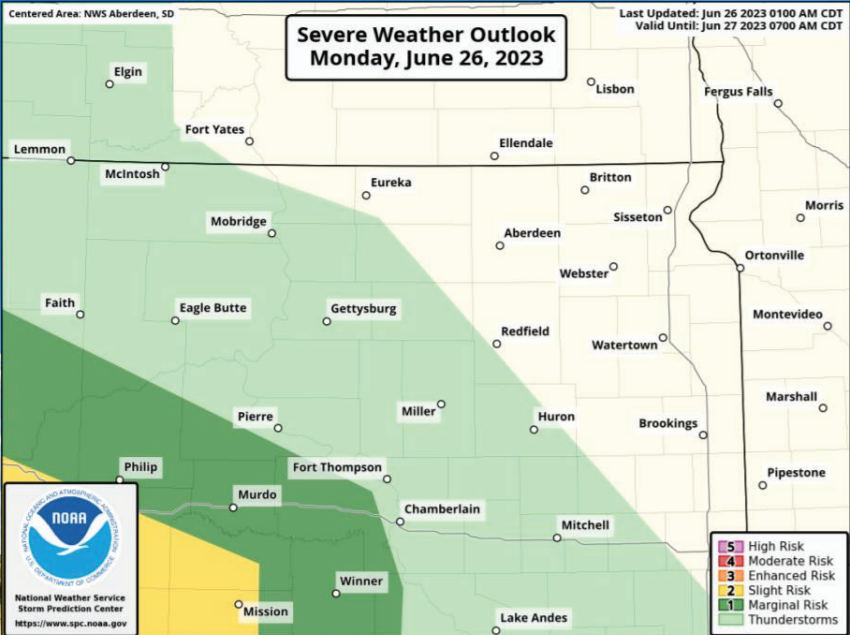
Mostly Dry Today

A few storms late this afternoon and overnight, mainly over central South Dakota

Temperatures
Seasonable through the week, with highs generally in the low to mid 80s

Severe Weather?
Marginal risk today/tonight across Jones, Lyman and parts of Stanley Counties. Marginal risk Tuesday across central South Dakota. Isolated large hail and damaging winds are the main threats.

Latest Local Forecast
Visit www.weather.gov/aberdeen




**Severe Weather Outlook
Monday, June 26, 2023**

Last Updated: Jun 26 2023 0100 AM CDT
Valid Until: Jun 27 2023 0700 AM CDT

Centered Area: NWS Aberdeen, SD

National Weather Service Storm Prediction Center
<https://www.spc.nwaa.gov>



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD
Updated June 26, 2023 4:14 AM

Today will feature mostly dry conditions with highs in the upper 70s to the mid-80s. A few thunderstorms may impact south-central South Dakota late this afternoon through the overnight hours. A few storms may produce quarter size hail and 60 mph winds.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 77 °F at 5:51 PM

Low Temp: 61 °F at 1:27 AM

Wind: 27 mph at 1:18 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 15 hours, 43 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 109 in 1933

Record Low: 39 in 2017

Average High: 83

Average Low: 58

Average Precip in June.: 3.24

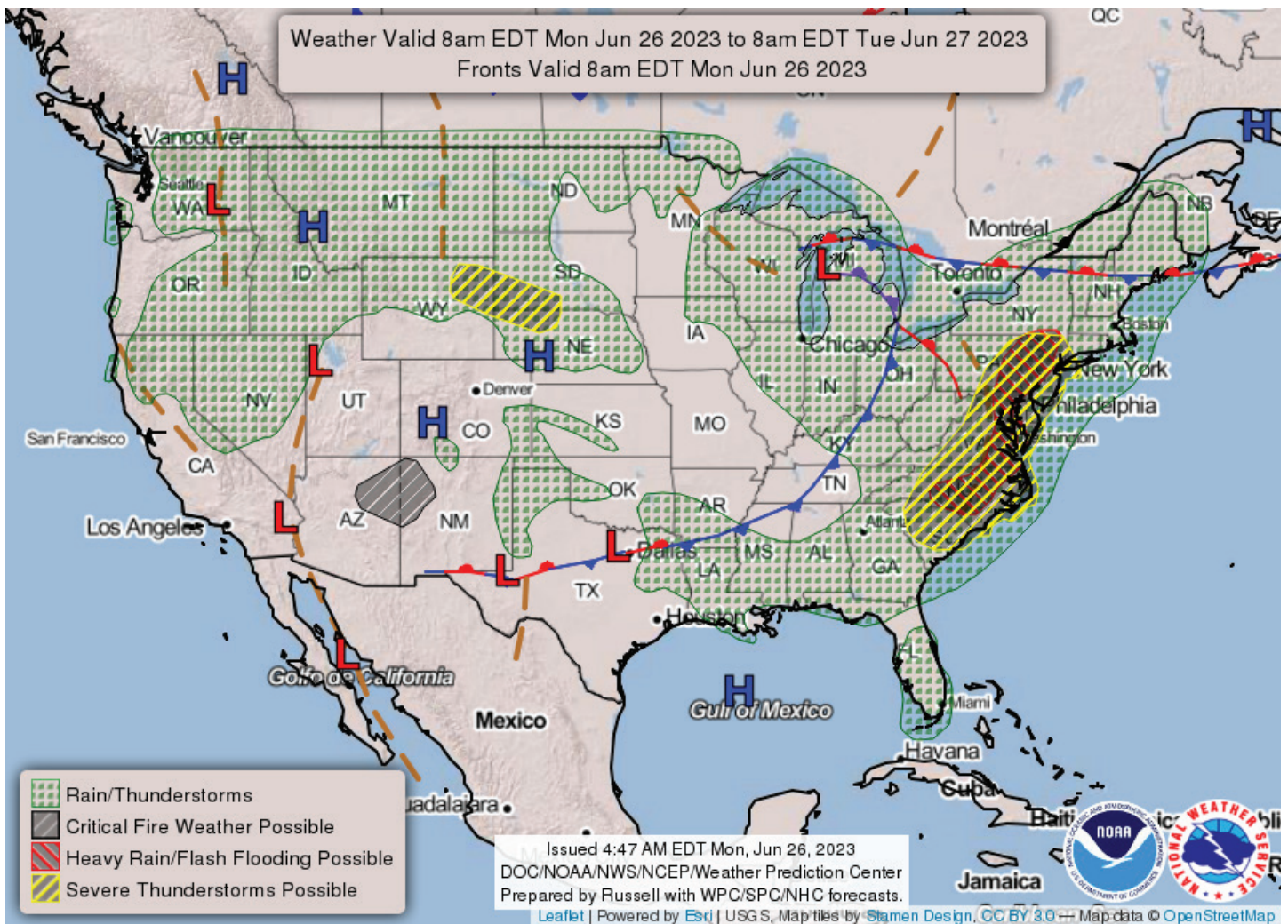
Precip to date in June.: 2.63

Average Precip to date: 10.49

Precip Year to Date: 10.54

Sunset Tonight: 9:26:55 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:44:04 AM



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Today in Weather History

June 26, 1998: Heavy rains of 2 to 5 inches fell across much of northern and eastern Brown, western and northern Day and all of Marshall County during the afternoon and evening hours. The additional heavy rain only exacerbated the flooding which had been occurring over much of this area for years. Kidder, in northern Marshall County, received up to 5 inches of rain on the 26th after receiving around 2 inches on the 25th. The heavy rain on the 26th flooded the whole town, filling nearly every basement. One resident had the basement walls cave in. Areas of Britton were also flooded with water in many basements. The heavy rains added to the already thousands of acres of crop and pastureland under water. One farmer in Day County, near Webster, had documented over one-half million dollars in damages to fences, buildings, land, and income from the prolonged flooding. On his farm, he had 15 buildings under water. This farmer said the highest he had measured the water from flooding was 9 feet, but for this year it had gone up to 21 feet. As a result of this and past heavy rains and also many years of above-average precipitation, about 22 percent of the total farm and pastureland acres in the three counties were flooded or too wet to farm. Some rainfall amounts included 2.30 inches at Sand Lake NWR, 2.7 inches at Langford, 2.95 inches at Groton, 3.5 inches northwest of Bristol, and 5.10 inches 9N 9W of Britton.

June 26, 2008: During the evening hours, a compact upper-level low-pressure system tracking through the Northern Plains interacted with a very moist and unstable air mass over western and central South Dakota resulting in a widespread severe weather outbreak. Three confirmed tornadoes occurred briefly in western Dewey County. Little or no damage was reported, and all three tornadoes were rated EF0. In addition to the tornadoes, multiple reports of large hail were received over Corson and Dewey Counties, including some to the size of baseballs near the communities of McLaughlin and Isabel. The large hail broke out many home and vehicle windows and damaged many roofs in Dewey, Corson, and Sully Counties. Significant wind damage occurred over sections of Sully County. There were multiple reports of wind gusts more than 70 mph, with the most concentrated swath of damaging winds extending from near Sutton Bay, eastward to the city of Onida, then southeast to the community of Harrold. The storm survey began near Sutton Bay on Lake Oahe, where a wind gust of 92 mph was recorded. The most significant property damage was found further east near the community of Agar where multiple grain bins were either damaged or destroyed. Nine miles west of Agar, a barn was destroyed, and a large pine tree was snapped in half. Winds in this area were estimated to range from 80 to 100 mph. Near the intersection of Highways 1804 and 175th Street, several Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) electrical transmission towers were collapsed entirely. The damage is consistent with wind speeds ranging from 130-140 mph. In the city of Onida, a bank roof was damaged, and the city was without power until the next day. Four miles north of Onida, a feed wagon was tossed nearly 40 feet. In Harrold, several railroad cars were tipped over. Also of great significance during the event was the peak wind speed of 124 mph recorded at the Onida airport. This wind speed is the strongest wind gust ever measured in the Aberdeen County Warning Area and the 4th highest wind speed ever reported in South Dakota.

1807: Lightning strikes a gunpowder factory in the small European country of Luxembourg, killing more than 300 people. The Luxembourg disaster may have been the most deadly lightning strike in history.

1986: Hurricane Bonnie made landfall on the upper Texas coast. A wind gust to 98 mph occurred at Sea Rim State Park. Ace, Texas recorded a total of 13 inches of rain.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

FAILING IS NOT FATAL

A struggling single mother worked as a secretary in a Dallas bank. Electric typewriters had just been introduced, but there was no automatic way to correct mistakes. Bette Nesmith became frustrated when she would have to retype an entire page for one misspelled word.

Watching the painters decorate the bank windows for Christmas, she noticed that if they made a mistake, they would simply cover it with another color. No one knew the difference.

Intrigued, she began to experiment at home and eventually developed a white, water-based paint. Whenever she made a mistake, she would simply cover it with her new product and continue typing. One morning she took her "discovery" to work in a nail polish bottle. When others noticed what she was doing, they asked if she would provide some for them to use. It was from her "failings" at spelling, observing the work of others, and research that "Liquid Paper" was born.

When we fail, it is never final or fatal unless we give in and give up. The prophet Micah had some great advice for us. Micah said, "Though I fall I will rise again. Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be my light."

When we fail we must remember that "we can rise again!" We must look to the Lord for His strength to empower us, His Spirit to guide us, and His wisdom to enable us to succeed.

Prayer: Encourage us, Lord, when times are tough and we are tempted to quit, to rely completely on You. May we find strength, courage, and wisdom in You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Do not gloat over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will rise. Though I sit in darkness, the LORD will be my light. Micah 7:8



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

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2023 Community Events

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.23.23

13 62 65 67 69 14

MegaPlier: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$343,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 16 Hrs 57
DRAW: Mins 33 Secs

[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 16 Hrs 12 Mins 33
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.25.23

16 17 18 35 47 11

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 27 Mins 33
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.24.23

8 14 23 33 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$118,000

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 27
DRAW: Mins 33 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.24.23

12 17 50 53 64 20

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 56 Mins 33
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
06.24.23

2 38 44 50 62 19

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$440,000,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 56 Mins 33
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

No more needles? A daily pill may work as well as Wegovy shots to treat obesity

By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

What if treating obesity could be as easy as popping an effective pill?

That's a notion that has long fueled hope for many of the more than 40% of Americans who are considered obese — and fueled criticism by those who advocate for wider weight acceptance. Soon, it may be a reality.

High-dose oral versions of the medication in the weight-loss drug Wegovy may work as well as the popular injections when it comes to paring pounds and improving health, according to final results of two studies released Sunday night. The potent tablets also appear to work for people with diabetes, who notoriously struggle to lose weight.

Drugmaker Novo Nordisk plans to ask the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to approve the pills later this year.

"If you ask people a random question, 'Would you rather take a pill or an injection?' People overwhelmingly prefer a pill," said Dr. Daniel Bessesen, chief of endocrinology at Denver Health, who treats patients with obesity but was not involved in the new research.

That's assuming, Bessesen said, that both ways to take the medications are equally effective, available and affordable. "Those are the most important factors for people," he said.

There have been other weight-loss pills on the market, but none that achieve the substantial reductions seen with injected drugs like Wegovy. People with obesity will be "thrilled" to have an oral option that's as effective, said Dr. Katherine Saunders, clinical professor of medicine at Weill Cornell Health and co-founder of Intellihealth, a weight-loss center.

Novo Nordisk already sells Rybelsus, which is approved to treat diabetes and is an oral version of semaglutide, the same medication used in the diabetes drug Ozempic and Wegovy. It comes in doses up to 14 milligrams.

But results of two gold-standard trials released at the American Diabetes Association's annual meeting looked at how doses of oral semaglutide as high as 25 milligrams and 50 milligrams worked to reduce weight and improve blood sugar and other health markers.

A 16-month study of about 1,600 people who were overweight or obese and already being treated for Type 2 diabetes found the high-dose daily pills lowered blood sugar significantly better than the standard dose of Rybelsus. From a baseline weight of 212 pounds, the higher doses also resulted in weight loss of between 15 and 20 pounds, compared to about 10 pounds on the lower dose.

Another 16-month study of more than 660 adults who had obesity or were overweight with at least one related disease — but not diabetes — found the 50-milligram daily pill helped people lose an average of about 15% of their body weight, or about 35 pounds, versus about 6 pounds with a dummy pill, or placebo.

That's "notably consistent" with the weight loss spurred by weekly shots of the highest dose of Wegovy, the study authors said.

But there were side effects. About 80% of participants receiving any size dose of oral semaglutide experienced things like mild to moderate intestinal problems, such as nausea, constipation and diarrhea.

In the 50-milligram obesity trial, there was evidence of higher rates of benign tumors in people who took the drug versus a placebo. In addition, about 13% of those who took the drug had "altered skin sensation" such as tingling or extra sensitivity.

Medical experts predict the pills will be popular, especially among people who want to lose weight but are fearful of needles. Plus, tablets would be more portable than injection pens and they don't have to be stored in the refrigerator.

But the pills aren't necessarily a better option for the hundreds of thousands of people already taking

injectable versions such as Ozempic or Wegovy, said Dr. Fatima Cody Stanford, an obesity medicine expert at Massachusetts General Hospital.

"I don't find significant hesitancy surrounding receiving an injection," she said. "A lot of people like the ease of taking a medication once a week."

In addition, she said, some patients may actually prefer shots to the new pills, which have to be taken 30 minutes before eating or drinking in the morning.

Paul Morer, 56, who works for a New Jersey hospital system, lost 85 pounds using Wegovy and hopes to lose 30 more. He said he would probably stick with the weekly injections, even if pills were available.

"I do it on Saturday morning. It's part of my routine," he said. "I don't even feel the needle. It's a non-issue."

Some critics also worry that a pill will also put pressure on people who are obese to use it, fueling social stigma against people who can't — or don't want to — lose weight, said Tigress Osborn, chair of the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance.

"There is no escape from the narrative that your body is wrong and it should change," Osborn said.

Still, Novo Nordisk is banking on the popularity of a higher-dose pill to treat both diabetes and obesity. Sales of Rybelsus reached about \$1.63 billion last year, more than double the 2021 figure.

