

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Groton Community Calendar

### 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.

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



### 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)

### Thursday, June 29

Senior Menu: BBQ chicken breast, rice pilaf, mixed vegetables, fruit, cookie, whole wheat bread.

Blood Drive at Groton Community Center, 11:30 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.

Legion hosts Redfield, 5:30 p.m. (1); Jr. Legion hosts Redfield, 7:30 p.m. (1); Us Softball hosts Clark, 6 p.m.; U10 Groton Scrimmage, 7 p.m.; U12BB hosts Borge 12, 5:30 p.m. (2)

**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

hit 112°F today.

Anderson Lee Aldrich was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole after he pleaded guilty to killing five people in a mass shooting at Club Q in Colorado Springs last year.

The LSU Tigers baseball team won its first men's College World Series title since 2009, beating Florida 18-4 at Charles Schwab Field in Omaha.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has issued a warning for the potential spread of malaria in the U.S. after at least five cases were found in Texas and Florida.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, Kyiv said it has taken control of another village in southeastern Ukraine, Rivnopol, which is close to the border between the contested Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia regions. Ukraine added that Russia lost more than 30 tanks in under a week..

#### TALKING POINTS

"I think what we are seeing in Russia over the last days demonstrates the fragility of the [...] Russian regime, we see the weakness of the Russian regime, and it also demonstrates how difficult and dangerous it is for President Putin to be reliant on mercenaries that has actually turned against him. It also demonstrates that it is hard to predict exactly what will now happen in the next days and weeks, but we should not make the mistakes that we are underestimating the Russians," NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said of Wagner Group leader Yevgeny Prigozhin's attempted rebellion.

"Dear Media, I plan on continuing to serve the people of NY3. Providing excellent constituent services to the people of NY03 and proposing common sense conservative legislation for the betterment of our nation. Speaker McCarthy's comments do not change my intention of running," Republican Rep. George Santos of New York tweeted.

"I am fortunate to have seen first-hand the tireless work of people and organizations across the sector, the tangible impact their efforts can have, and what can be done when communities are able to focus on preventing homelessness, rather than managing it. It's a big task, but I firmly believe that by working together, it is possible to make homelessness rare, brief, and unrecurred, and I am very much looking forward to working with our six locations to make our ambition a reality," Prince William said about his new program aspiring to end homelessness in the United Kingdom..

#### WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAY AHEAD

A judge is set to hear arguments on whether to move Donald Trump's criminal case in New York out of the state court to Manhattan federal court. A ruling isn't expected immediately.

President Joe Biden will be participating in campaign receptions today in Chevy Chase, Maryland.

The New Hampshire Federation of Republican Women's 76th Lilac Luncheon takes place this afternoon in Concord. Donald Trump will speak as the event's special guest.

Arizona's 2022 GOP gubernatorial candidate Kari Lake is releasing her memoir *Unafraid: Just Getting Started* through Winning Team Publishing.

S&P Case-Shiller home price index, new home sales, durable goods, and consumer confidence figures are on the economic calendar, from 8:30 a.m. ET.

The F.B.I. and the Department of Homeland Security have been accused of ignoring "a massive amount of intelligence information" ahead of the Jan. 6 Capitol riot, according to a new Senate report that will be released today.

Prosecutors say they will seek the death penalty against Bryan Kohberger, the 28-year-old man accused of murdering four students at the University of Idaho.

Millions of Muslim worshippers descended on Mecca, Saudi Arabia, on Monday for the start of the annual Hajj pilgrimage, as meteorologists warn that temperatures in the city could

## Brown County Fatal Crash

What: Two-vehicle crash

Where: U.S. Highway 281 and S.D. Highway 10, eight miles south of Frederick, S.D.

When: 12:47 p.m., Fri., June 23, 2023

Driver No. 1: Male, 40, serious non-life-threatening injuries

Vehicle No. 1: 2008 Ford F250 pickup

Driver No. 2: Male, 85, fatal injuries

Vehicle No. 2: 2015 Buick Lacrosse

Frederick, S.D.: One person died Friday afternoon in a two-vehicle crash south of Frederick, S.D.

The names of the persons involved have not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates that a 2008 Ford F250 pickup was traveling south on U.S. Highway 281. A 2015 Buick Lacrosse was northbound on U.S. Highway 281. As the Buick Lacrosse attempted to make a left turn onto S.D. Highway 10, it turned in front of the Ford F250 pickup. The Buick Lacrosse and Ford F250 pickup collided head-on and came to rest in the southwest ditch of the intersection.

The 85-year-old male driver of the Buick Lacrosse died from injuries he sustained in the crash.

The 40-year-old male driver of the Ford F250 pickup suffered serious non-life-threatening injuries.

South Dakota's Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. All information released so far is only preliminary.

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

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## **Simon Throws Perfect Game Over Hamlin Post 37 / 217, Takes Victory For Groton Legion Post 39**

Cole Simon threw a gem on Monday to lead Groton Legion Post 39 past Hamlin Post 37 / 217 15-0 with the rarest of baseball moments: The Perfect Game. Simon induced a fly out from Ted Smith to end the game.

Groton Legion Post 39 fired up the offense in the first inning, when Parker Boerger threw a wild pitch allowing one run across the plate for Groton Legion Post 39.