Other companies are working on oral versions of drugs that work as well as Eli Lilly and Co.'s Mounjaro — an injectable diabetes drug expected to be approved for weight-loss soon. Lilly researchers reported promising mid-stage trial results for an oral pill called orforglipron to treat patients who are obese or overweight with and without diabetes.

Pfizer, too, has released mid-stage results for dargulipron, an oral drug for diabetes taken twice daily with food.

Novo Nordisk officials said it's too early to say what the cost of the firm's high-dose oral pills would be or how the company plans to guarantee adequate manufacturing capacity to meet demand. Despite surging popularity, injectable doses of Wegovy will be in short supply until at least September, company officials said.

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

Oil spill from Shell pipeline fouls farms and a river in a long-polluted part of Nigeria

By TAIWO ADEBAYO Associated Press

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — A new oil spill at a Shell facility in Nigeria has contaminated farmland and a river, upending livelihoods in the fishing and farming communities in part of the Niger Delta, which has long endured environmental pollution caused by the oil industry.

The National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency, or NOSDRA, told The Associated Press that the spill came from the Trans-Niger Pipeline operated by Shell that crosses through communities in the Eleme area of Ogoniland, a region where the London-based energy giant has faced decadeslong local pushback to its oil exploration.

The volume of oil spilled has not been determined, but activists have published images of polluted farmland, water surfaces blighted by oil sheens and dead fish mired in sticky crude.

While spills are frequent in the region due to vandalism from oil thieves and a lack of maintenance to pipelines, according to the U.N. Environmental Program, activists call this a "major one."

It is "one of the worst in the last 16 years in Ogoniland," said Fyनेface Dumnamene, an environmental activist whose nonprofit monitors spills in the Delta region. It began June 11.

"It lasted for over a week, bursts into Okulu River — which adjoins other rivers and ultimately empties into the Atlantic Ocean — and affects several communities and displaces more than 300 fishers," said Dumnamene of the Youths and Environmental Advocacy Centre.

He said tides have sent oil sheens about 10 kilometers (6 miles) further to creeks near the nation's oil business capital, Port Harcourt.

Shell stopped production in Ogoniland more than 20 years ago amid deadly unrest from residents protesting environmental damage, but the Trans-Niger Pipeline still sends crude from oil fields in other areas through the region's communities to export terminals.

The leak has been contained, but treating the fallout from the spill at farms and the Okulu River, which runs through communities, has stalled, NOSDRA Director General Idris Musa said.

"Response has been delayed," Musa said, blaming protesting residents. "But engagement is going on."

The apparent deadlock stems from mistrust and past grievances in the riverine and oil-abundant Niger Delta region, which is mostly home to minority ethnic groups who accuse the Nigerian government of marginalization.

Africa's largest economy overwhelmingly depends on the Niger Delta's oil resources for its earnings, but pollution from that production has denied residents access to clean water, hurt farming and fishing, and heightened the risk of violence, activists say.

The communities "are very angry because of the destruction of their livelihoods resulting from the obsolescence of Shell's equipment and are concerned the regulator and Shell will blame sabotage by the residents," Dumnamene said.

Often oil companies blame pipeline vandalism by oil thieves or aggrieved young people in affected communities for spills, which could allow the companies to avoid liability.

London-based Shell said it is working with a joint investigatory team, consisting of regulators, Ogoniland residents and local authorities, to identify the cause and impact of the spill.

Shell's response team "has been activated, subject to safety requirements, to mobilize to the site to take actions that may be necessary for the safety of environment, people and equipment," a company statement said.

NOSDRA confirmed the joint investigation, but a cause of the spill — whether sabotage or equipment failure — has not yet been revealed.

Hundreds of farmers and fishermen who have been cut off from their livelihoods would insist on restoration of the environment and then compensation, Dumnamene said.

At the request of the Nigerian government, the U.N. Environment Program conducted an independent environmental assessment of Ogoniland, releasing a report in 2011 that criticized Shell and the Nigerian government for 50 years of pollution and recommended a comprehensive, billion-dollar cleanup.

While, the government announced the cleanup in 2016, there is little evidence of restoration on the ground. The government says community protests and lawsuits by local activists have hampered progress.

"A credible cleanup would have been a beacon of hope for the Niger Delta and other areas in Africa that have suffered oil pollution, but no credible cleanup is ongoing," said Ledum Mitee, a veteran Ogoni environmental activist and former president of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People. "It is a cover-up, and we do not see the impact."

Associated Press climate and environmental coverage receives support from several private foundations. See more about AP's climate initiative here. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Russian defense minister makes first public appearance since mercenary revolt as uncertainty swirls

By The Associated Press undefined

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu made his first public appearance since a mercenary uprising demanded his ouster, inspecting troops in Ukraine Monday in a video aimed at projecting a sense of order after a weekend of chaos.

Shoigu is one of three powerful Russian military leaders whose diverging interests erupted into a mutiny that saw armed rebels seize a Russian city and march seemingly unopposed on the capital. Thousands of

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Wagner Group mercenaries headed from Ukraine deep into Russia, before turning around Saturday after less than 24 hours.

He is the first to appear publicly since then, in video released by the Defense Ministry that was widely shown on Russian media, including state-controlled television. It was unclear when it was filmed.

Neither Wagner Group chief Yevgeny Prigozhin nor General Staff chief Gen. Valery Gerasimov — like Shoigu, a target of Prigozhin's ire — has been seen or heard in public since then. Russian President Vladimir Putin hasn't made any public appearances either.

Moscow Mayor Sergey Sobyanin announced an end to the "counter-terrorism regime" imposed on the capital Saturday, during which troops and armored vehicles set up checkpoints on the edges of the city and authorities tore up roads leading into the city.

The Defense Ministry released a video showing Shoigu flying in a helicopter and then attending a meeting with military officers at a military headquarters in Ukraine, showing the minister for the first time since Prigozhin declared a "march of justice" to oust the defense minister and Gerasimov late Friday, during which the mercenaries captured the southern city of Rostov-on-Don and then marched on Moscow.

The rebellion ended on Saturday when Prigozhin ordered his troops back. The Kremlin said it had made a deal that the mercenary chief will move to Belarus and receive an amnesty, along with his soldiers. The mutiny marked the biggest challenge to President Vladimir Putin in more than 20 years of rule.

As Wagner's convoy drove out of the southern Russian city of Rostov-on-Don after its brief occupation on Saturday, led by Prigozhin in an SUV, someone asked how he viewed the result of his revolt, according to a video posted later on Russian social media.

"It's normal, we have cheered everyone up," the mercenary chief responded.

It was unclear what would ultimately happen to Prigozhin and his forces. Few details of the deal were released either by the Kremlin or Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, who brokered it, and Prigozhin's whereabouts were unclear on Monday.

Before starting the revolt, Prigozhin had blasted Shoigu and army chief Gerasimov with expletive-ridden insults for months, attacking them for failing to provide his troops with enough ammunition during the battle for Bakhmut, the war's longest and bloodiest battle.

Putin stood back from the rift, and Shoigu and Gerasimov remained mum, possibly reflecting uncertainty about Putin's support. Observers said that by failing to end the feud Putin had encouraged Prigozhin to dramatically up the stakes.

Alex Younger, former head of Britain's MI6 intelligence agency, said it appeared that "neither side was in control" during the rebellion.

He told the BBC that Prigozhin "didn't have a plan, he didn't have enough people" to succeed, while Putin looked indecisive, first vowing to crush the rebels then striking a deal.

"Everyone comes out of this weaker," Younger said.

Asked by reporters Saturday whether Putin still trusts Shoigu, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov responded he wasn't aware of any changes in the president's attitude. Commenting on whether any changes in military leadership were discussed during negotiations with Prigozhin, Peskov responded that personnel changes were the exclusive prerogative of Putin as the commander-in-chief and so it wasn't a subject for discussion.

Russian media and commentators speculated that Putin could replace Shoigu with Alexei Dyumin, the governor of the Tula region who had previously served as a Putin bodyguard and then a deputy defense minister. They noted that Putin, who avoids making decisions under pressure, would likely wait before announcing a shakeup.

Russian political analyst Tatiana Stanovaya said Prigozhin's mutiny "wasn't a bid for power or an attempt to overtake the Kremlin," but a desperate move amid his escalating rift with Russia's military leadership.

"Prigozhin was forced out of Ukraine and found himself unable to sustain Wagner the way he did before, while the state machinery was turning against him," she wrote in a commentary on Twitter. "To top it off, Putin was ignoring him and publicly supporting his most dangerous adversaries."

Stanovaya said that while Prigozhin could get out of crisis alive, he doesn't have a political future in Russia under Putin.

Prigozhin's rift with the top military brass dates back years to the Russian military intervention in Syria, where Wagner Group was also active. It dramatically escalated in recent months amid the fighting for Bakhmut.

The U.S. had intelligence that Prigozhin had been building up his forces near the border with Russia for some time, suggesting the revolt was planned in advance. That conflicts with Prigozhin's claim that his rebellion was a response to an attack on his field camps in Ukraine on Friday by the Russian military, which he said killed a large number of his men. The Defense Ministry denied attacking the camps.

It was not yet clear what the fissures opened by the 24-hour rebellion would mean for the war in Ukraine. But it resulted in some of the best forces fighting for Russia being pulled from the battlefield: the Wagner troops, who had shown their effectiveness in scoring the Kremlin's only land victory in months, in Bakhmut, and Chechen soldiers sent to stop them on the approach to Moscow.

The Wagner forces' largely unopposed, rapid advance also exposed vulnerabilities in Russia's security and military forces. The mercenary soldiers were reported to have downed several helicopters and a military communications plane. The Defense Ministry has not commented.

The U.K. Ministry of Defense said Ukraine had "gained impetus" in its push around Bakhmut, making progress north and south of the town.

"There has been little evidence that Russia maintains any significant ground forces operational level reserves which could be used to reinforce against the multiple threats it is now facing in widely separated sectors," it said in a daily assessment of the war.

U.S. President Joe Biden and leaders of several of Ukraine's European allies discussed events in Russia over the weekend, but Western officials have been muted in their public comments.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg "the events over the weekend are an internal Russian matter."

Speaking in Vilnius, Lithuania, he said the crisis was "yet another demonstration of the big strategic mistake that President Putin made with his illegal annexation of Crimea and the war against Ukraine."

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, speaking to reporters before a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Luxembourg, said the revolt showed that the war is "cracking Russia's political system."

"The monster that Putin created with Wagner, the monster is biting him now," Borrell said. "The monster is acting against his creator."

Essentials for the Hajj: From sun hats to shoe bags, a guide to gear for the Muslim pilgrimage

By RIAZAT BUTT Associated Press

MECCA, Saudi Arabia (AP) — Straw hats, cross-body bags, and collapsible chairs: These are just some of the essentials Muslims bring to the Hajj pilgrimage.

Spiritually, the five-day Hajj is awe-inspiring for the faithful, an experience they say brings them closer to God and to the entire Muslim world.

Physically, it's grueling. Pilgrims walk outdoors for hours in broiling heat around holy sites in Mecca and the surrounding desert. They are caught in unimaginable and overwhelming crowds, all trying to get to the same place. Barriers directing the traffic mean that if you miss your turn, you might walk hours more to get where you want to be.

So the more than 2 million pilgrims don't just learn the complicated rules of how to properly perform the rituals, which began Monday. They also pick up helpful hints and tricks of the trade to get by, learned from other hajjis — as those who have completed the pilgrimage are known.

Here's a look at what they say is essential gear.

WHAT TO WEAR

Dress for the heat, since daytime temperatures regularly soar past 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees

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Fahrenheit). The majority of rituals take place outdoors in the desert, including climbing the Mount of Mercy and stoning the Jamarat, a row of pillars representing the devil.

Sun hats are key. Pilgrims often opt for wide-brimmed straw hats or even cowboy hats. Umbrellas of every color are everywhere. Some balance their prayer mats on their heads or the canopies from umbrellas.

All men are required to wear simple white robes without any stitching, a rule aimed at uniting rich and poor. Women must forego beauty products and cover their hair but have more latitude to wear fabrics from their native countries, resulting in a colorful display of Islam's multiculturalism.

When it comes to footwear, it's best to wear something that's durable for the long walks but that also slips on and off easily, as pilgrims must remove their shoes before entering Mecca's Grand Mosque.

Sandals are sensible, but some pilgrims say it's best also to wear socks as the mosque's marble floor can be surprisingly cold as they walk around the Kaaba seven times.

WHAT TO CARRY

A daypack of some kind is essential for carrying food, water, sunscreen and other sundries. But backpacks can be a hassle when you're crammed shoulder-to-shoulder.

Far more popular are cross-body bags that you can access without turning around.

Many pilgrims also carry a separate drawstring bag or pouch for their shoes. Usually at mosques, you can leave your shoes with an attendant at the entrance, but with hundreds of thousands at the Grand Mosque, that's a sure way to lose your shoes, or at best waste a long time getting them back. It would also mean you have to exit the same way you entered, not always possible when the crowd takes you in another direction.

Umaima Hafez, a five-time hajjah from Egypt, packs like a pro.

Sitting on her portable plastic stool, she reaches into her large pack and pulls out a blanket, homemade granola and crackers, a travel towel that she wets and places on her head when it gets hot, an extra-thick prayer mat — for her knees — and some medications. The stool fits into the bag as well. She'll carry it throughout Hajj, then leave it behind for someone else to use.

She insists her bag isn't heavy. "Everything is beautiful and easy with God. ... And people give out a lot of water and food here."

Hassan Hussain, a 24-year-old first-time pilgrim from Britain, also went for a maximal approach. His bag holds his phone, charging cable, power bank, sunglasses, water bottle, British and Saudi currency, bank cards, his shoe bag, a prayer mat and hydrating facial mist.

He said his sister, who did the Hajj last year, told him what to bring. His advice to other pilgrims is to overpack.

"You don't know when you're going to need things," he said. "The person next to you might need things. Just take everything and work it out as you go along."

In contrast, Ali Ibn Mousa, a 30-year-old Russian and father of seven, is going for maneuverability and speed, so he stays light.

His drawstring bag holds only his phone and his pilgrim ID. He's more interested in what he will bring back from the Hajj, saying that alongside the spiritual journey he's on the lookout for a second wife.

"If I had a heavy bag, I wouldn't be able to do some of the things I want to," he said. "That's why I take a small bag that is easy to carry, so I can run inside" while circling the Kaaba.

CAMPOUT CHECKLIST

The giant flows of pilgrims move back and forth between holy sites spread out over a length of more than 10 miles (16 kilometers) from the Grand Mosque to the Mount of Mercy, or Mount Arafat, out in the desert. Even within a single ritual site, it can take much of the day to walk from one end to another, like Mina, where pilgrims will stay in one of the world's largest tent camps and stone the pillars representing the devil.

A pilgrim has to be prepared to be stuck in a spot outside for ages, waiting for a transport to arrive or a crowd to clear, sometimes in the middle of the night.

Ikram Mohammed's supermarket in Mecca sells camping essentials such as lightweight tents, sleeping mats and collapsible water pouches.

"They buy dried fruit and nuts, biscuits, chips. Anything they can consume easily while they are on the move that doesn't need refrigeration or utensils," Mohammed said. A special section specializes in fragrance-free toiletries, in keeping with the prohibition on perfume.

Mohammed also sells souvenirs for pilgrims to take back home with them, everything from chocolate and sweets to water from the sacred Zamzam well near the Kaaba.

Another popular item: Pain relief cream for achy joints.

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.

The Supreme Court's biggest decisions are coming. Here's what they could say

By JESSICA GRESKO and MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court is getting ready to decide some of its biggest cases of the term. The high court has 10 opinions left to release over the next week before the justices begin their summer break. As is typical, the last opinions to be released cover some of the most contentious issues the court has wrestled with this term including affirmative action, student loans and gay rights.