Groton Legion Post 39 put up four runs in the fourth inning. Cade Larson and Colby Dunker all drove in runs in the frame.

Simon earned the win for Groton Legion Post 39. Simon surrendered zero runs on zero hits over four and two-thirds innings, striking out six and walking zero.

Boerger took the loss for Hamlin Post 37 / 217. Boerger allowed 11 hits and 15 runs over four innings, striking out five.

Groton Legion Post 39 saw the ball well today, racking up 13 hits in the game. Brevin Flihs, Larson, Bradin Althoff, and Dunker each had multiple hits for Groton Legion Post 39. Flihs led Groton Legion Post 39 with three hits in four at bats. Groton Legion Post 39 was sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Larson had the most chances in the field with seven.

## **Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion Grabs Lead in Seventh Inning to Defeat Hamlin Post 37 / 217**

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion took the lead late and defeated Hamlin Post 37 / 217 15-14 on Tuesday. The game was tied at 11 with Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion batting in the top of the seventh when Gavin Englund grounded out, scoring one run.

Braxton Imrie collected five hits in five at bats to help lead Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion to victory. Imrie singled in the first, singled in the second, singled in the fourth, singled in the sixth, and singled in the seventh.

Hamlin Post 37 / 217 opened up scoring in the second inning when an error scored two runs for Hamlin Post 37 / 217.

Korbin Kucker earned the victory on the hill for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion. The righthander lasted one inning, allowing one hit and zero runs while striking out two and walking zero. Jarrett Erdmann threw four and two-thirds innings in relief out of the bullpen.

Gavin Maag took the loss for Hamlin Post 37 / 217. The pitcher surrendered five runs on four hits over one inning, striking out one.

Parker Boerger started the game for Hamlin Post 37 / 217. Boerger surrendered two runs on two hits over one-third of an inning, walking zero. Englund started the game for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion. The righty lasted one and one-third innings, allowing three hits and eight runs.

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion racked up 17 hits in the game. Imrie, Kucker, Brevin Flihs, and Carter Simon all had multiple hits for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion. Kucker and Imrie all had five hits to lead Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion. Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion tore up the base paths, as three players stole at least two bases. Imrie led the way with two.

Hamlin Post 37 / 217 racked up seven hits. Watson Grantham and Maag each racked up multiple hits for Hamlin Post 37 / 217.

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Groton Legion Post 39 **15 - 0** Hamlin Post 37 / 217

📍 Away 📅 Monday June 26, 2023

	1	2	3	4	5	R	H	E
GRTN	4	4	1	4	2	15	13	0
HMLN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

## BATTING

Groton Legion Post	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
B Fliehs (CF)	4	3	3	2	0	0
C Simon (P)	2	2	0	0	0	0
B Althoff	3	2	2	1	1	1
T Larson (1B)	2	2	0	0	2	1
R Groeblichhoff (...)	2	1	1	1	1	1
L Ringgingberg (R...)	3	1	1	2	0	0
C Larson (C)	3	1	2	4	0	0
C Dunker (LF)	3	1	2	2	0	1
B Imrie (2B)	3	0	1	1	0	1
K Hoover (3B)	2	2	1	0	1	0
CR: C McInerney	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>

Hamlin Post 37 / 21	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
W Grantham (SS,...)	2	0	0	0	0	0
R Prouty (2B, SS)	2	0	0	0	0	0
P Boerger (P, 2B)	2	0	0	0	0	1
G Maag (C)	2	0	0	0	0	1
T Smith (1B, P)	2	0	0	0	0	0
T Everson (LF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
J Williams (CF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
J Mahe (RF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
K Hauck (3B)	1	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>

**2B:** C Dunker 2, **3B:** K Hoover, B Fliehs, **TB:** K Hoover 3, L Ringgingberg, C Dunker 4, B Althoff 2, R Groeblichhoff, B Fliehs 5, B Imrie, C Larson 2, **CS:** L Ringgingberg, **HBP:** L Ringgingberg, C Simon 2, R Groeblichhoff, **SB:** L Ringgingberg, B Althoff, B Fliehs, **LOB:** 6

## PITCHING

Groton Legioi	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
C Simon	4.2	0	0	0	0	6	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>

Hamlin Post 37	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
P Boerger	4.0	11	15	11	4	5	0
T Smith	1.0	2	0	0	1	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>

**W:** C Simon, **P-S:** C Simon 61-38, **BF:** C Simon 14

**L:** P Boerger, **P-S:** T Smith 14-8, P Boerger 106-60, **WP:** T Smith, P Boerger, **HBP:** P Boerger 4, **BF:** T Smith 5, P Boerger 31



## 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 Jr. Teeners Falls to Huron Tigers After Fourth Inning Score

Groton Jr. Teeners lost the lead late in a 10-5 defeat to Huron Tigers 13U on Monday. The game was tied at three with Huron Tigers 13U batting in the bottom of the fourth when Colt C singled on a 1-0 count, scoring one run.

Groton Jr. Teeners lost despite out-hitting Huron Tigers 13U seven to four.

In the first inning, Groton Jr. Teeners got their offense started when Ryder Schelle singled on a 1-2 count, scoring two runs.

In the bottom of the second inning, Huron Tigers 13U tied things up at three. An error scored two runs for Huron Tigers 13U.

Huron Tigers 13U pulled away for good with four runs in the fourth inning. In the fourth Josh G drew a walk, scoring one run and Jimmie M was struck by a pitch, driving in a run.

Carter P was credited with the victory for Huron Tigers 13U. The righthander lasted four innings, allowing two hits and three runs while striking out eight. Parker B threw two innings in relief out of the bullpen.

Tristin Mcgannon took the loss for Groton jr. Teeners 14U. Mcgannon lasted four innings, allowing two hits and seven runs while striking out three.

Schelle, Nick Groeblichhoff, Gavin Kroll, Easton Weber, Shaydon Wood, Lincoln Krause, and Karson Zak all had one hit to lead Groton jr. Teeners 14U.

Jaxon S went 2-for-2 at the plate to lead Huron Tigers 13U in hits. Huron Tigers 13U didn't commit a single error in the field. G had the most chances in the field with ten.

## Groton Jr. Teeners Defeats Huron Despite Allowing 5-Run Inning

Despite allowing five runs in the fourth inning, Groton Jr. Teeners defeated Huron Tigers 13U 20-6 on Tuesday. Carter P, Josh G, Eric B, and Quincy R each had RBIs in the frame.

There was plenty of action on the basepaths as Groton Jr. Teeners collected 14 hits and Huron Tigers 13U had eight.

Huron Tigers 13U got on the board in the first inning when Colt C singled on a 2-0 count, scoring one run.

Groton Jr. Teeners pulled away for good with four runs in the second inning. In the second Shaydon Wood singled on a 0-1 count, scoring one run, Karson Zak singled on a 2-2 count, scoring one run, and Nick Groeblichhoff drew a walk, scoring one run.

Groton Jr. Teeners tallied nine runs in the fourth inning. Groton Jr. Teeners batters contributing to the big inning included Zak, Ryder Schelle, Tristin Mcgannon, Ethan Kroll, Gavin Kroll, and Easton Weber, all driving in runs in the inning.

Schelle was the winning pitcher for Groton jr. Teeners 14U. Schelle surrendered six runs on eight hits over four innings, striking out four and walking one. Quinn Cogley threw one inning in relief out of the bullpen.

Jimmie M was on the pitcher's mound for Huron Tigers 13U. M went two innings, allowing four runs on five hits and striking out one. Sean J, G, and Blaise S each contributed in relief for Huron Tigers 13U.

Groton Jr. Teeners tallied 14 hits on the day. Weber, Kroll, Zak, and Wood all managed multiple hits for Groton jr. Teeners 14U. Kroll and Weber each collected three hits to lead Groton jr. Teeners 14U.

Collyn H led Huron Tigers 13U with two hits in three at bats.

## At 125, Wishek's still looking toward the future

The pace has been brisk as final preparations are made for Wishek's 125th birthday this weekend. We're calling it the 125th because quasiquicentennial uses entirely too many letters. You have to be a 4X just to get it on a T-shirt.

The WPA-era historic Wishek Civic Center, home of Sauerkraut Day (the second Wednesday each October), looks stately. The water tower has a new coat of paint, including South Border Mustang logos.

Not everyone is thrilled. If Wishek City Councilperson Kathy Welder had her way, the iconic Wishek Badger would be up there. When Wishek and historic rival Ashley formed a cooperative a couple decades ago, former Wishek Editor Francis Materi hated it, too.

This new generation of kids doesn't care about any of that. They often develop strong friendships... boyfriend-girlfriend stuff... cross-pollination... dogs and cats living together!

It's dwindling older generations of Badgers and Aces cling to the rivalry. An Ashley oldster once told me an old joke: "Everybody flush! Wishek needs the water." And he was a retired minister.

When the Bender Family purchased the Wishek Star and Ashley Tribune in 1998, we walked into those politics, a Wishek Centennial, and the first of what would be many—and still counting—Ashley-Wishek state wrestling championships. We continue to enjoy some fine athletic programs.

Amidst the preparations, I began to reminisce. In 1998, the internet was picking up steam and some "experts" didn't give newspapers much more than a decade. But, we saw still-robust communities that were 100 miles from any big city and doggedly independent. We thought could make it here.

With hard work and a lot of community support, we're still standing strong. We've evolved. Today, the Wishek Star and Ashley Tribune are available on the internet at [mcintosh-star-tribune.com](http://mcintosh-star-tribune.com). Like the successful businesses in this area facing shrinking populations, we've expanded our reach.

That's what's remarkable about Wishek. There are two car dealerships, two implement dealerships, a vastly-expanded hardware store, a fencing supply company that brings people in from two states away, a homebuilder that annually sends scores of completed houses hundreds of miles in every direction, a regional hospital, nursing home, and dozens upon dozens of other businesses. Wishek's become a destination community. A big regional economic engine.

You can count on another big shindig in 25 years.

Every community has a personality, and Wishek's is, well, direct. My friends wondered how I'd do in the second-most conservative county in the state. Just great, and I'll tell you why. These stoics would give you the shirt off their back. A few years ago in a conversation with a conservative local business owner, I kiddingly referred to myself as a "wild-eyed liberal."

"No," she corrected me, "You're a moderate. "But around here, moderates just seem liberal."