Here's a look at some of the cases the court has left to decide from the term that began back in October:

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

The survival of affirmative action in higher education is the subject of two related cases, one involving Harvard and the other the University of North Carolina. The Supreme Court has previously approved of the use of affirmative action in higher education in decisions reaching back to 1978. But the justices' decision to take the cases suggested a willingness to revisit those rulings. And when the high court heard arguments in the cases in late October, all six conservative justices on the court expressed doubts about the practice.

The Biden administration has said that getting rid of race-conscious college admissions would have a "destabilizing" effect that would cause the ranks of Black and Latino students to plummet at the nation's most selective schools.

STUDENT LOANS

The justices will also decide the fate of President Joe Biden's plan to wipe away or reduce student loans held by millions of Americans. When the court heard arguments in the case in February, the plan didn't seem likely to survive, though it's possible the justices could decide the challengers lacked the right to sue and the plan can still go forward.

Biden had proposed erasing \$10,000 in federal student loan debt for those with incomes below \$125,000 a year, or households that earn less than \$250,000. He also wanted to cancel an additional \$10,000 for those who received federal Pell Grants to attend college. The administration has said millions of borrowers would benefit from the program.

Regardless of what happens at the high court, loan payments that have been on hold since the start of the coronavirus pandemic three years ago will resume this summer.

GAY RIGHTS

A clash of gay rights and religious rights is also yet to be decided by the court. The case involves a Christian graphic artist from Colorado who wants to begin designing wedding websites but objects to making wedding websites for same-sex couples.

State law requires businesses that are open to the public to provide services to all customers, but the designer, Lorie Smith, says the law violates her free speech rights. She says ruling against her would force artists — from painters and photographers to writers and musicians — to do work that is against their beliefs. Her opponents, meanwhile, say that if she wins, a range of businesses will be able to discriminate, refusing to serve Black, Jewish or Muslim customers, interracial or interfaith couples or immigrants.

During arguments in the case in December, the court's conservative majority sounded sympathetic to Smith's arguments, and religious plaintiffs have in recent years won a series of victories at the high court.

RELIGIOUS RIGHTS

Another case that could end as a victory for religious rights is the case of a Christian mail carrier who refused to work on Sundays when he was required to deliver Amazon packages.

The question for the high court has to do with when businesses have to accommodate religious employees. The case is somewhat unusual in that both sides agree on a number of things, and when the court heard arguments in April both liberal and conservative justices seemed in broad agreement that businesses like the Postal Service can't cite minor costs or hardships to reject requests to accommodate religious practices. That could mean a ruling joined by both liberals and conservatives.

Less clear, however, was how the justices might decide the particular worker's case.

VOTING

As election season accelerates, the Supreme Court has still not said what it will do in a case about the power of state legislatures to make rules for congressional and presidential elections without being checked by state courts.

In a case out of North Carolina the justices were asked to essentially eliminate the power of state courts to strike down congressional districts drawn by legislatures on the grounds that they violate state constitutions.

But there's a wrinkle. Since the justices heard arguments in the case in December, North Carolina's state Supreme Court threw out the ruling the Supreme Court was reviewing after Republicans claimed control of that court. That could give the justices an out and let them dismiss the case without reaching a decision.

The high court could still take up a similar case from Ohio and reach a decision there, but it wouldn't be until after the 2024 elections.

No sign of threat from the hazardous train that plunged into Yellowstone River, regulators say

COLUMBUS, Mont. (AP) — Preliminary testing of water and air quality along a stretch of the Yellowstone River where train cars carrying hazardous materials fell into the waterway following a bridge collapse did not indicate any threat to the public, state and federal officials said Sunday.

The seven mangled cars that carried hot asphalt and molten sulfur remained in the rushing river a day after the bridge gave way near the town of Columbus, about 40 miles (about 64 kilometers) west of Billings, Montana. The area is in a sparsely populated section of the Yellowstone River Valley, surrounded by ranch and farmland.

Preliminary results of water quality sampling did not show petroleum hydrocarbons, which would have come from the asphalt, or sulfur, Kevin Stone, a spokesperson for the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, said. Both do not dissolve when they enter water, he explained.

"Water quality testing will continue until the cleanup is complete and at this time there are no known risks to the public drinking water," he said.

The water testing is being done by contractors working for the train's operator, Montana Rail Link, while the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and the federal Environmental Protection Agency are overseeing it, Stone said.

Meanwhile, contractors monitoring the air downwind of the derailment for the EPA have not detected any toxic gases, said Rich Mylott, a spokesperson for the agency's regional office.

Water testing began Saturday and will continue throughout the cleanup of the derailment site, Montana Rail Link spokesperson Andy Garland said in a statement.

"Montana Rail Link remains committed to addressing any potential impacts to the area as a result of this incident," he said.

The amount of cargo that spilled from the cars in the river is still not known, said David Stamey, the head of Stillwater County Disaster and Emergency Services.

Garland said both hot asphalt and molten sulfur harden and solidify quickly when mixed with water and modeling suggests that the substances are not likely to move very far downstream.

Crews were still trying to figure out the best way to remove the cars since the crash was so extensive and there was a lot of damage to them, Stamey said.

The Federal Railroad Administration was leading the investigation into the cause of the derailment but did not have any preliminary information about the probe to share, spokesperson Daniel Griffin 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. It was still providing service on a back-up route but some users do not have service or were experiencing very slow connections on Sunday, the company said in a recorded update on its phone line.

The Yellowstone saw record flooding in 2022 that caused extensive damage to Yellowstone National Park and adjacent towns in Montana. The river where the bridge collapsed flows away from Yellowstone National Park, which is about 110 miles (177 kilometers) southwest.

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 bottom," Bea said Saturday. "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. The railroad bridge is inspected twice a year and the most recent inspection was performed in May, Garland said.

The Federal Railroad Administration will review the inspection reports to see if they complied with federal safety standards, Griffin said.

This story has been updated to correct the spelling to David Stamey, not David Samey.

BET Awards show honors Busta Rhymes, hip-hop's 50 years and pays tribute to Takeoff and Tina Turner

By MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The 2023 BET Awards celebrated 50 years of hip-hop with tributes to the genre's earliest voices, late legends, and new talent during a show packed with spectacular performances that consistently felt like a party.

Sunday's biggest surprise came when Quavo and Offset, the surviving members of Migos, performed "Bad and Boujee" in front of an image of Takeoff, who died in a shooting last December.

"BET, do it for Take," the duo shouted near the beginning of their set, as their backdrop switched from the image of a space shuttle to one of Takeoff pointing in the air.

Throughout the show, whether it was Tupac, Notorious B.I.G., Biz Markie or Pop Smoke, performers and emcee Kid Capri paid homage to late hip-hop stars, often by quickly highlighting a taste of their best-known hits. In a show where few awards were given, Capri and BET kept the emphasis on the music.

Busta Rhymes took home the night's biggest honor, the Lifetime Achievement Award, handed to him by Swizz Beatz. 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.

Diddy, Janet Jackson, Chuck D, Missy Elliot, Pharrell Williams, and Mariah Carey recorded a video tribute to Rhymes.

"Alright, Imma wear it on my sleeve. I do wanna cry," Rhymes started his speech, as his eyes started to water. He talked about his six children, being kicked out from his hip-hop group Leaders of the New School, and learning how to rebuild by going into studios, sharing a cigar with whoever was in the studio,

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and “quickly whipping up a 16 bar verse. ... By default, I pioneered the feature,” he said. “A lot of greatness from out people in our culture is by default. Because it’s just a magic we have.”

An energetic tribute to Rhymes followed — the MC teamed up with Spliff Star for “Ante Up Remix,” “Scenario,” “Look At Me Now,” “I Know What You Want”, before a long list of A-listers jumped in: Scar Lip with “This Is New York”, Coi Leray with “Players,” BIA with “Beach Ball,” among them. Halfway through the performance, Rhymes shifted gears to celebrate dancehall alongside Dexta Daps “Shabba Madda Pot,” Spice, “So Mi Like It,” Skillibeng, “Whap Whap”, and CuttyRanks’ “A Who Seh Me Dun (Wait Deh Man).”

Throughout the show, old school hip-hop heroes and modern stars mixed it up onstage, performing tracks celebrating rap’s most influential cities and innovation. For Miami, Trick Daddy and Trina rocked through “Nann” and Uncle Luke took on “I Wanna Rock (Doo Doo Brown).” For Atlanta, Jeezy ripped through “They Know”, T.I. hit “24’s,” and Master P did “No Limit Soldiers” into “Make ‘Em Say Ugh.” And for hip-hop’s reggae influence, Jamaica’s Doug E. Fresh and Lil ‘Vicious did an acapella version of “Freaks,” Mad Lion performed “Take It Easy,” and PATRA nailed “Romantic Call.”

Capri spun some of Tupac’s “Hail Marry” to tease a crash course on West Coast rap: Warren G’s “Regulate,” Yo-Yo’s “You Can’t Play With My Yo-Yo,” Tyga’s “Rack City”, and E-40’s “Tell Me When To Go.”

An ode to trap started with Capri spinning the late Pop Smoke’s “Dior”, before Chief Keef nailed “Faneto” and Ying Yang Twins did “Wait (The Whisper Song).”

Audience members, danced, sang along (and a few hopped up on stage) while Capri and MC Lyte keep the hostless show moving. It was a mostly hiccup-free show — save for a hitch during Patti LaBelle’s performance and the show running nearly four hours — particularly noteworthy for an event scheduled in the midst of the ongoing Hollywood writers’ strike.

LaBelle honored the Tina Turner with a performance of the late singer’s hit “The Best,” telling the audience at one point she couldn’t see the words. “I’m trying, y’all!” she said before powering into the chorus.

A masked Lil Uzi Vert opened the show at Los Angeles’ Microsoft Theater before it jumped into a quick history lesson. Capri walked the audience through a medley of the earliest days of New York City ‘80s rap culture featuring The Sugarhill Gang’s “Rapper’s Delight,” MC LYTE’s “Cha Cha Cha”, D-NICE’s “Call ME D-Nice” and Big Daddy Kane’s “Raw,” into a partial cover of “Just A Friend,” an homage to the late great Biz Markie.

“I would not be in this business on the stage tonight if it wasn’t for one person,” Big Daddy Kane said introducing the song. “Rest in peace.” He invited audience members to sing along to the song’s infectious chorus.

The coveted best new artist award went to Coco Jones, in a category which featured only female performers.

“For all of my black girls, we do have to fight a little harder to get what we deserve,” she said in her acceptance speech. “But don’t stop fighting even when it doesn’t make sense. And you’re not sure how you’re going to get out of those circumstances. Keep pushing because we are deserving of great things.”

It was followed by a supermarket-themed performance of AP’s pick for club song of the summer, Latto’s “Put It On Da Floor Again,” sans featured artist Cardi B but no less catchy. It ended with a text tribute: “RIP Shawty Lo,” a screen read.

Teyana “Spike Tey” Taylor won video director of the year, which was accepted by her mom Nikki Taylor — like a true matriarch, she interrupted the show to videocall her daughter and let her have the moment.

At the end of his acceptance speech, Rhymes urged the hip-hop community to “stop this narrative that we don’t love each other,” urging veteran musicians and newcomers alike to embrace one another.

It was the perfect mirror for the night: New York rapper Ice Spice ran through abridged versions of “Munch (Feelin’ U),” “Princess Diana” and “In Ha Mood”; Glorilla brought “Lick Or Sum” to the BET stage, and Kali powered through her TikTok hit, “Area Codes.”

In the audience, generations of hip-hop heavy-hitters cheered.

The suspect in the attack that killed 5 at Colorado Springs gay nightclub is set to plead guilty

By COLLEEN SLEVIN Associated Press

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (AP) — The suspect in a mass shooting at a Colorado Springs gay nightclub is expected to plead guilty Monday in an attack last year that killed five people and wounded 17 at a longtime sanctuary for the LGBTQ+ community in the mostly conservative city.

The plea could bring a life sentence for suspect Anderson Lee Aldrich and end the court case just seven months after the shooting — sparing victim's families and survivors a potentially painful trial that would force them to revisit the attack.

Victims' family members and survivors are expected to speak at Monday's hearing about how their lives were forever altered by the terror that erupted just before midnight on Nov. 19 when the suspect walked into Club Q and indiscriminately fired an AR-15-style semiautomatic rifle.

Aldrich, who is nonbinary and uses they and them pronouns, had been arrested over a year before the attack for threatening their grandparents and vowing to become "the next mass killer." But, charges in that case were ultimately dropped.

Monday's hearing follows a series of jailhouse phone calls from Aldrich to The Associated Press expressing remorse and the intention to face the consequences at this court hearing. Several survivors told the AP about a planned plea agreement after being approached about Aldrich's comments. They said prosecutors had notified them that Aldrich will plead guilty to charges that would ensure a sentence of life behind bars.

Federal and state authorities and defense attorneys have declined to comment on a possible plea agreement for Aldrich but Colorado law requires victims to be notified of such developments.

Aldrich faces more than 300 state counts, including murder and hate crimes. The U.S. Justice Department is considering pursuing federal hate crime charges, according to a senior law enforcement official familiar with the matter who spoke to AP on condition of anonymity to discuss the ongoing case.

Aldrich hinted at plans to carry out violent attacks at least a year before the Club Q assault. In June 2021, Aldrich's grandparents told authorities that they were warned not to stand in the way of a plan to stockpile guns, ammo, body armor and a homemade bomb to become "the next mass killer." Aldrich was then arrested after a standoff with SWAT officers that was livestreamed on Facebook and the evacuation of 10 nearby homes, telling officers "If they breach, I'm a f---ing blow it to holy hell!" Aldrich eventually surrendered.

However, the charges against Aldrich were thrown out in July 2022 after Aldrich's mother and grandparents, the victims in the case, refused to cooperate with prosecutors, evading efforts to serve them with subpoenas to testify, according to court documents unsealed after the shooting. Other relatives told a judge they feared Aldrich would hurt their grandparents if released, painting a picture of an isolated, violent person who did not have a job and was given \$30,000 that was spent largely on the purchase of 3D printers to make guns, the records showed.

Aldrich was released from jail then and authorities kept two guns — a ghost gun pistol and an MM15 rifle — seized in the arrest. But there was nothing to stop Aldrich from legally purchasing more firearms, raising questions immediately after the shooting about whether authorities should have sought a red flag order to prevent such purchases.

The El Paso County Sheriff's Office said it would not have been able to seek a court order stopping Aldrich from buying or possessing guns because the 2021 arrest record was sealed after the charges were dropped. There was no new evidence that they could use to prove that Aldrich posed a threat "in the near future," the sheriff's office said.

Investigators later revealed that the two guns Aldrich had during the Club Q attack — the rifle and a handgun — appeared to be ghost guns, or firearms without serial numbers that are homemade and do not require an owner to pass a background check.

Aldrich told AP in one of the interviews from jail they were on a "very large plethora of drugs" and abus-

that led to the Titan deaths to decide whether a full investigation is warranted. That full probe will only take place if it appears criminal, federal or provincial law may have been broken, officials said.

The Coast Guard led the initial search and rescue mission, a massive international effort that likely cost millions of dollars. "The Coast Guard doesn't charge for search and rescue nor do we associate a cost with human life," said Rear Adm. John Mauger, of the Coast Guard First District.

OceanGate Expeditions, the company that owned and operated the Titan, is based in the U.S. but the submersible was registered in the Bahamas. OceanGate is based in Everett, Washington, but it closed when the Titan was found. Meanwhile, the Titan's mother ship, the Polar Prince, was from Canada, and those killed were from England, Pakistan, France, and the U.S.

The deep-sea investigations promise to be long and painstaking. How the overall investigation will proceed is complicated by the fact that the world of deep-sea exploration is not well-regulated.

A key part of any investigation is likely to be the Titan itself. The Titan was not registered as a U.S. vessel or with international agencies that regulate safety. And it wasn't classified by a maritime industry group that sets standards on matters such as hull construction.

OceanGate CEO Stockton Rush, who was piloting the Titan when it imploded, had complained that regulations can stifle progress.

One question that seems at least partially resolved is when the implosion likely happened. After the Titan was reported missing, the Navy went back and analyzed its acoustic data and found an "anomaly" June 18 that was consistent with an implosion or explosion in the general vicinity of where the vessel was operating when communications were lost, said a senior U.S. Navy official.

The Navy passed on the information to the Coast Guard, which continued its search because the data was not considered definitive, according to the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive acoustic detection system.

The Titan launched at 8 a.m. June 18 and was reported overdue that afternoon about 435 miles (700 kilometers) south of St. John's, Newfoundland. Rescuers rushed ships, planes and other equipment to the area.

Any sliver of hope that remained for finding the crew alive was wiped away early Thursday, when the Coast Guard announced debris had been found near the Titanic.

Killed in the implosion were Rush; two members of a prominent Pakistani family, Shahzada Dawood and his son Suleman Dawood; British adventurer Hamish Harding; and Titanic expert Paul-Henri Nargeolet.

Questions about the submersible's safety were raised by both by a former company employee and former passengers.

The next big advance in cancer treatment could be a vaccine

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

SEATTLE (AP) — The next big advance in cancer treatment could be a vaccine.

After decades of limited success, scientists say research has reached a turning point, with many predicting more vaccines will be out in five years.

These aren't traditional vaccines that prevent disease, but shots to shrink tumors and stop cancer from coming back. Targets for these experimental treatments include breast and lung cancer, with gains reported this year for deadly skin cancer melanoma and pancreatic cancer.

"We're getting something to work. Now we need to get it to work better," said Dr. James Gulley, who helps lead a center at the National Cancer Institute that develops immune therapies, including cancer treatment vaccines.

More than ever, scientists understand how cancer hides from the body's immune system. Cancer vaccines, like other immunotherapies, boost the immune system to find and kill cancer cells. And some new ones use mRNA, which was developed for cancer but first used for COVID-19 vaccines.

For a vaccine to work, it needs to teach the immune system's T cells to recognize cancer as dangerous, said Dr. Nora Disis of UW Medicine's Cancer Vaccine Institute in Seattle. Once trained, T cells can travel

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anywhere in the body to hunt down danger.

"If you saw an activated T cell, it almost has feet," she said. "You can see it crawling through the blood vessel to get out into the tissues."

Patient volunteers are crucial to the research.

Kathleen Jade, 50, learned she had breast cancer in late February, just weeks before she and her husband were to depart Seattle for an around-the-world adventure. Instead of sailing their 46-foot boat, Shadowfax, through the Great Lakes toward the St. Lawrence Seaway, she was sitting on a hospital bed awaiting her third dose of an experimental vaccine. She's getting the vaccine to see if it will shrink her tumor before surgery.

"Even if that chance is a little bit, I felt like it's worth it," said Jade, who is also getting standard treatment.

Progress on treatment vaccines has been challenging. The first, Provenge, was approved in the U.S. in 2010 to treat prostate cancer that had spread. It requires processing a patient's own immune cells in a lab and giving them back through IV. There are also treatment vaccines for early bladder cancer and advanced melanoma.

Early cancer vaccine research faltered as cancer outwitted and outlasted patients' weak immune systems, said Olja Finn, a vaccine researcher at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine.

"All of these trials that failed allowed us to learn so much," Finn said.

As a result, she's now focused on patients with earlier disease since the experimental vaccines didn't help with more advanced patients. Her group is planning a vaccine study in women with a low-risk, noninvasive breast cancer called ductal carcinoma in situ.

More vaccines that prevent cancer may be ahead too. Decades-old hepatitis B vaccines prevent liver cancer and HPV vaccines, introduced in 2006, prevent cervical cancer.

In Philadelphia, Dr. Susan Domchek, director of the Basser Center at Penn Medicine, is recruiting 28 healthy people with BRCA mutations for a vaccine test. Those mutations increase the risk of breast and ovarian cancer. The idea is to kill very early abnormal cells, before they cause problems. She likens it to periodically weeding a garden or erasing a whiteboard.

Others are developing vaccines to prevent cancer in people with precancerous lung nodules and other inherited conditions that raise cancer risk.

"Vaccines are probably the next big thing" in the quest to reduce cancer deaths, said Dr. Steve Lipkin, a medical geneticist at New York's Weill Cornell Medicine, who is leading one effort funded by the National Cancer Institute. "We're dedicating our lives to that."

People with the inherited condition Lynch syndrome have a 60% to 80% lifetime risk of developing cancer. Recruiting them for cancer vaccine trials has been remarkably easy, said Dr. Eduardo Vilar-Sanchez of MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, who is leading two government-funded studies on vaccines for Lynch-related cancers.

"Patients are jumping on this in a surprising and positive way," he said.

Drugmakers Moderna and Merck are jointly developing a personalized mRNA vaccine for patients with melanoma, with a large study to begin this year. The vaccines are customized to each patient, based on the numerous mutations in their cancer tissue. A vaccine personalized in this way can train the immune system to hunt for the cancer's mutation fingerprint and kill those cells.

But such vaccines will be expensive.

"You basically have to make every vaccine from scratch. If this wasn't personalized, the vaccine could probably be made for pennies, just like the COVID vaccine," said Dr. Patrick Ott of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston.

The vaccines under development at UW Medicine are designed to work for many patients, not just a single patient. Tests are underway in early and advanced breast cancer, lung cancer and ovarian cancer. Some results may come as soon as next year.

Todd Pieper, 56, from suburban Seattle, is participating in testing for a vaccine intended to shrink lung cancer tumors. His cancer spread to his brain, but he's hoping to live long enough to see his daughter graduate from nursing school next year.

"I have nothing to lose and everything to gain, either for me or for other people down the road," Pieper said of his decision to volunteer.

One of the first to receive the ovarian cancer vaccine in a safety study 11 years ago was Jamie Crase of nearby Mercer Island. Diagnosed with advanced ovarian cancer when she was 34, Crase thought she would die young and had made a will that bequeathed a favorite necklace to her best friend. Now 50, she has no sign of cancer and she still wears the necklace.

She doesn't know for sure if the vaccine helped, "But I'm still here."

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

With abortion rights on the line, an August special election has Ohio election offices scrambling

By JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — A high-stakes August special election with national political implications is upending local election offices across Ohio, as already stressed election workers are suddenly faced with a mountain of logistical challenges after Republican lawmakers backtracked on their own law.

Officials have to lure poll workers away from vacations, relocate polling places booked for summer weddings, maintenance or other events, and repeatedly retest ballot language after the state's high court found errors.

"It's disheartening. It's exhausting," said Michelle Wilcox, a Democrat who is the director of elections in tiny Auglaize County in northwest Ohio. "When you're overworked, haven't had breaks, are stressed, things can happen. These are the things that lead up to catastrophes on Election Day, and to have to do it on such a short timeline is troubling."

The tight timeframe was imposed by Republican lawmakers, who reversed a new law that had taken effect in January to eliminate August elections. In May, they added the Aug. 8 special election for a measure that seeks to make it harder to amend the state's constitution. If passed, the amendment would raise the threshold for passing future constitutional changes from a simple majority, as it's been for more than a century, to 60%.

Republicans' immediate goal is to make it harder for voters to pass an abortion rights amendment that is in the works for November.

Other brewing constitutional amendments also could be affected, including efforts to legalize recreational marijuana, increase the minimum wage, reform Ohio's redistricting system and limit vaccine mandates.

All Ohio's living ex-governors, both Democrats and Republicans, and five bipartisan former attorneys general oppose the constitutional change, along with a sweeping coalition of labor, faith, voting rights, civil rights and community groups. It's backed by an alliance of powerful anti-abortion, gun rights, farming and business groups.

Chris Melody Fields Figueredo, executive director of the Ballot Initiative Strategy Center, said the effort is part of a growing movement in Republican-led states to weaken citizens' access to direct democracy and will have national implications.

"What happens in Ohio, win or lose, will have an impact moving forward and have a reverberating effect across the country, because it's stuck between two major election years, and it's a special election," she said. "Whatever happens, it will set the tone for how we go into 2024 legislative sessions, what tactics, what nuances state legislatures may do to try and undermine the will of the people, and impact the ability of citizens to bring issues to the ballot."

Despite the significance, August's Issue 1 could be decided by a fraction of Ohio voters. Turnout predictions diverge wildly.

Republican Joe Kuhn, a member of the Auglaize County Board of Elections, said the question should go

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before voters in a regular general election when history suggests turnout would be greater.

"This goes well beyond the abortion-reproductive rights issue that's going to hit in November. This affects every other issue that would touch the Ohio Constitution. The law's been in place since 1912," he said.

Military and overseas voting began Friday, and voter registration closes July 10. Early voting begins the next day.

Chronically low turnouts were among the reasons Ohio nixed August elections in the first place. Republican Secretary of State Frank LaRose testified at the time that they were bad for taxpayers, election officials and the civic health of the state, largely because few people show up.

"That means just a handful of voters end up making big decisions. The side that wins is often the one that has a vested interest in the passage of the issue up for consideration," he told senators last year. "This isn't how democracy is supposed to work."

A group of Republican lawmakers refused to reverse course on the issue, as LaRose since has, preventing passage of a bill that would have reinstated an August election one time and provide \$20 million to run it.

Legislative leaders decided the bill wasn't needed, tucking the special election date into the resolution that sent Issue 1 to the ballot without the money to pay for it. One Person One Vote, the opposition campaign, challenged the move as illegal, but lost.

The money has been included in the state budget bill, but Wilcox, the Auglaize election director, said the absence of available money has created another set of time-consuming tasks for election boards. That includes clearing expenses with county commissioners that would normally be part of their annual budgets and filing tedious reimbursement paperwork.

In addition, she said, contracts with polling places didn't include the August election date. That means postcards will have to go out telling voters of the relocations, then again in the fall reminding them to return to where they normally vote. She said her roughly 45,000-population county barely dodged a problem at the local fairgrounds, which hosts 10 polling locations serving about 9,000 voters.

In populous Cuyahoga County, which includes Cleveland, "a couple dozen" polling locations had to be switched, said spokesperson Mike West. They include churches now booked with weddings and school buildings being renovated.

Aaron Sellers, spokesperson for the Franklin County Board of Elections in Columbus, said the county will use only 282 voting locations, rather than its usual 307, displacing about 7% of voters.

"We had 25 locations that could not accommodate us, due to resurfacing floors, church camps, Bible studies, those types of things," he said.

To attract people who might be planning August vacations, Franklin County voted this month to increase pay for its poll workers. Sellers said the \$134 stipend for working Election Day is set by the state, but the county election board was able to bump poll workers' allowances for training time and set-up duties.

Hamilton County Elections Director Sherry Poland said her office in Cincinnati only had three polling locations with conflicts, leaving poll worker recruitment as its biggest challenge. Commissioners voted last year to give county workers the day off if they serve, without needing to use vacation time, as well as an extra day off, she said, so they are focusing on that group first.

Changing ballot language has been another challenge for local election boards. Initial wording approved by the state ballot board was found to be erroneous by the Ohio Supreme Court, which ordered it rewritten. Wilcox said that's meant testing voting systems multiple times to accommodate the wording changes.

Initial, intermediate and final wording all required testing, she said, a time-consuming exercise for small counties — and a huge one for a county like Cuyahoga, which has 4,000 different ballot types.

Wilcox said her county's three-person office has been struggling. At one point, the office was juggling duties related to four separate elections: an audit of spring results, the August election, petitions rolling in for the November ballot issue, and the first 2024 candidates beginning to declare their candidacies.

Added to that, groups advancing the abortion rights measure for the November ballot are aiming to collect 700,000 signatures. They're due to local elections offices by July 5.

Civil rights icon James Meredith, 90, falls at Mississippi event but has no visible injuries

By EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — Civil rights icon James Meredith fell outside the Mississippi Capitol on Sunday at an event marking his 90th birthday, but he suffered no visible injuries and was resting comfortably at home later.

Meredith leaned onto an unsecured portable lectern as he stood to speak to about 200 people. The lectern toppled forward, and he fell on top of it. Those around him quickly scrambled to stand Meredith up upright, and they helped him back into the wheelchair he had been using. People also gave him ice packs and cold water as the temperature hovered at about 95 degrees Fahrenheit (35 degrees Celsius).

Meredith remained at the event until it ended about 45 minutes later. An ambulance crew checked him afterward, and Meredith then left in a sport utility vehicle with friends and family.

His wife, Judy Alsobrooks Meredith, said in a text message to The Associated Press hours later that he was at home with family.

"He's enjoying his birthday cake now," she said. "He's tougher than anybody I've ever known."

Meredith was already an Air Force veteran in 1962 when he became the first Black student to enroll at the University of Mississippi, after winning a federal court order. White mobs rioted on the Oxford campus as federal marshals protected Meredith.

In 1966, Meredith set out to promote Black voting rights and to prove that a Black man could walk through Mississippi without fear. On the second day of his planned walk from Memphis, Tennessee, to Jackson, Mississippi, a white man with a shotgun shot and wounded Meredith on a highway.

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and other leaders of the Civil Rights Movement continued Meredith's march in his absence, and Meredith recovered enough to join them for the final stretch. About 15,000 people rallied outside the Mississippi Capitol on June 26, 1966.

With Russia revolt over, mercenaries' future and direction of Ukraine war remain uncertain

By The Associated Press undefined

The rebellious mercenary soldiers who briefly took over a Russian military headquarters on an ominous march toward Moscow were gone Sunday, but the short-lived revolt has weakened President Vladimir Putin just as his forces are facing a fierce counteroffensive in Ukraine.

Under terms of the agreement that ended the crisis, Yevgeny Prigozhin, who led his Wagner troops in the failed uprising, will go into exile in Belarus but will not face prosecution.

But it was unclear what would ultimately happen to him and his forces. Few details of the deal were released either by the Kremlin or Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, who brokered it. Neither Prigozhin nor Putin has been heard from, and top Russian military leaders have also remained silent.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken described the weekend's events as "extraordinary," recalling that 16 months ago Putin appeared poised to seize the capital of Ukraine and now he has had to defend Moscow from forces led by his onetime protege.

"I think we've seen more cracks emerge in the Russian façade," Blinken said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

"It is too soon to tell exactly where they go and when they get there, but certainly we have all sorts of new questions that Putin is going to have to address in the weeks and months ahead."

It was not yet clear what the fissures opened by the 24-hour rebellion would mean for the war in Ukraine. But it resulted in some of the best forces fighting for Russia being pulled from the battlefield: the Wagner troops, who had shown their effectiveness in scoring the Kremlin's only land victory in months, in Bakhmut, and Chechen soldiers sent to stop them on the approach to Moscow.

The Wagner forces' largely unopposed, rapid advance also exposed vulnerabilities in Russia's security and military forces. The mercenary soldiers were reported to have downed several helicopters and a military

ing steroids at the time of the attack. But they did not answer directly regarding the hate crimes charges. When asked whether the attack was motivated by hate, Aldrich said only that was "completely off base." Aldrich's attorneys, who have not disputed Aldrich's role in the shooting, have also pushed back on hate being the reason.

Some survivors who listened to the recorded phone calls saw Aldrich's comments as an attempt to avoid the death penalty which still exists in the federal system. Colorado abolished it in 2020 and life without prison is now the mandated sentence for first-degree murder in the state. They objected to Aldrich's unwillingness to discuss a motive and their use of passive, general language like "I just can't believe what happened" and "I wish I could turn back time."

International group of agencies investigates loss of submersible carrying 5 people to the Titanic

By JENNIFER McDERMOTT and STEVE LeBLANC Associated Press

An international group of agencies is investigating the loss of the Titan submersible, seeking to determine what caused it to implode while carrying five people to the Titanic.

Investigators from the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board, the Transportation Safety Board of Canada, the French marine casualties investigation board and the United Kingdom Marine Accident Investigation Branch are working closely together on the probe of the June 18 accident that drew worldwide attention.

Evidence is being collected in the port of St. John's, Newfoundland, in coordination with Canadian authorities.

On Sunday, U.S. Coast Guard Capt. Jason Neubauer, that agency's chief investigator, said at a news conference that the salvage operations from the sea floor in the North Atlantic are ongoing, and they have mapped the accident site.