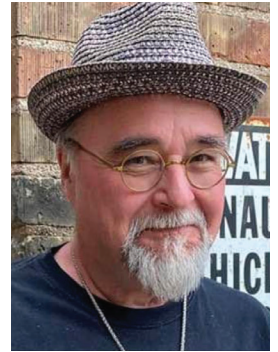
One day, I was taken off-guard when I called on someone I liked and admired for building his business the hard way.

I'll explain. You know how political parties seemingly send out a memo to get everyone talking about the same thing? Well, the week before, I'd mocked the sudden hysteria over socialism. That rubbed him the wrong way.

"Tony, I will never buy another ad from you because you're a socialist," he said.

"Well, I'm a terrible socialist," I responded, "because I'm trying to do capitalism! I'm trying to sell something!" I told him that I had always liked him and that wasn't about commerce and that I intended to keep calling on him. I stuck to my promise and he eventually forgot about his.

But, if you really want a political argument, discuss sausage. Loyalties in this area are fierce. They'll fight you in Long Lake over headcheese. I was born in Ashley, and Grandpa was a homer when it came to sausage.



## That's Life

by Tony Bender

Of course, Wishek is famous for its sausage, and it was made more famous by Stan Deile of Stan's Supermarket, one of the last of the great small town promoters. Stan always seemed to be moving, but he always had time for a grin, a slice of wisdom, and a slap on the back. Hard to believe it's been five years. I miss Stan.

There are still some some exceptional entrepreneurs and community builders in Wishek, but none as colorful as Stan, except perhaps, Mike Martell, a gravely old-school guy. He's one of the reasons the annual Tri-County Fair keeps chugging along. Mostly, he just threatens people into action.

For 25 years, Mike has been giving me orders. A year ago, when I saw him at the fair, he told me that the Wishek Star would be doing a commemorative photo edition after the 125th celebration.

We're on it, Mike. I may have saluted.

Maybe I'll see you this weekend. I wouldn't miss it. Wishek knows how to throw a party.

© Tony Bender, 2023

## 2023 West Nile Virus Awards

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Health (DOH) is pleased to announce that nearly 200 cities, counties, and tribes across South Dakota will collectively receive \$500,000 in grants to combat mosquitoes and prevent the spread of West Nile virus (WNV) in 2023. These grants have been allocated to support local efforts in controlling mosquito populations and reducing the risk of WNV transmission.

Grant recipients were selected based on various factors, including the population of the applying jurisdiction and its history of human WNV cases up until 2022. Every community that applied for funding has been awarded a grant, ranging from \$500 to \$20,000, reflecting the specific needs and challenges faced by each locality. These reimbursement grants are designed to alleviate some of the financial burdens associated with mosquito control measures necessary for protecting public health.

Secretary Melissa Magstadt expressed her gratitude for the ongoing dedication and proactive approach taken by communities in controlling mosquitoes and preventing the spread of West Nile virus. "Thanks for all your efforts to control mosquitoes and prevent West Nile virus. Your commitment to public health is commendable, and we appreciate the work you are doing to safeguard the well-being of our communities" said Secretary Melissa Magstadt.

The South Dakota Department of Health remains committed to supporting and partnering with communities in their mosquito control efforts. For any inquiries regarding this funding opportunity, please do not hesitate to reach out to Julie.Ramsey@state.sd.us or contact us by phone at 605-773-8107.

Last week, the department issued a release announcing the detection of the first human case of WNV in Sanborn County.

Area towns receiving grants are: Aberdeen \$20,000, Andover \$750, Bristol \$1,138, Claremont \$1,500, Columbia \$1,137, Doland \$977, Groton \$4,993, Hecla \$2,000, Langford \$2,000, Pierpont \$1,000, Stratford \$1,936, Warner \$1,800, Westport \$1,700.



## New Laws Impacting Veterans

Hundreds of legislative issues are considered each year by the governor, South Dakota agencies, legislators, constituents, and lobbyists. During the 2023 legislative session, 517 legislative bills and resolutions were introduced.

As an advocate for veterans, it is the responsibility of The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs to review any bills that will impact our veterans. This year we introduced four bills and monitored 32 pieces of proposed legislation. The following veteran-related bills were passed by the state legislature and signed into law by Governor Kristi Noem. They will become law on July 1.

Senate Bill 15 updates the forms and documents that can be used when obtaining veteran designation on a state driver's license or state ID card to include the Uniformed Services ID Card (Retired).

House Bills 1039 and 1046 focus on education. HB 1039 provides eligibility for a 100% reduction in tuition charges at any state supported university for undergraduate programs up to 128 credits and graduate programs up to 32 credits for Guard members that meet the requirements for admission. This 100% tuition reduction could also be applied to one program of study at any state vocational college that has been approved by the South Dakota Board of Education. HB 1046 adds technical colleges as an option for the free tuition for children or spouse of a member of the South Dakota National Guard totally disabled or deceased in the line of duty.

The final two bills involve headstones for deceased veterans. HB 1065 increased the headstone setting fee reimbursement for a federal government headstone or marker set in a private cemetery to \$200. HB 1054 allows the state to pay \$100 for the professional etching of veterans' military information on the back of a privately purchased headstone. The etching on the private stone must include the name, rank, branch of service, and dates of birth and death of the veteran.