He did not give a timeline for the investigation.

The Coast Guard board can make recommendations to prosecutors to pursue civil or criminal sanctions as necessary.

"My primary goal is to prevent a similar occurrence by making the necessary recommendations to advance the safety of the maritime domain worldwide," Neubauer said.

The U.S. Coast Guard announced Thursday that debris from the submersible had been found roughly 1,600 feet (488 meters) from the Titanic shipwreck on the ocean floor.

The Titan submersible imploded on its way to tour the Titanic wreckage, killing all five on board. Debris was located about 12,500 feet (3,810 meters) underwater.

On Saturday, the Transportation Safety Board of Canada said it has begun an investigation into the loss of the submersible and has been speaking with those who traveled on Titan's mother ship, the Polar Prince.

Authorities from the U.S. and Canada began the process of probing the cause of the underwater implosion and are grappling with questions of who is responsible for determining how the tragedy unfolded.

"We are conducting a safety investigation in Canada given that this was a Canadian-flagged vessel (the Polar Prince) that departed a Canadian port and was involved in this occurrence, albeit in international waters," said Kathy Fox, chair of the transportation board. "Other agencies may choose to conduct investigations."

The Polar Prince left Newfoundland on June 16, towing the ill-fated Titan. There were 41 people on board the ship — 17 crew members and 24 others — including the five-man team of the Titan.

Fox said the Canadian Transportation Safety Board will share information it collects with other agencies, like the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board and the U.S. Coast Guard, within the limits of Canadian law. Voice recordings and witness statements are protected under Canadian law, she said.

"We don't want to duplicate efforts. We want to collaborate," she said.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police also announced Saturday that they are studying the circumstances

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communications plane. The Defense Ministry has not commented.

"I honestly think that Wagner probably did more damage to Russian aerospace forces in the past day than the Ukrainian offensive has done in the past three weeks," Michael Kofman, director of Russia studies at the CNA research group, said in a podcast.

Ukrainians hoped the Russian infighting could create opportunities for their army, which is in the early stages of a counteroffensive to take back territory seized by Russian forces.

"Putin is much diminished and the Russian military, and this is significant as far as Ukraine is concerned," said Lord Richard Dannatt, former chief of the general staff of the British armed forces. "... Prigozhin has left the stage to go to Belarus, but is that the end of Yevgeny Prigozhin and the Wagner Group?"

Under terms of the agreement that stopped Prigozhin's advance, Wagner troops who didn't back the revolt will be offered contracts directly with the Russian military, putting them under the control of the military brass that Prigozhin was trying to oust. A possible motivation for Prigozhin's rebellion was the Defense Ministry's demand, which Putin backed, that private companies sign contracts with it by July 1. Prigozhin had refused to do it.

"What we don't know, but will discover in the next hours and days is, how many of his fighters have gone with him, because if he has gone to Belarus and kept an effective fighting force around him, then he ... presents a threat again" to Ukraine, Dannatt said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he told U.S. President Joe Biden in a phone call on Sunday that the aborted rebellion in Russia had "exposed the weakness of Putin's regime."

In their lightning advance, Prigozhin's forces on Saturday took control of two military hubs in southern Russia and got within 200 kilometers (120 miles) of Moscow before retreating.

People in Rostov-on-Don cheered Wagner troops as they departed late Saturday, a scene that played into Putin's fear of a popular uprising. Some ran to shake hands with Prigozhin as he drove away in an SUV.

Yet the rebellion fizzled quickly, in part because Prigozhin did not have the backing he apparently expected from Russian security services. The Federal Security Services immediately called for his arrest.

"Clearly, Prigozhin lost his nerve," retired U.S. Gen. David Petraeus, a former CIA director, said on CNN's "State of the Union."

"This rebellion, although it had some applause along the way, didn't appear to be generating the kind of support that he had hoped it would."

Rostov appeared calm Sunday morning, with only tank tracks on the roads as a reminder of the Wagner fighters.

"It all ended perfectly well, thank God. With minimal casualties, I think. Good job," said a resident, who agreed only to provide his first name, Sergei. He said the Wagner soldiers used to be heroes to him, but not now.

In the Lipetsk region, which sits on the road to Moscow, residents appeared unfazed by the turmoil.

"They did not disrupt anything. They stood calmly on the pavement and did not approach or talk to anyone," Milena Gorbunova told the AP.

As Wagner forces moved north toward Moscow, Russian troops armed with machine guns set up checkpoints on the outskirts. By Sunday afternoon, the troops had withdrawn and traffic had returned to normal, although Red Square remained closed to visitors. On highways leading to Moscow, crews repaired roads ripped up just hours earlier in panic.

Anchors on state-controlled television stations cast the deal ending the crisis as a show of Putin's wisdom and aired footage of Wagner troops retreating from Rostov to the relief of local residents who feared a bloody battle for control of the city. People there who were interviewed by Channel 1 praised Putin's handling of the crisis.

But the revolt and the deal that ended it severely dented Putin's reputation as a leader willing to ruthlessly punish anyone who challenges his authority.

Prigozhin had demanded the ouster of Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, whom Prigozhin has long criticized in withering terms for how he has conducted the war in Ukraine.

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 field camps in Ukraine on Friday by the Russian military that he said killed a large number of his men. The Defense Ministry denied attacking the camps.

U.S. Rep. Mike Turner, who chairs the House Intelligence Committee, said Prigozhin's march on Moscow appeared to have been planned in advance.

"Now, being a military guy, he understands the logistics and really the assistance that he's going to need to do that," including from some Russians on the border with Ukraine who supported him, Turner said on CBS' "Face the Nation."

"This is something that would have had to have been planned for a significant amount of time to be executed in the manner in which it was," he said.

This story has been edited to correct the spelling of Zelenskyy's first name, to fix AP style on Belarusian and correct the name of the CNA research group.

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

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

Your state has a law on bathrooms and trans kids? Officials may not know how it will be enforced

By JACK DURA, JOHN HANNA and SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — When North Dakota restricted what bathrooms transgender students can use in public schools and universities this year, the school district in the state's largest city promised to ignore the new rules. A Republican legislator then called for confiscating its state funding, but the law doesn't include that possibility.

The defiance in Fargo shows that it's not exactly clear how bathroom laws will play out in local communities after being enacted in at least 10 states with Republican-controlled legislatures.

Kansas' GOP attorney general planned to discuss his state's law Monday, five days before it was to take effect. His view is likely to be challenged.

Even Florida's law, allowing the state to threaten the licenses of educators who don't comply, says a transgender student or staffer must first be asked to leave a restroom and refuse.

Some schools already have gender-neutral bathrooms and changing spaces or allow trans students to use staff restrooms. In others, trans students try to make it through the day without using a restroom.

Advocates for transgender people worry that bullying will increase.

"Especially in smaller towns where, say, that bullying could be really bad because transgender individuals are really misunderstood," said Caedmon Marx, outreach chair for LGBTQ+ advocacy group Dakota OutRight and a 23-year-old nonbinary Bismarck State University student.

While the laws focus mostly on transgender students, critics believe they also encourage harassment of trans adults at work and while they're shopping and eating out — and even harassment of cisgender people, or those whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth.

"By men, I get harassed for going into a women's restroom because people think that — the way I look, the way I dress, the way my hair is — that I'm a man," Kansas state Rep. Susan Ruiz, a Kansas City-area Democrat and a lesbian, said during a debate over the Kansas bathroom measure. "This is going to just open up the doors for that."

North Carolina Republicans enacted a bathroom law in 2016, but rolled it back following protests and economic boycotts. A new wave of anti-LGBTQ+ measures began building in 2020, when Idaho enacted the nation's first law barring transgender athletes from girls and women's sports. State lawmakers across

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the U.S. considered hundreds of proposals this year.

Supporters argue that bathroom laws protect the privacy of cisgender women and girls. They've also pitched the laws as safety measures, without evidence of threats or assaults by transgender people against cisgender women or girls.

In North Dakota, Republican state Rep. Robin Weisz, chair of a committee that handled bathroom legislation, said some lawmakers worried about "being taken over by a radical agenda" on gender identity.

A GOP colleague, state Rep. Bill Tveit, said: "Our whole society is catering to it and encouraging it, and I don't think that that's where we're at, nor should be."

States' laws vary in their sweep. Florida and North Dakota are applying their restrictions to state universities and prisons. Arkansas is making it a misdemeanor for transgender adults to be in any public changing room associated with their gender identities if a minor is present and the purpose is "arousing or gratifying a sexual desire." Kansas' law applies not just to restrooms and locker rooms, but to rape crisis centers, domestic violence shelters, prisons and other detention centers.

State laws also differ in what they say about enforcement.

If an Oklahoma school violates that state's 2022 law, its district can lose 5% of its state funding, though none have so far.

Florida schools and universities must have policies for punishing students who don't comply, and educators who flout the law could risk losing their state licenses. Starting in July 2024, the state attorney general can sue schools that don't comply.

Arkansas mandates a minimum fine of \$1,000 for defiant educators, and Iowa residents can file complaints with the state's attorney general. Arkansas, Idaho, Oklahoma and Tennessee allow private lawsuits against schools.

But laws in Alabama, Kansas, Kentucky and North Dakota don't spell out any enforcement regime.

Transgender, nonbinary and gender-nonconforming people and LGBTQ-rights advocates predict that states will rely on "vigilante" enforcement by private individuals. Sarah Warbelow, legal director for the Human Rights Campaign, expects lawsuits from people "dedicated to making life impossible for transgender people."

All of the laws permit schools and other institutions to make special accommodations for trans students, such as providing gender-neutral bathrooms, so long as they aren't allowed into facilities associated with their gender identities.

In Kansas' largest school district in Wichita, schools already have worked with individual students and their parents to make accommodations. The Shawnee Mission district in the state's affluent Kansas City suburbs is adding gender-neutral restrooms.

But in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Al Stone-Gebhardt, an 18-year-old transgender man, recently graduated from a high school that didn't have gender-neutral restrooms. After using the girls restroom during his junior year, he planned to use the nurse's but was turned away the first day of his senior year.

His mother, Erika DuBose, acknowledged "flipping out" when her son texted her about it. She sent an email to school staff that demanded, "HOW DARE YOU DENY MY CHILD THEIR BIOLOGICAL NEEDS?" To avoid using any restroom at school, her son was wasn't eating or drinking much.

The school became more accommodating, they said.

"It is literally putting trans students at risk," Stone-Gebhardt said. "Having to choose between being hydrated and being outed is extremely traumatic and inherently problematic as well."

Warbelow said states can expect some "civil disobedience."

In the liberal community of Lawrence in northeast Kansas, the home of the University of Kansas' main campus, the local district attorney declared that she wouldn't prosecute violations of the new state law.

And in Fargo, one of North Dakota's rare politically blue places, the school board backed Superintendent Rupak Gandhi's public statement that, "We will not participate in anything that we think is going to subject students to further discrimination or increase their self-harm."

That prompted Tveit to email fellow state lawmakers, suggesting the district lose its state funding. But

North Dakota's Legislature won't be in session again until 2025.

"I think any law that goes into place needs a specific penalty," Tveit said, "because without a specific penalty, then you have this defiance."

Hanna reported from Topeka, Kan., and Murphy, from Tulsa, Okla. Also contributing was Associated Press Writer Andrew DeMillo in Little Rock, Ark.

Follow John Hanna on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/apjdhanna>

When wealthy adventurers take huge risks, who should foot the bill for rescue attempts?

By ADAM GELLER and WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS Associated Press

When millionaire Steve Fossett's plane went missing over the Nevada range in 2007, the swashbuckling adventurer had already been the subject of two prior emergency rescue operations thousands of miles apart.

And that prompted a prickly question: After a sweeping search for the wealthy risktaker ended, who should foot the bill?

In recent days, the massive hunt for a submersible vehicle lost during a north Atlantic descent to explore the wreckage of the Titanic has refocused attention on that conundrum. And with rescuers and the public fixated first on saving and then on mourning those aboard, it has again made for uneasy conversation.

"Five people have just lost their lives and to start talking about insurance, all the rescue efforts and the cost can seem pretty heartless — but the thing is, at the end of the day, there are costs," said Arun Upneja, dean of Boston University's School of Hospitality Administration and a researcher on tourism.

"There are many people who are going to say, 'Why should the society spend money on the rescue effort if (these people) are wealthy enough to be able to ... engage in these risky activities?'"

That question is gaining attention as very wealthy travelers in search of singular adventures spend big to scale peaks, sail across oceans and blast off for space.

The U.S. Coast Guard declined Friday to provide a cost estimate for its efforts to locate the Titan, the submersible investigators say imploded not far from the world's most famous shipwreck. The five people lost included a billionaire British businessman and a father and son from one of Pakistan's most prominent families. The operator charged passengers \$250,000 each to participate in the voyage.

"We cannot attribute a monetary value to Search and Rescue cases, as the Coast Guard does not associate cost with saving a life," the agency said.

While the Coast Guard's cost for the mission is likely to run into the millions of dollars, it is generally prohibited by federal law from collecting reimbursement related to any search or rescue service, said Stephen Koerting, a U.S. attorney in Maine who specializes in maritime law.

But that does not resolve the larger issue of whether wealthy travelers or companies should bear responsibility to the public and governments for exposing themselves to such risk.

"This is one of the most difficult questions to attempt to find an answer for," said Pete Sepp, president of the National Taxpayers Union, noting scrutiny of government-funded rescues dating back to British billionaire Richard Branson's hot air balloon exploits in the 1990s.

"This should never be solely about government spending, or perhaps not even primarily about government spending, but you can't help thinking about how the limited resources of rescuers can be utilized," Sepp said.

The demand for those resources was spotlighted in 1998 when Fossett's attempt to circle the globe in a hot air balloon ended with a plunge into the ocean 500 miles off Australia. The Royal Australian Air Force dispatched a Hercules C-130 transport aircraft to find him. A French military plane dropped a 15-man life raft to Fossett before he was picked up by a passing yacht.

Critics suggested Fossett should pay the bill. He rejected the idea.

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Late that same year the US Coast Guard spent more than \$130,000 to rescue Fossett and Branson after their hot air balloon dropped into the ocean off Hawaii. Branson said he would pay if the Coast Guard requested it, but the agency didn't ask.

Nine years later, after Fossett's plane vanished over Nevada during what should have been a short flight, the state National Guard launched a months-long search that turned up the wreckage of several other decades-old crashes without finding the millionaire.

The state said the mission had cost taxpayers \$685,998, with \$200,000 covered by a private contribution. But when the administration of Gov. Jim Gibbons announced that it would seek reimbursement for the rest, Fossett's widow balked, noting she had spent \$1 million on her own private search.

"We believe the search conducted by the state of Nevada is an expense of government in performance of government action," a lawyer wrote on behalf of the Fossett estate.

Risky adventurism is hardly unique to wealthy people.

The pandemic drove a surge in visits to places like national parks, adding to the popularity of climbing, hiking and other outdoor activities. Meanwhile, the spread of cellphones and service has left many feeling that if things go wrong, help is a call away.

Some places have laws commonly referred to as "stupid motorist laws," in which drivers are forced to foot the emergency response bill when they ignore barricades on submerged roads. Arizona has such a law, and Volusia County in Florida, home to Daytona, enacted similar legislation this week. The idea of a similar "stupid hiker law" is a regularly debated item in Arizona as well, with so many unprepared people needing to be rescued in stifling triple-digit heat.

Most officials and volunteers who run search efforts are opposed to charging for help, said Butch Farabee, a former ranger who participated in hundreds of rescue operations at the Grand Canyon and other national parks and has written several books on the subject.

Searchers are concerned that if they did charge to rescue people "they won't call for help as soon as they should and by the time they do it's too late," Farabee said.

The tradeoff is that some might take that vital aid for granted. Farabee recounts a call in the 1980s from a lawyer who underestimated the effort needed to hike out of the Grand Canyon. The man asked for a helicopter rescue, mentioning that he had an important meeting the following day. The ranger rejected that request.

But that is not an option when the lives of adventurers, some of them quite wealthy, are at extreme risk.