When it comes to benefits for veterans, many federal programs are constantly changing and can be very confusing. As always, we encourage all veterans to visit their county or tribal veterans service officers (CTVSOs) and allow them to assist in filing claims. These men and women have worn the boots, walked through trenches, conducted maneuvers, commanded troops, sustained missions, and protected our freedoms. Who better to have on your team? To locate the CTVSO nearest you visit: <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/veteransserviceofficers/locatevso.aspx>.

Greg Whitlock, Secretary  
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



**Greg Whitlock,**  
**Secretary**  
**South Dakota**  
**Department of**  
**Veterans Affairs**



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **Tribal leaders urge legislators to support reestablishment of Lake Traverse Reservation boundaries**

**by Makenzie Huber  
South Dakota Searchlight**

AGENCY VILLAGE — The Lake Traverse Reservation, home to the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, doesn't appear on official South Dakota state maps.

Literally, the oyate (a Dakota word meaning "people" or "nation") was wiped off the map because of a 1975 U.S. Supreme Court decision.

That decision has made tribal members feel erased in the last 50 years, tribal council members told the State-Tribal Relations Committee at the tribal headquarters Monday in northeastern South Dakota. But Sisseton Wahpeton is alive – its culture and government – and tribal leaders say its boundaries are intact, even if official maps don't recognize it.

The tribe has been working to resolve the issue for years, with the only options being to take the issue to the Supreme Court again or have Congress federally recognize and reestablish the reservation boundaries. The boundaries encompass a triangular-shaped reservation with

The first step is having the South Dakota Legislature recognize those boundaries in its own legislation before taking the issue to Congress, tribal council members said.

"This is a part of our treaty and something that's recognized on a federal level," said Rep. Tamara St. John, R-Sisseton, and a member of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate. "Although this is a big issue, what we're asking for is relatively small. It is the understanding that we're still here."

St. John has already drafted legislation for the 2024 legislative session, which will convene in January, to recognize the treaty boundaries. She stressed that the draft isn't complete.

"We have work to do," St. John said. "This is a first step in wanting you all to be aware and ideally support us as we move this forward."

The South Dakota State-Tribal Relations Committee is a legislative committee filled with lawmakers responsible for fostering relationships between the state government and South Dakota's nine tribal nations.

If the Legislature passes the bill, it would be the first major step in a decades-long battle for Angelique EagleWoman, a professor of law at the Mitchell Hamline School of Law, director of the Native American Law and Sovereignty Institute and chief justice of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Supreme Court.

The Lake Traverse Reservation was created by a treaty between the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate and the United States in 1867, 22 years before South Dakota became a state. The tribal nation ceded over 25 million acres of land to the United States from 1805 until the reservation boundaries were officially established in 1867.

In 1975, the Supreme Court made a 6-3 decision in *DeCoteau v. District County Court* to disestablish the reservation boundaries. The decision cited an 1891 agreement between the Sisseton Wahpeton and the U.S. government to open the reservation to non-Native settlers within its boundaries. A dissenting opinion argued that there wasn't any indication in the agreement that the reservation boundaries were altered or disestablished.

While the U.S. Congress did pass a federal law recognizing the reservation existed after the 1975 decision, it was limited to allotments and tribal lands within the original boundaries, EagleWoman said, and did not provide the full federal recognition needed of its 1867 boundaries.

EagleWoman urged the lawmakers to support the legislation next session as "a matter of justice, fair-

ness and doing what is right.”

“This is ongoing and we’d like to put it to rest so we can start focusing on things we need,” Eaglewoman said.

The official map of South Dakota’s state highways also omits the Yankton Sioux Reservation and the Flandreau Santee Sioux Reservation. According to an article in the Lakota Times by the Center for American Indian Research and Native Studies, the state Department of Tribal Relations said Flandreau isn’t included because it is an “area of influence” instead of a reservation, and Yankton is not shown because its boundaries are “undefined.”

## South Dakota to receive \$207 million from new Biden broadband plan

by Ashley Murray  
South Dakota Searchlight

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration on Monday announced \$42.45 billion to connect all Americans to high-speed broadband internet by the end of the decade, likening the ambitious goal to FDR’s New Deal-era rural electrification program that brought the then-modern technology to farms and rural areas across the United States.

The funding includes about \$207 million for South Dakota.

The funds, which will be distributed as grants across U.S. states and territories, are allocated under the bipartisan infrastructure law, passed in 2021, but unveiled as the kick-off for the administration’s three-week tour highlighting infrastructure projects and private sector investment across the U.S.

“What we’re doing is, as I said, not unlike what Franklin Delano Roosevelt did when he brought electricity to nearly every American home and farm in our nation. Today (Vice President) Kamala (Harris) and I are making an equally historic investment to connect everyone in America to high speed internet, and affordable high speed internet, by 2030,” Biden said at the White House event in the East Room attended by guests and members of Congress.

“Because for today’s economy to work for everyone, internet access is just as important as electricity was, or water or other basic services,” Biden continued.

Twenty-four million people lack access to high-speed internet because networks do not reach their homes or because of affordability issues, according to the administration.

Harris opened the event with a description of her visit to Sunset, Louisiana, where she said 40 percent of households do not have broadband access.

“In Sunset, I met with parents who cannot apply for remote-work jobs because they do not have a high-speed internet connection at home,” Harris said. “... I met with entrepreneurs who struggle to start or grow a small business because they cannot get online. And I met with students who, when public buildings were closed during the pandemic, had to sit in the parking lot of a local library just to submit their homework over Wi-Fi.”