At Mount Everest, it can cost tens of thousands of dollars in permit and expedition fees to climb. A handful of people die or go missing while hiking the mountain every year — prompting emergency response from local officials.

While the government of Nepal requires that climbers have rescue insurance, the scope of rescue efforts can vary widely, with Upneja estimating that some could cost "multiple dozens of thousands of dollars."

Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not respond to a message seeking comment.

On the high seas, wealthy yachtsmen seeking speed and distance records have also repeatedly required rescue when their voyages run astray.

When the yacht of Tony Bullimore, a British millionaire on a round-the-world journey, capsized 1,400 miles off the Australia Coast in 1997 it seemed he might be done for. Clinging to the inside of the hull, he ran out of fresh water and was almost out of air.

When a rescue ship arrived, he swam desperately toward the surface.

'I was starting to look back over my life and was thinking, 'Well, I've had a good life, I've done most of the things I had wanted to,' Bullimore said afterward. "If I was picking words to describe it, it would be a miracle, an absolute miracle.'

Australian officials, whose forces rescued a French yachtsman the same week, were more measured in their assessment.

"We have an international legal obligation," Ian McLachlan, the defense minister said. "We have a moral obligation obviously to go and rescue people, whether in bushfires, cyclones or at sea."

Less was said, however, about the Australian government's request to restrict the routes of yacht races

— in hopes of keeping sailors to areas where they might require less rescuing.

Associated Press writer David Sharp in Portland, Maine contributed to this story.

LGBTQ+ Pride Month reaches its grand crescendo on city streets from New York to San Francisco

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Thousands of effusive marchers danced to club music in New York City streets Sunday as bubbles and confetti rained down, and fellow revelers from Toronto to San Francisco cheered through Pride Month's grand crescendo.

New York's boisterous throng strolled and danced down Fifth Avenue to Greenwich Village, cheering and waving rainbow flags to commemorate the 1969 Stonewall uprising, where a police raid on a gay bar triggered days of protests and launched the modern movement for LGBTQ+ rights.

While some people whooped it up in celebration, many were mindful of the growing conservative countermovement, including new laws banning gender-affirming care for transgender children.

"I'm trying not to be very heavily political, but when it does target my community, I get very, very annoyed and very hurt," said Ve Cinder, a 22-year-old transgender woman who traveled from Pennsylvania to take part in the country's largest Pride event.

"I'm just, like, scared for my future and for my trans siblings. I'm frightened of how this country has looked at human rights, basic human rights," she said. "It's crazy."

Parades in New York, Chicago and San Francisco are among events that roughly 400 Pride organizations across the U.S. are holding this year, with many focused specifically on the rights of transgender people.

One of the grand marshals of New York City's parade 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.

San Francisco Pride, another of the largest and best known LGBTQ+ celebrations in the United States, drew tens of thousands of spectators to the city Sunday.

The event, kicked off by the group Dykes on Bikes, featured dozens of colorful floats, some carrying strong messages against the wave of anti-transgender legislation in statehouses across the country.

Organizers told the San Francisco Chronicle that this year's theme emphasized activism. The parade included the nation's first drag laureate, D'Arcy Drollinger.

"When we walk through the world more authentic and more fabulous, we inspire everyone," Drollinger said at a breakfast before the parade.

Along Market Street, House Speaker Emerita Nancy Pelosi and Rep. Adam Schiff of Burbank were spotted riding together.

In Chicago, a brief downpour at the beginning of the parade didn't deter parade goers, who took shelter under awnings, trees and umbrellas.

"A little rain can't stop us!" tweeted Brandon Johnson, the city's newly elected mayor.

Chicago's 52nd annual celebration on Sunday featured drag performers Marilyn Doll Traid and Selena Peres, as well as the Bud Billiken dancers, who drew loud praise from the crowd as they represented the celebration of Black roots in Chicago's South Side.

"It's very important to have a Chicago Pride parade," Traid said. "And those that wanna go against us, you have to realize that we all stand together."

Thousands of people also flooded the streets Saturday night in Houston to celebrate pride parades and embrace the LGBTQ+ community.

"Houston is one big diverse family. Today is about celebrating people who are themselves, their authentic selves and letting everyone know that this is a city full of love, not division, not hate," said Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner.

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San Antonio also celebrated its Pride parade Saturday night, with hundreds of people lining downtown streets.

"This year's theme is 'Just Say Gay.' We feel so strongly about the legislation that's occurring, not only here in Texas, but in other states throughout the United States that are trying to put us back in the closet," Phillip Barcena, Pride San Antonio president, told KSAT.

Also Saturday, first lady Jill Biden made an appearance at the Pride parade in Nashville, Tennessee, where she told the crowd "loud and clear that you belong, that you are beautiful, that you are loved."

Many other cities held their marquee events earlier this month, including Boston, which hosted its first parade after a three-year hiatus that began with COVID-19 but extended through 2022 because the organization that used to run it dissolved under criticism that it excluded racial minorities and transgender people.

A key message this year has been 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 for the transgender community, its advocates say.

"We 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."

Earlier Sunday, New York Gov. Kathy Hochul signed a bill that would make the state a "safe haven" for transgender youth and forbid law enforcement agencies from providing information that could undermine the ability for a child to get gender-affirming care.

NYC Mayor Adams made a similar move this week, issuing an executive order preventing city resources from being used to cooperate with out-of-state authorities in detaining anyone receiving gender-affirming care in the city.

The Anti-Defamation League and GLAAD, a national LGBTQ+ organization, reported 101 anti-LGBTQ+ incidents 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 incidents coincided with Pride events.

Nevertheless, Roz Gould Keith, who has a transgender son, is heartened by the increased visibility of transgender people at marches and celebrations across the country.

"Ten years ago, when my son asked to go to Motor City Pride, there was nothing for the trans community," said Keith, 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 transgender people.

AP writers Juan Lozano in Houston; Erin Hooley in Chicago; Trần Nguyễn in Sacramento, California; James Pollard in Columbia, South Carolina; Geoff Mulvihill in Cherry Hill, New Jersey; Trisha Ahmed in St. Paul, Minnesota, and Susan Haigh in Hartford, Connecticut, contributed to this report.

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.

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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 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

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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.

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.

Flights at Reagan National, Dulles airports resume after being halted by air traffic control woes

WASHINGTON (AP) — Normal operations at airports in the Washington, D.C., area resumed about an hour after they were suspended Sunday evening because of a problem at a major air traffic control facility, the Federal Aviation Administration said.

The FAA said on Twitter that the operations at Reagan and Dulles international airports have restarted after repairs to a communications system were made at the Potomac Terminal Radar Approach Control facility.

While the repairs were underway, departures from National and Dulles international airports were subjected to a ground stop, the FAA said.

US Coast Guard will lead investigation of Titan implosion with help from Canada, France, UK

By JENNIFER McDERMOTT and STEVE LeBLANC Associated Press

The U.S. Coast Guard said Sunday it is leading an investigation into the loss of the Titan submersible that was carrying five people to the Titanic, to determine what caused it to implode.

Capt. Jason Neubauer, chief investigator, said the salvage operations from the sea floor are ongoing, and they have mapped the accident site. He did not give a timeline for the investigation. The convening of a Marine Board of Investigation is the highest level of investigation conducted by the U.S. Coast Guard, Neubauer said.

Investigators are working closely with other national and international investigative authorities, including the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board, Transportation Safety Board of Canada, the French marine casualties investigation board and the United Kingdom Marine Accident Investigation Branch, Neubauer added. Evidence is being collected in the port of St. John's, Newfoundland, in coordination with Canadian authorities.

The Coast Guard board can make recommendations to prosecutors to pursue civil or criminal sanctions as necessary.

"My primary goal is to prevent a similar occurrence by making the necessary recommendations to advance the safety of the maritime domain worldwide," Neubauer said.

The U.S. Navy said Sunday that it won't be using a large piece of salvage equipment that it had deployed to the effort to retrieve the Titan submersible.

The Flyaway Deep Ocean Salvage System had the capability of lifting an intact Titan back to the surface. The U.S. Coast Guard announced on Thursday that debris from the submersible had been found roughly 1,600 feet (488 meters) from the Titanic in North Atlantic waters.

The Titan submersible imploded on its way to tour the Titanic wreckage, killing all five on board. Debris was located about 12,500 feet (3,810 meters) underwater.

The Navy would only use the ocean salvage system if there were pieces large enough to require the use of the specialized equipment.

"Efforts are focused on helping map the debris field in preparation for recovery efforts and to support

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investigative actions. Efforts to mobilize equipment such as the Flyaway Deep Ocean Salvage System have been discontinued," a Navy official told The Associated Press.

The Navy describes the Flyaway Deep Ocean Salvage System as a "portable, ship lift system designed to provide reliable deep ocean lifting capacity of up to 60,000 pounds for the recovery of large, bulky, and heavy sunken objects such as aircraft or small vessels."

The Titan weighed 20,000 pounds (9,071 kilograms).

The Navy is continuing to support the U.S. Coast Guard as operations continue.

On Saturday, the Transportation Safety Board of Canada said that it has begun an investigation into the loss of the submersible and has been speaking with those who traveled on Titan's mother ship, the Polar Prince.

Authorities from the U.S. and Canada began the process of probing the cause of the underwater implosion and are grappling with questions of who is responsible for determining how the tragedy unfolded.

"We are conducting a safety investigation in Canada given that this was a Canadian-flagged vessel that departed a Canadian port and was involved in this occurrence, albeit in international waters," said Kathy Fox, chair of the transportation board. "Other agencies may choose to conduct investigations."

The Polar Prince left Newfoundland on June 16, towing the ill-fated Titan. There were 41 people on board the ship — 17 crew members and 24 others — including the five-man team of the Titan.

Fox said the Canadian Transportation Safety Board will share information it collects with other agencies, like the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board and the U.S. Coast Guard, within the limits of Canadian law. Voice recordings and witness statements are protected under Canadian law, she said.

"We don't want to duplicate efforts. We want to collaborate," she said.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police also announced Saturday that they are studying the circumstances that led to the Titan deaths to decide whether a full investigation is warranted. That full probe will only take place if it appears criminal, federal or provincial law may have been broken, officials said.

The Coast Guard led the initial search and rescue mission, a massive international effort that likely cost millions of dollars. "The Coast Guard doesn't charge for search and rescue nor do we associate a cost with human life," said Rear Adm. John Mauger, of the Coast Guard First District.

OceanGate Expeditions, the company that owned and operated the Titan, is based in the U.S. but the submersible was registered in the Bahamas. OceanGate is based in Everett, Washington, but it closed when the Titan was found. Meanwhile, the Titan's mother ship, the Polar Prince, was from Canada, and those killed were from England, Pakistan, France, and the U.S.

The deep-sea investigations promise to be long and painstaking. How the overall investigation will proceed is complicated by the fact that the world of deep-sea exploration is not well-regulated.

A key part of any investigation is likely to be the Titan itself. The Titan was not registered as a U.S. vessel or with international agencies that regulate safety. And it wasn't classified by a maritime industry group that sets standards on matters such as hull construction.

OceanGate CEO Stockton Rush, who was piloting the Titan when it imploded, had complained that regulations can stifle progress.

One question that seems at least partially resolved is when the implosion likely happened. After the Titan was reported missing, the Navy went back and analyzed its acoustic data and found an "anomaly" Sunday that was consistent with an implosion or explosion in the general vicinity of where the vessel was operating when communications were lost, said a senior U.S. Navy official.

The Navy passed on the information to the Coast Guard, which continued its search because the data was not considered definitive, according to the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive acoustic detection system.

The Titan launched at 8 a.m. that day and was reported overdue that afternoon about 435 miles (700 kilometers) south of St. John's, Newfoundland. Rescuers rushed ships, planes and other equipment to the area.

Any sliver of hope that remained for finding the crew alive was wiped away early Thursday, when the

Coast Guard announced that debris had been found near the Titanic.

Killed in the implosion were Rush; two members of a prominent Pakistani family, Shahzada Dawood and his son Suleman Dawood; British adventurer Hamish Harding; and Titanic expert Paul-Henri Nargeolet.

Questions about the submersible's safety were raised by both by a former company employee and former passengers.

At least three dead and five injured at early morning shootings in Kansas City, Missouri

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — At least three people have been found dead, and at least five others are thought to be injured, police in Missouri said while investigating two shootings with multiple victims in the same area of Kansas City early Sunday morning.

Officers were called to the intersection of 57th Street and Prospect Avenue just after 4:30 a.m. when they found three shooting victims — two men and one woman — dead in a parking lot and in the street, the Kansas City Police Department said in a news release.

Police were told that five other shooting victims with injuries that were not life-threatening arrived at various hospitals by private vehicles or ambulance, the department said. "Preliminary information indicates there was a large gathering of people in a parking lot at the intersection when the victims were shot," the department said.

The investigation indicates the gathering took place outside an auto mechanic shop that is known to host informal after hours gatherings, though there is not a licensed club, bar or restaurant at that location, police spokesperson Jake Becchina said in an email.

Kansas City, Missouri, Mayor Quinton Lucas posted on Twitter, "My condolences to the families of three people killed in a shooting this morning at an apparent after-hours gathering near 57 and Prospect. If the business knew persons would be present, without security, selling alcohol, and thwarting our laws, that business should be closed."

There were no immediate arrests, Becchina said. He added that police also responded to a nearby shooting on Prospect Avenue near 31st Street around 3 a.m. where at least one person suffered life-threatening injuries.

'Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse' slings back into box office top spot while 'The Flash' drops

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse" slung its webs back atop the box office ranks while "The Flash" saw a drop faster than the film's speedy character.

The Spidey animated sequel — starring Shameik Moore as the teenage webslinger Miles Morales — reclaimed the No. 1 spot in its fourth week in North American theaters, scoring \$19.3 million. The latest number helped the Sony film reach \$317.1 million domestically and an impressive \$560.3 million worldwide.

"For a film like this to crawl and spin a web back into the No. 1 spot is very rare," said Paul Dergarabedian, the senior media analyst for Comscore. "It's a testament to the quality of the movie. This is a very competitive and crowded summer movie marketplace. And yet 'Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse' has distinguished itself as one of the biggest movies this summer season."

"Spider-Verse" beat out "Elemental," which took second place for the second week in a row with an estimated \$18.5 million. The film held on to the spot after experiencing Pixar's worst three-day opening last week.

No other film had such a dramatic drop than "The Flash" with \$15.2 million for the big-budget offering. The second-week output for the DC and Warner Bros superhero film, starring Ezra Miller, fell off by 72% after opening with a subpar \$55 million.

So far, the numbers "The Flash" have accumulated haven't measured up for a movie with a \$200 million

production budget. Some are crediting the film's struggles to Miller's off-screen behavior that has included arrests and misconduct. The actor has apologized and sought mental health treatment.

"Sometimes it's not the opening weekend that tells the whole story — particularly with 'Elemental,'" Dergarabedian said. "It's more about the challenges that can sometimes face a movie like 'The Flash' that are multifaceted, and it's very difficult to overcome."

"The Flash" barely edged out "No Hard Feelings," starring Jennifer Lawrence and Andrew Barth Feldman. The Sony R-rated comedy, which opened in fourth place with \$15.1 million, tells a story about a teen's parents who hired a woman (Lawrence) to date and boost his confidence.

With "Spider-Verse" and "No Hard Feelings," Dergarabedian said Sony should be pleased about the turnout for both films.

"Transformers: Rise of the Beasts" came in fifth place with \$11.6 million in its third week with a total \$122.9 million. It placed ahead of Wes Anderson's "Asteroid City," which did better than expected with \$9 million.

In seventh, "The Little Mermaid" pulled in \$8.6 million to bring its total to more than \$270 million.

Dergarabedian said he expects a good draw for "Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny," which opens June 30.

"No matter what the reviews are. I know the reviews have been mixed. But the summer movie fan who wants to go to the movie theater, you can't sit this one out," he said. "It's really going to be the audience who will decide the ultimate success of this film."

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore. Final domestic figures will be released Monday.

1. "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse," \$19.3 million.
2. "Elemental," \$18.4 million.
3. "The Flash," \$15.2 million.
4. "No Hard Feelings," 15.1 million.
5. "Transformers: Rise of the Beasts," \$11.6 million.
6. "Asteroid City" \$9 million.
7. "The Little Mermaid," \$8.6 million.
8. "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3," \$3.5 million.
9. "The Blackening," \$3 million.

Sarah, Duchess of York, undergoes surgery following breast cancer diagnosis

LONDON (AP) — Sarah, the Duchess of York, underwent surgery after being diagnosed with breast cancer, according to a spokesperson.

The 63-year-old was diagnosed with early-stage breast cancer following a routine mammogram. The surgery was a success and Sarah's prognosis is good, the duchess's spokesperson said. She was released from King Edward VII's Hospital in London on Sunday to recuperate at home in Windsor.

Sarah, the former wife of Prince Andrew and the mother of Princess Beatrice and Princess Eugenie, spoke about the diagnosis on her new podcast, "Tea Talks with the Duchess and Sarah," set to be released Monday. She recorded the segment before her operation.

Once a favorite target of Britain's tabloids, the former Sarah Ferguson has previously published her memoirs and authored a number of children's books as well as a historical romance for adults.

NYC gets \$25M for e-bike charging stations, seeking to prevent deadly battery fires

NEW YORK (AP) — After a series of fires involving faulty e-bike batteries including a recent blaze that claimed four lives, New York City officials announced Sunday that they are receiving a \$25 million emergency grant from the federal government to fund scores of charging stations citywide.

Mayor Eric Adams hopes the stations will provide a safer way for delivery workers, who rely on e-bikes to efficiently do their jobs, to recharge lithium batteries used to power their bicycles.

"This means that residents will no longer need to charge the e-bikes in their apartments — what we find to be extremely dangerous, particularly when you charge them overnight," Adams said at a news conference Sunday. He was flanked by the state's two U.S. senators who helped secure the funding from the US. Department of Transportation.

The announcement comes after a lithium ion battery caught fire and engulfed an e-bike shop in Manhattan's Chinatown. The fire and thick smoke spread to apartments above the shop, killing four people and injuring three others, including a responding firefighter.

In the days since, New York City officials sought the public's help in cracking down on unsafe e-bike shops and fire officials issued at least 10 citations to shops for improper handling of the batteries.

City officials said they'd previously fined the shop for its e-bike charging practices, though inspectors reportedly did not check to see if the store was selling reconditioned batteries on a recent visit.

Under new guidelines, fire officials will be directed to respond to complaints about e-bike batteries within 12 hours, rather than the previous policy of three days.

New York City has seen over 100 fires and 13 deaths this year linked to e-bikes, more than double the total number of fatalities from last year, officials said.

The city has issued nearly 500 summonses related to e-bikes, which can result in fines between \$1,000 and \$5,000.

The batteries can overheat if defective or improperly charged.

Adams had announced in March that the city was working to establish charging stations. The grant would fund an initial 170 charging units in about 50 locations.

New York Sen. Chuck Schumer, the Senate Majority Leader, said the charging stations proved "new hope" to prevent "these fires that start from shoddy China-made lithium ion batteries and chargers," he said during the press conference.

Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand said she and Schumer were working on legislation to establish safety standards for batteries.

"If passed," she said, "it would take improperly manufactured batteries off the market."

Russian mercenaries' revolt undermines Putin and could lead to further challenges to his rule

By The Associated Press undefined

For the first time in his more than 20-year rule, President Vladimir Putin's power appeared to hang in the balance this weekend.

And even though the rebellious Russian mercenary forces who descended on Moscow have turned back, Putin will struggle to project the image of a man in total control that he once did. That could set the stage for further challenges to his rule at home and could weaken Russia's hand in the war in Ukraine.

With spectacular ease and a stated aim of ousting Russia's defense minister, Yevgeny Prigozhin's Wagner troops swept into Rostov-on-Don, a city of 1.1 million people, and seized the military headquarters there. They then continued hundreds of kilometers (miles) north on a lightning march toward the capital without meeting any serious resistance.

Some were even cheered — a sign that Prigozhin's positioning of himself as an enemy of a corrupt and incompetent elite resonated and a detail that will not be lost on those surrounding Putin in the coming days.

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"This whole episode has sowed really profound anxiety across Russia's elites," said Nigel Gould-Davies, a senior fellow for Russia and Eurasia at the Institute for Strategic Studies. The actions of the Russian leader's one-time protégé "severely shake confidence in Putin among those around him who matter."

For several tense hours, the Kremlin seemed powerless as Wagner convoys rolled through Russia, smashing occasional roadblocks and shooting down aircraft sent by the military in a desperate attempt to stop them.

With the bulk of Russian forces tied up in the fighting in Ukraine, authorities rushed a motley collection of troops and police to protect Moscow, dug up roads and even blew up bridges to slow down the onslaught.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and General Staff chief Gen. Valery Gerasimov vanished from public view on that decisive day, amplifying the sense of weakness and lack of control.

In a televised address to the nation broadcast early Saturday, a somber-looking Putin accused Prigozhin of betrayal and compared the situation to the collapse of the Russian empire in 1917.

But hours later, the Russian leader granted Prigozhin amnesty — on condition that he goes into exile in Belarus.

While the Kremlin tried to cast the deal as a wise move that helped avoid a looming bloodbath, it was a remarkable compromise for a man who has relentlessly suppressed any sign of dissent and sometimes violently silenced foes daring to criticize him.

The quick pardon for Prigozhin stood in contrast to the Kremlin's methodical crackdown on dissidents and critics of the war in Ukraine, who have faced prosecution, forced exile or even violent deaths. For many in Putin's Russia, his handling of the revolt was a sign of unforgivable weakness.

"Prigozhin demonstrated that it's possible to capture a city of a million people with impunity, put demands to the country's leadership, refuse to obey its orders and mount military marches on Moscow while killing Russian soldiers on the way," said Viktor Alksnis, a retired Soviet air force colonel and current hardliner who expresses views shared by many Russian hawks, who have been increasingly critical of Putin's rule and his handling of the war in Ukraine. "Russia has moved a step closer to its final and irreparable collapse."

The blow to Putin comes on top of repeated Russian failures in his 16-month war in Ukraine.

Gould-Davies noted that the mutiny has destabilized the military and badly hurt troop morale, opening new opportunities to Ukraine, now in the initial stages of its counteroffensive.

"This is Russians killing Russians on Russian territory while Russia is trying to contain a Ukrainian counteroffensive," Gould-Davies observed. "This is not what Russia wants in wartime."

While the deal with Prigozhin could bring some Wagner troops under the control of the Defense Ministry — a demand that the mercenary leader had previously rejected, precipitating the conflict — it's a small compensation for the huge damage to the government authority that the crisis has inflicted.

Kirill Rogov, a political analyst who has long studied Putin's politics, observed that the problem was of the Russian president's own making: He tolerated Prigozhin's feud with the top military leaders as part of his strategy to shift blame for the military blunders in Ukraine and play members of the elite against one another in an apparent belief that he could fully control Prigozhin.

"Golem's creator always thinks that he can be stopped and he makes him look increasingly convincing in order to scare others," Rogov wrote in a commentary, referring to a clay creature brought to life in Jewish folklore.

Putin did stop Prigozhin in the end — but at a steep price.

Associated Press writer Danica Kirka in London contributed to this report.

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

A woman fatally shot an Uber driver. Police say she wrongly thought she was being kidnapped

EL PASO, Texas (AP) — A Kentucky woman has been accused of fatally shooting her West Texas Uber driver after mistakenly believing she was being kidnapped and taken to Mexico, according to police.

Phoebe Copas remained jailed Sunday in El Paso, Texas, after being charged with murder last week in the death of 52-year-old Daniel Piedra Garcia.

Court and jail records did not list an attorney who could speak for Copas, 48.

The shooting took place on June 16 as Piedra was driving Copas to a location in far southeast El Paso. Copas, who is from Tompkinsville, Kentucky, was in El Paso visiting her boyfriend, according to authorities.

During the ride, Copas saw traffic signs that read "Juarez, Mexico," according to an arrest affidavit. El Paso is located on the U.S.-Mexico border across from Juarez.

Believing she was being kidnapped and taken to Mexico, Copas is accused of grabbing a handgun from her purse and shooting Piedra in the head, according to the affidavit. The vehicle crashed into barriers before coming to a stop on a freeway.

The area where the car crashed was "not in close proximity of a bridge, port of entry or other area with immediate access to travel into Mexico," according to the affidavit.

"The investigation does not support that a kidnapping took place or that Piedra was veering from Copas' destination," police said in a news release.

Police allege that before she called 911, Copas took a photo of Piedra after the shooting and texted it to her boyfriend.

Piedra was hospitalized for several days before his family took him off life support after doctors told them he would not recover.

"He was a hardworking man and really funny," Piedra's niece, Didi Lopez, told the El Paso Times. "He was never in a bad mood. He was always the one that, if he saw you in a bad mood, he'd come over and try to lift you up."

Copas, who is being held on a \$1.5 million bond, was originally charged with aggravated assault. The charge was upgraded to murder after Piedra died.

A GoFundMe campaign set up by Piedra's family said he was their sole provider and had only recently started working again after being injured in his previous job.

"I wish she would've spoken up, asked questions, not acted on impulse and make a reckless decision, because not only did she ruin our lives, but she ruined her life, too," Lopez said. "We just want justice for him. That's all we're asking."

Belarus deal to take in leader of Russian rebellion puts him in an even more repressive nation

By YURAS KARMANAU The Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — Russian mercenary boss Yevgeny Prigozhin was notorious for unbridled and profane challenges to authority even before the attempted rebellion that he mounted Saturday. The reported agreement for him to go into exile in Belarus would place him in a country where such behavior is even less acceptable than in his homeland.

Prigozhin on Sunday was uncharacteristically silent as his Wagner private army forces pulled back from Russian cities after a Kremlin announcement that he had agreed to depart for Belarus; it remains unclear whether he's actually there.

What will Prigozhin find in Belarus?

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko reportedly negotiated the deal, and Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Saturday that Lukashenko "has been acquainted with Mr. Prigozhin for a long time, at least 20 years."

But Prigozhin's maverick ways are at odds with Lukashenko's harsh repression of dissent and indepen-

dent media.

In power since 1994, the leader who is often called "Europe's last dictator" launched a brutal crackdown on 2020 protests against his rule. Hundreds were sentenced to lengthy prison terms, including Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ales Bialiatski.

Under Lukashenko, Belarus became almost umbilically tied to neighboring Russia, agreeing to form a still-in-progress "union state." Although Belarus' army is not known to have taken part in Russia's war on Ukraine, the country allows Russia to base troops there that have fought in Ukraine and made a deal this year for deployment of Russian tactical nuclear weapons. Lukashenko is a vehement ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Prigozhin's stance toward the Kremlin leader is murkier. Even as his fighters moved swiftly toward Moscow on Saturday, Prigozhin did not criticize Putin directly and instead claimed his aim was to oust the Russian defense establishment, which he has denounced as corrupt and incompetent, complaining that it undermined his forces fighting in Ukraine.

What's next for Prigozhin?

"It is not yet clear what Lukashenko is going to do with Prigozhin. I think they don't have an understanding themselves," exiled Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya told The Associated Press.

"Lukashenko once again has made Belarus a hostage to other people's games and wars. He is by no means a peacemaker," Tsikhanouskaya said.

"Prigozhin leaving for Belarus does not mean that Prigozhin will stay there. There's nothing for him to do in Belarus — arrive, exhale, use the corridor and move on," said Artem Shraibman, a Belarusian political analyst now in exile in Poland.

What's next for Wagner?

The Belarus deal removes Prigozhin's control of Wagner, but it's unclear whether any of his fighters would follow him to Belarus, either out of a sense of loyalty or due to dismay with being absorbed into the Russian military as contract soldiers.

"These personnel could potentially sign contracts with the MoD on an individual basis, demobilize in Russia ... (or) travel to Belarus in some capacity," the Institute for the Study of War think tank said in its report on the failed rebellion.

If in Belarus, there would be concerns about whether they could get access to the Russian battlefield nuclear weapons. Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy head of Russia's security council, was worried about them gaining control of Russian weapons as the uprising roiled on Saturday.

"The world will be put on the brink of destruction" if Wagnerites obtain nuclear weapons, Medvedev warned.

Jim Heintz in Tallinn contributed to this report.

Riders plunge from a derailed roller coaster in Sweden, killing one and injuring several others

By KARL RITTER Associated Press

STOCKHOLM (AP) — A roller coaster train derailed in Stockholm on Sunday, sending some passengers plunging to the ground in an amusement park accident that left one dead and nine injured, police and park officials said.

Witnesses described a chaotic scene at the Gröna Lund park as the front of the train appeared to jump off the tracks before coming to a stop, with one car tilted toward the ground.

"The front of the train partly derailed and stopped on the track at a height of between 6 and 8 meters (between 20 and 25 feet)," park chief executive Jan Eriksson said. "A total of 14 people were on board, of which one person has died and several are injured."

The regional government said nine people were taken to a hospital, one of them in serious condition. Three of the injured were children, all of them with minor injuries, it said.

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Witness Ziba Assadi told Swedish broadcaster TV4 that she was standing just below the Jetline roller coaster when she saw the wheel assembly of one of the cars crashing to the ground.

"Then the car stops and people fly out, fall out of the car," she said.

Witnesses said two or three people fell out of the car, one of whom managed to cling to the track. Photos from the scene showed a man sitting on a beam below the stopped train.

"So he sits there straddling (the beam) and waits," Assadi said. "There was complete panic."

The amusement park was evacuated after the accident and will remain closed for seven days to allow investigators to find out what went wrong, park officials said.

"This should not be allowed to happen," Gröna Lund spokeswoman Annika Troselius said. "Safety is the most important thing for us. And we would never open an attraction if we were not confident that it was safe, so this is something we need to investigate thoroughly."

Police launched a criminal investigation on possible charges of involuntary manslaughter, causing bodily harm and causing danger to others.

The 800-meter (2,600-foot) long Jetline rollercoaster opened in 1988 and was renovated in 2000, according to Gröna Lund. It has a maximum height of 30 meters (98 feet) and a top speed of 90 kph (56 mph).

Opened in 1883, Gröna Lund is Sweden's oldest amusement park.

Salman Rushdie and Cheryl Strayed among endorsers of anti-censorship initiative

NEW YORK (AP) — Salman Rushdie, Cheryl Strayed, Carl Hiaasen and Ibram X. Kendi are among hundreds of authors who have endorsed an announcement by the American Library Association and the Association of American Publishers that calls attention to the 70th anniversary of a Freedom to Read Statement issued by book publishers and librarians during the height of the McCarthy era.

With book bannings surging nationwide over the past two years, the library and publishing associations are urging "all members of the book community" to affirm their commitment to the June 1953 declaration, which includes such propositions as "It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions, including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority."

Sunday's press announcement reads in part: "Today, as we grapple with a new wave of censorship in schools, libraries, and bookstores targeting a wide range of expression, including fiction and nonfiction, the Freedom to Read Statement remains an important defense of the freedom to write, publish and inquire."

Supporters of the initiative also include Jennifer Egan, Ron Chernow, Jodi Picoult, along with such organizations as Penguin Random House, Simon & Schuster, the Authors Guild and the American Booksellers Association.

GOP state legislatures seek greater control over state and local election offices

By CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Lawmakers in several Republican-led states have been looking to exert more authority over state and local election offices, claiming new powers that Democrats warn could be used to target left-leaning counties in future elections.

The moves range from requiring legislative approval of court settlements in election-related lawsuits to creating paths for taking over local election offices.

In North Carolina, a Republican proposal working its way through the General Assembly would change the composition of state and county election boards and give lawmakers sole authority to appoint board members.

Republican lawmakers in Texas recently approved legislation that not only eliminates the top election official in the Democratic stronghold of Harris County, which includes Houston, but also permits the state's

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chief election official — the secretary of state — to take over the county's election office. The secretary is appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate, both now in Republican hands.