Jeff Say, manager of community engagement for UVA Health Culpeper Medical Center and a resident of Culpeper County, Virginia, told the crowd that the local internet service provider’s broadband connectivity stops a half mile from his home.

“What we ended up with was a hotspot that’s spotty at best and an ongoing struggle to work our schedule around the lack of connectivity,” Say said after Harris spoke and before he introduced Biden.

“We have to drive our children into my work, to my wife’s school, or to our county library to finish projects or homework assignments. Every aspect of our daily life has now seemingly been touched by internet access — education, health, commerce, and entertainment,” he continued.

Connecting Americans to high-speed internet is a “key part” of “Bidenomics” — Biden’s plan that “is rooted in the simple idea that we need to grow the economy from the middle out and the bottom up—not the top down,” according to a memo the administration released Monday.

During his remarks on broadband funding, Biden highlighted recent employment numbers and big-ticket private investment in areas like semiconductor manufacturing — a nod to the CHIPS and Science Act he signed into law in 2022 that provided subsidies for the industry — as proof of his administration's recent economic success.

The latest round of broadband grants builds upon the Affordable Connectivity Program that provided income-eligible families at least a \$30 discount per month on internet service as a part of the American Rescue Plan, both Biden and Harris noted.

Dubbed the "Internet for All" initiative, Monday's announcement begins the near-month-long tour by Biden and administration officials to spotlight some of the 35,000 projects either funded or underway since Biden took office.

Biden is running for re-election in 2024.

The money will first be prioritized to install and upgrade broadband networks, according to the White House. Once those goals are met, remaining funds can be used for "access-, adoption- and equity-related uses."

The Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration will administer the grants to all 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia and five U.S. territories. The funding comes from the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment program established under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

States and territories are expected to receive a formal notice of allocated funds by June 30.

## **Where the GOP presidential candidates stand on national abortion bans, restrictions** **by Jennifer Shutt**

WASHINGTON — The 2024 Republican presidential primary marks the first time in half a century that candidates will debate whether abortion should be restricted or banned at the federal level without the Roe v. Wade ruling making most of their proposals moot.

The U.S. Supreme Court's decision last summer to overturn the nationwide, constitutional right to an abortion sent the question back to "the people and their elected representatives."

Many Republicans have interpreted that as sending the issue back to state lawmakers and GOP-led states during the past year moved to pass bans and restrictions. The ruling also left the door open for Congress to pass legislation — a move many anti-abortion organizations would like to see.

While some GOP presidential candidates at this early point in the campaign are enthusiastic supporters of the idea, others are unwilling to back national abortion laws.

The Faith & Freedom Coalition "Road to Majority 2023" conference June 22 to 24 in Washington, D.C. billed as "the nation's premier pro-faith, pro-family event," produced new details and commitments from several candidates.

Roger Severino, vice president of domestic policy at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank in Washington, D.C., said during an interview it will be "crucial" for Republican presidential candidates to release clear proposals for what abortion legislation they would advocate for if elected.

Heritage, he said, is calling on the GOP candidates to push for a nationwide law that would restrict abortion after embryonic cardiac activity is detected, which happens approximately six weeks into a pregnancy.

Severino pressed back against the stance from some Republicans in Congress that the issue is best left up to the states. A Republican U.S. House and U.S. Senate would be essential for any GOP president to implement a nationwide abortion ban.

"Members of Congress should not avoid the issue by trying to punt it off to the states when they have been elected on pro-life platforms for years and are expected to deliver," Severino said. "That would be the height of disingenuousness."

Severino was less clear about whether Republicans, if they regain control of the Senate, should eliminate

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the legislative filibuster that requires at least 60 senators to move legislation toward final passage.

That provision ensures that absent one party holding a supermajority, only bipartisan bills pass through the chamber. It has blocked Republicans from passing nationwide bans under unified control of Washington and Democrats from passing nationwide protections for abortion access when they held control.

"The legislative filibuster is a more complicated question because once it's gone you can't take it back," Severino said.

The conservative organization, he said, is looking for a presidential candidate that possesses "leadership to pick up the mantle of this new civil rights movement to protect innocent unborn life."

Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America President Marjorie Dannenfelser said in a written statement released in May that the organization, one of the nation's largest anti-abortion groups, wants the next president to push for a national ban of at least 15 weeks.

The group also wants that person to "work tirelessly to build consensus and gather the votes necessary in Congress."

Dannenfelser has rebuked Republicans who argue abortion should be left up to states, saying in a written statement released in April that it "is a morally indefensible position for a self-proclaimed pro-life presidential candidate to hold."

"The Supreme Court made clear in its decision that it was returning the issue to the people to decide through their elected representatives in the states and in Congress," she wrote. "Holding to the position that it is exclusively up to the states is an abdication of responsibility by anyone elected to federal office."

"This holds especially true for the president, more than any other federal official, because he or she has a responsibility to forge national consensus and progress on the most egregious human rights violation of our time," Dannenfelser added.

President Joe Biden, likely to be the Democratic nominee for president, said Friday that if reelected he would prevent any restrictions to reproductive rights or abortion access.