Election observers say it's imperative for public trust that elections remain free of partisan manipulation and they say they worry about lawmakers deciding to assert their new powers for political gain.

"There are ways that states can intervene and help local election officials," said David Levine, a former local election official in Idaho who is now a senior fellow with the German Marshall Fund's Alliance for Securing Democracy. "Instead, we are seeing states that are enacting laws that could introduce new challenges to the conduct of U.S. elections."

Attempts by Republican legislatures to expand their power over how elections are run have soared since the 2020 presidential election, spurred by former President Donald Trump's false claims of widespread fraud. Republican lawmakers characterize the moves as necessary oversight aimed at improving elections, while Democrats criticize them as power grabs that could be used to interfere in voting or ballot counting.

The offices that oversee elections at the state or local level are primarily filled by people who win partisan elections or are appointed in a process that involves partisan officials. But those in the jobs have typically worked to maintain a nonpartisan approach to running elections. Since the 2020 presidential election, a few of these positions have been taken by people who rejected the results, raising doubts about how they will run their office.

Some of the legislation passed during that time by Republican lawmakers has led to additional concerns about partisan interference. Lawmakers in 13 mostly GOP-controlled states have passed an estimated 15 bills that either expanded lawmakers' authority over elections or took some action to interfere with local election administrators, according to data collected by the Voting Rights Lab, which tracks voting-related legislation in the states and advocates for expanded voter access.

In Texas, laws just passed by Republican lawmakers and signed into law by Republican Gov. Greg Abbott will abolish the elections administrator's office in heavily Democratic Harris County, which includes Houston and has more than 2 million voters. The laws also provide a way for the state to take oversight of the county's election office in the future.

The rush by the Texas GOP to shake up elections in the nation's third-largest county — and one with large numbers of Hispanic and Black voters — followed limited problems in November's elections that included a shortage of paper ballots and some polling locations opening late. Previous stumbles also have put Harris County elections under scrutiny by Republicans, including 10,000 mail ballots that weren't counted the day of the 2022 primary.

"This is about performance, not politics," said state Sen. Paul Bettencourt, a Houston Republican.

Leaders in Harris County have accused Republicans of using the issues as an excuse to take greater control of elections in a place that is increasingly tilting toward Democrats. A lawsuit is expected.

The county was virtually split in the 2012 presidential race. By 2020, Democrat Joe Biden easily won Harris County by double digits.

"This has been a big saga of the state deciding that they don't like the way Harris County residents vote, so instead they're going to take control of the Harris County elections apparatus," said Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo, a Democrat and the county's top elected official.

In North Carolina, where Republicans control the legislature, lawmakers are making another attempt to take power away from the governor, a Democrat, in deciding who serves on election boards. The moves come after Republicans were thwarted in previous years by the courts and by voters, who opposed a 2018 constitutional amendment.

Republicans, who now hold veto-proof majorities, envision an eight-person State Board of Elections that likely would be comprised of equal numbers of Democrats and Republicans, appointed by legislative leaders of both political parties. It would replace the current five-person model, with appointees of Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper based on lists of candidates provided by the two parties. Under current state law, no more than three members of the board can be of the same political party.

Republicans have pointed to a legal settlement reached over mail ballot deadlines during the COVID-19

pandemic between the Democratic-controlled board and a union-affiliated group as proof of partisan mischief.

"Those actions were enabled by a board that circumvented the legislative process and caused North Carolinians to lose trust in the election process," said Senate leader Phil Berger, a Republican. "Now we will take the necessary steps to begin rebuilding that trust."

The elections bill, which passed the Senate this past week, also would reduce the size of county election boards from five members to four. Legislative leaders of both parties would appoint the members, rather than the current model in which the governor has one appointment and the State Board of Elections fills the rest of the seats. Democrats see the change as a recipe for stalemate.

"This is going to result in uncertified election results, uncertainty and endless litigation," said Minority Leader Dan Blue, a Democrat.

Fears of a takeover did not come to pass in Georgia after the GOP-controlled legislature passed a bill in 2021 that gave the State Election Board the power to intervene in county election offices and remove local election officials. After its review clause was triggered by Republican lawmakers, the board launched an examination of Fulton County, which includes much of Atlanta and has had a history of election troubles.

After the review found the heavily Democratic county had shown considerable improvement, the board recently decided against taking over its election office. Matt Mashburn, a Republican appointee to the board, said the "talking heads were wrong" when they suggested the law would be used to meddle in local elections.

"I think the process has been very good and thorough, and everybody took their time," he said.

In Wisconsin, state election commissioners are scheduled to meet this coming week to consider whether Meagan Wolfe, the state's nonpartisan election administrator, should serve another term. It's one of the relatively few examples of nonpartisan election administration in the United States.

Commissioners are weighing the chances of Wolfe surviving confirmation in the Republican-led Senate, where some lawmakers have pledged not to support her despite numerous reviews in the state affirming there was no evidence of widespread fraud or wrongdoing with the state's elections in 2020. Republicans in the state have made various efforts in recent years to weaken the bipartisan election commission, which has an equal number of Democrats and Republicans.

Kathy Bernier, a former Republican state senator and county election official who has spoken out against false claims of widespread fraud, said commissioners face a tough vote.

"The difficulty with both Republicans and Democrats right now is they don't trust anyone as nonpartisan," she said. "So whoever they pick, one side or the other is probably going to have a complaint or two."

Associated Press writers Jeff Amy in Atlanta; Gary Robertson in Raleigh, North Carolina; Paul Weber in Austin, Texas; and Harm Venhuizen in Madison, Wisconsin, contributed to this report.

Two people died and 12 were hurt in a shooting at a street party that was promoted on social media

SAGINAW, Mich. (AP) — A 51-year-old woman and a 19-year-old man were slain and a dozen others wounded during a shooting at a large street party in Michigan that was promoted on social media.

The shooting occurred around midnight Saturday in Saginaw, about 102 miles (164 kilometers) northwest of Detroit, state police said.

Police initially said about 200 people were in the area of the party and that officers had been dispersing the crowd prior to the shooting, MLive.com reported.

Three people also were struck by cars and injured as people quickly fled from the gunshots, WNEM-TV reported. Investigators determined five different guns had been fired in the shooting.

No arrests were made.

Drug abuse is soaring in Sao Paulo's downtown. Users, residents and shop owners are all suffering

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.

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

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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.

In post-Roe era, House Republicans begin quiet push for new restrictions on abortion access

By FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When the Supreme Court issued its abortion ruling last June overturning Roe v. Wade, House Republican leader Kevin McCarthy said "our work is far from done." He didn't say what might come next.

A year later later, McCarthy is the speaker, Republicans are in the majority and the blanks are beginning to be filled in.

In a flurry of little-noticed legislative action, GOP lawmakers are pushing abortion policy changes, trying to build on the work of activists whose strategy successfully elevated their fight to the nation's highest court.

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In one government funding bill after another, Republicans are incorporating unrelated policy provisions, known as riders, to restrict women's reproductive rights. Democrats say the proposals will never become law.

"This is not just about an attack on women's health," Connecticut Rep. Rosa DeLauro, the top Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee, said Friday. "I view it as an attempt to derail the entire process of funding the federal government by injecting these riders into the appropriations process."

Rep. Kay Granger, the Texas Republican who heads the committee, said during a hearing this past week that the riders that were included continue "long-standing pro-life protections that are important to our side of the aisle."

Using budget bills this way is hardly new, but it points to a broader divide among Republicans about where to go next on abortion after the Supreme Court's decision cleared the way for state-by-state restrictions on abortion rights.

Republicans for years held stand-alone votes in the House on bills to restrict abortion. Now, some in the party — particularly the nearly 20 Republicans running for reelection in swing districts — are hesitant, if not outright opposed, to roll calls on abortion proposals. They say such bills will never see the light of day as long as Democrats control the Senate.

The GOP's new push is taking place line by line in the sprawling legislation drafted each year to fund government agencies and programs.

Nearly a dozen anti-abortion measures have been included so far in budget bills. In the agricultural one, for example, Republicans are looking to reverse a recent move by the Food and Drug Administration that would allow the contraception pill mifepristone to be dispensed in certified pharmacies, as opposed to only in hospitals and clinics.

Anti-abortion proposals have found their way into the defense bill, where GOP lawmakers are aiming to ban paid leave and travel for military service members and their family members who are seeking reproductive health care services. Rep. Mike Rogers, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, said he warned Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin about it.

"I told them that that was going to be a poison pill when it came to getting their legislation done over here," Rogers, R-Ala., said this past week. "I told him, you know, you're asking for trouble. And now they got trouble."

There are riders, too, in the financial services bill, where Republicans want to prohibit local and federal money to be used to carry out a District of Columbia law that bans discrimination over employees' reproductive decisions.

"It seems like they can't do anything without trying to put something in there to restrict abortion rights," Rep. Suzan DelBene of Washington state, chair of the House Democrats' campaign arm, said. "I don't think the public is fooled by that and absolutely, this will be a critical issue in the next election."

She and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee are working to target the vulnerable Republicans on the issue before the 2024 election.

The broad effort by Republicans to include what critics often deride as "poison pills" in the appropriations process steps up the confrontation with Senate Democrats and the White House come September over spending bills, potentially heightening the odds of a government shutdown with the Oct. 1 start of the new budget year.

DeLauro, who headed the Appropriations Committee in the last Congress, said the decision by Republicans to include these measures is a betrayal of the agreement the parties made years ago to not include any provisions in spending bills that would block passage.

She said committee Democrats who spent the past week marking up these bills late into the night pleaded with their Republican colleagues to rethink the abortion language.

The Senate just last week passed the military and agriculture bills out of committee without any abortion measures attached.

Sen. Patty Murray, chair of the Senate Appropriation Committee, told The Associated Press that she has

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made it clear that she would be a “firewall” against House Republicans’ efforts to further restrict reproductive rights.

“I have fought back Republican efforts to restrict access to reproductive health care and abortion in every deal or negotiation I have been a part of since I got to the Senate — that’s not changing any time soon,” said Murray, D-Wash.

In a previous statement with the committee’s top Republican, Maine Sen. Susan Collins, the two pledged “to continue working together in a bipartisan manner to craft serious funding bills that can be signed into law.”

But the growing tension between GOP factions over abortion legislation remains apparent.

The Republican Study Committee — the largest single group in the House GOP conference — recently issued a memo to members urging leaders to hold vote on a proposal that would “clarify that health insurance plans that provide elective abortion would be ineligible for federal funding.”

That bill would effectively codify the Hyde Amendment, which restricts government funding for most abortions. Democrats have allowed it to become part of government funding legislation for decades, as a trade-off of sorts that has enabled them to focus on securing other priorities.

It is unclear whether House Republican leaders will want to take the risk of bringing anti-abortion measures to the floor for votes when the spending bill route may be a more palatable option for some in the party.

Today in History: June 26, first Harry Potter book published

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, June 26, the 177th day of 2023. There are 188 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History:

On June 26, 1945, the charter of the United Nations was signed by 50 countries in San Francisco.

On this date:

In 1917, the first troops of the American Expeditionary Force deployed to France during World War I landed in St. Nazaire.

In 1925, Charles Chaplin’s classic comedy “The Gold Rush” premiered at Grauman’s Egyptian Theatre in Hollywood.

In 1948, the Berlin Airlift began in earnest after the Soviet Union cut off land and water routes to the isolated western sector of Berlin.

In 1963, President John F. Kennedy visited West Berlin, where he delivered his famous speech expressing solidarity with the city’s residents, declaring: “Ich bin ein Berliner” (I am a Berliner).

In 1977, 42 people were killed when a fire sent toxic smoke pouring through the Maury County Jail in Columbia, Tennessee. Elvis Presley performed his last concert at Market Square Arena in Indianapolis.

In 1990, President George H.W. Bush went back on his “no-new-taxes” campaign pledge, conceding that tax increases would have to be included in any deficit-reduction package worked out with congressional negotiators.

In 1993, President Bill Clinton announced the U.S. had launched missiles against Iraqi targets because of “compelling evidence” Iraq had plotted to assassinate former President George H.W. Bush.

In 1996, the Supreme Court ordered the Virginia Military Institute to admit women or forgo state support.

In 1997, the first Harry Potter novel, “Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone” by J.K. Rowling, was published in the United Kingdom (it was later released in the United States under the title “Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone”).

In 2008, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a handgun ban in the District of Columbia as it affirmed, 5-4, that an individual right to gun ownership existed.

In 2020, after protesters in Washington, D.C., attempted to pull down a statue of Andrew Jackson, President Donald Trump signed an executive order to protect monuments, memorials and statues.

Ten years ago: In deciding its first cases on the issue, the U.S. Supreme Court gave the nation’s legally

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married gay couples equal federal footing with all other married Americans and also cleared the way for same-sex marriages to resume in California. New England Patriots tight end Aaron Hernandez was arrested in the shooting death of Odin Lloyd; Hernandez was convicted of first-degree murder. Seven-time champion Roger Federer was stunned by 116th-ranked Sergiy Stakhovsky in the second round of Wimbledon; third-seeded Maria Sharapova was knocked out by the 131st-ranked qualifier, losing to Michelle Larcher de Brito of Portugal.

Five years ago: A sharply divided Supreme Court upheld President Donald Trump's ban on travel from several mostly Muslim countries; dissenting Justice Sonia Sotomayor (SOHN'-ya soh-toh-my-YOR') said the court was making a historic mistake by refusing to recognize that the ban discriminates against Muslims. Joe Crowley of New York, the fourth-ranking House Democrat, lost a primary to 28-year-old liberal activist Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. General Electric Co. was removed from the Dow Jones industrial average, where it had been an original component in 1896; it was replaced by the Walgreens drugstore chain.

One year ago: Opening a summit in Germany, President Joe Biden and Western allies were intent on keeping economic fallout from the war in Ukraine from fracturing the global coalition working to punish Russia's aggression. Britain's Boris Johnson warned fellow leaders not to give in to "fatigue" even as Russia fires missiles at Kyiv. In the U.S., parades celebrating LGBTQ pride kicked off in some of America's biggest cities amid new fears about the potential erosion of freedoms won through decades of activism. The annual marches in New York, San Francisco, Chicago and elsewhere took place after at least one Supreme Court justice signaled, in that week's ruling on abortion, that the court could reconsider the right to same-sex marriage recognized in 2015. A U.S. Navy destroyer that engaged a superior Japanese fleet in the largest sea battle of World War II in the Philippines became the deepest wreck ever discovered, according to explorers.

Today's Birthdays: Jazz musician-film composer Dave Grusin is 89. Actor Josef Sommer is 89. Singer Billy Davis Jr. is 85. Rock singer Georgie Fame is 80. Actor Clive Francis is 77. R&B singer Brenda Holloway is 77. Actor Michael Paul Chan is 73. Actor Robert Davi is 72. Singer-musician Mick Jones is 68. Actor Gedde Watanabe (GEH'-dee wah-tah-NAH'-bee) is 68. Rock singer Chris Isaak is 67. Rock singer Patty Smyth is 66. Singer Terri Nunn (Berlin) is 64. U.S. Bicycling Hall of Famer Greg LeMond is 62. Country musician Eddie Perez (The Mavericks) is 55. Rock musician Colin Greenwood (Radiohead) is 54. Writer-director Paul Thomas Anderson is 53. Actor Sean Hayes is 53. Actor Matt Letscher is 53. Actor Chris O'Donnell is 53. Actor Nick Offerman is 53. Actor Rebecca Budig is 50. Baseball Hall of Famer Derek Jeter is 49. Contemporary Christian musician Jeff Frankenstein (Newsboys) is 49. Country singer Gretchen Wilson is 49. Rock musician Nathan Followill (Kings of Leon) is 44. Pop-rock singer-musician Ryan Tedder (OneRepublic) is 44. Actor-musician Jason Schwartzman is 43. Actor Aubrey Plaza is 39. Actor-singer Jennette McCurdy is 31. Actor-singer Ariana Grande is 30.