Here's where the current Republican presidential candidates currently stand on a nationwide abortion law, according to their public actions, statements and campaign websites:

Doug Burgum

The North Dakota governor signed legislation in April that restricts abortion access in the state to six weeks for people who survive rape or incest. Abortion would then be banned for anyone except for pregnant patients whose lives would be at risk or who are having medical emergencies. His campaign website doesn't have an official position on what he would support as president.

Chris Christie

The former New Jersey governor hasn't been especially clear about whether he'd sign a nationwide abortion ban if he won election to the Oval Office, though during his run in 2016, Christie said he would support a 20-week ban.

During a CNN town hall in June, Christie said he doesn't believe there's a constitutional right to an abortion and that the issue should be decided in each state. "The federal government should not be involved unless and until there's a consensus around the country from the 50 states making their own decisions about what it should be. And if at that time there's a consensus that has emerged, well, then that's fine."

Ron DeSantis

The Florida governor has signed several state bills since the fall of *Roe v. Wade* last year, including a ban once a fetal heartbeat is detected, roughly around six weeks. That new law will take effect if the state Supreme Court upholds a 15-week ban that he also signed.

DeSantis said Friday during the Faith & Freedom Coalition conference that he was proud to have enacted legislation that removed sales taxes from all baby supplies, as well as bills to provide support for foster care, adoption and single mothers.

"It's important that we walk the walk and just not talk the talk when it comes to right to life," DeSantis said.

Larry Elder

The radio host opposes abortion, but has said he believes it should be decided at the state level.

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Nikki Haley

The former South Carolina governor and ambassador to the United Nations in the Trump administration describes herself as “unapologetically pro-life” and said during a CNN town hall in June that she does believe there’s a role for the federal government to play.

But Haley said Republicans running for the Oval Office must be honest with voters that it’s highly unlikely they’d have at least 60 senators to move abortion legislation past the Senate’s legislative filibuster. Instead, she said, the House, Senate and White House should look for what they do agree on and move forward with that.

“I think we can all agree on banning late-term abortions. I think we can all agree on encouraging adoptions and making sure those foster kids feel more loved, not less,” Haley said. “I think we can agree on doctors and nurses who don’t believe in abortions shouldn’t have to perform them. I think we can agree on the fact that contraception should be accessible. And I think we can all come together and say any woman that has an abortion shouldn’t be jailed or given the death penalty.”

In 2016, Haley signed a bill as governor that banned abortions starting at 20 weeks with an exception afterward for the life of the pregnant patient. The measure didn’t have exceptions after that threshold for rape or incest survivors.

Will Hurd

The former Texas congressman tweeted in May 2022 that he is “pro-life” and believes that life begins at conception, though he added he believes “we shouldn’t continue to fail women – before, during and after pregnancy.”

During his time in Congress, Hurd voted for a bill that would have instituted a nationwide abortion ban at 20 weeks gestation with exceptions for rape, incest or the life of the pregnant patient after that time. Hurd doesn’t state on his campaign website whether he’d support a nationwide ban if elected president.

Asa Hutchinson

While governor of Arkansas, Hutchinson signed several bills that restricted abortion, including one that didn’t include exceptions for rape or incest.

During the Faith & Freedom Coalition conference on Friday, Hutchinson said he would sign a nationwide abortion ban and work to prevent federal dollars from going to abortion. Federal law only allows federal taxpayer dollars to provide abortions in cases of rape, incest or the life of the pregnant patient.

“As president I would fight to make sure taxpayer funds are not used to support abortion,” Hutchinson said. “And if Congress acts, I will sign a federal law to restrict abortion as well, as president of the United States.”

Hutchinson said in April that he would want to see the details of any nationwide bills before signing the legislation.

“I’ve always signed pro-life bills that come to me ... I certainly support the decisions of the states,” he said at the time. “And my longtime position is that abortion should not be allowed except in three circumstances: in the life of the mother and in the cases of rape and incest.”

Mike Pence

The former vice president during the Trump administration has a long record of supporting abortion restrictions and cheered the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision last summer to send the issue back to lawmakers.

During the Faith & Freedom Coalition conference on Friday, he rejected calls from some of his fellow Republicans to leave the issue solely to state lawmakers. Pence called for every Republican candidate to support a nationwide abortion ban of at least 15 weeks.

“Now some you will hear from, at this very podium, will say that the Supreme Court returned the issue of abortion only to the states, that nothing should be done at the federal level. Others will say that continuing the fight to life has produced state legislation that’s too harsh. Some have even gone on to blame the overturning of Roe v. Wade for election losses in 2022,” Pence said.

“But, let me say from my heart, the cause of life is the calling of our time and we must not rest and must not relent until we restore the sanctity of life to the center of American law in every state in this country,” Pence added.

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Vivek Ramaswamy

The entrepreneur has said abortion access should only be taken up at the state level, not by Congress. "I don't believe a federal abortion ban makes any sense. I say this as somebody who is pro-life," he said during an interview with CNN in May. "This is not an issue for the federal government. It is an issue for the states. I think we need to be explicit about that. If murder laws are handled at the state level and abortion is a form of murder, the pro-life view, then it makes no sense for that to be the one federal law."

Murder, and other legal definitions of killing, can be charged as federal crimes, however. At the state level, Ramaswamy said, he supports a six-week ban.

Tim Scott

The U.S. senator who has represented South Carolina for more than a decade has co-sponsored several bills during his time in Congress, including one that would define life as beginning at the moment of "fertilization or cloning" and a 20-week abortion ban. Scott didn't co-sponsor a 15-week ban that was introduced in the Senate following the Dobbs decision.

Scott has given mixed answers about when abortion should be legal since announcing his presidential bid. In mid-April, Scott declined to get into specifics on the campaign trail before saying he would sign a 20-week ban. Scott then said during an interview with NBC News that he would "sign the most conservative, pro-life legislation that they can get through Congress." But Scott declined to go into details about exceptions to a nationwide ban, saying he didn't want to get into hypotheticals.

Francis Suarez

The Miami mayor spoke at length during the Faith & Freedom conference on Friday about his personal faith and the "pro-life" values within his family, though he didn't get into specifics about what types of legislation he would press for if elected to the White House

Suarez said in mid-June during an interview with The Associated Press that he would support a 15-week nationwide ban on abortion, suggesting support isn't there for a six-week ban.

"We are in a situation where 70% of the country agrees with a limitation of 15 weeks, where there is an exception for the life of the mother and an exception for rape and incest, and I think that is a position that will save a tremendous amount of babies," Suarez said to the AP. "If there was that kind of federal law, that's one that I would support as president."

Donald Trump

The former president nominated three conservative-leaning justices to the U.S. Supreme Court during his four years in office. That move was possible after Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell, a Kentucky Republican, held one seat open during the last year of the Barack Obama presidency.

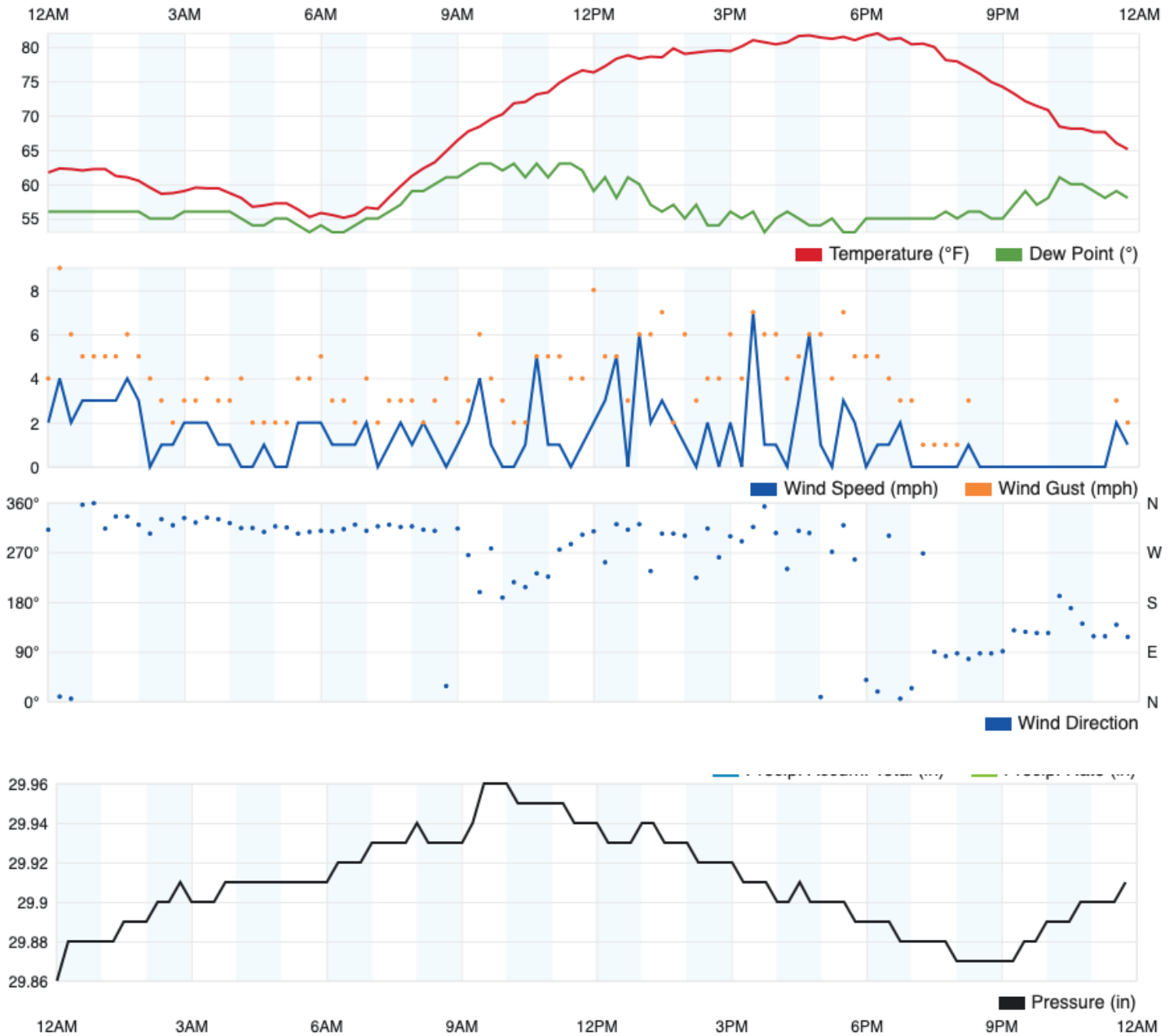
Trump has repeatedly referred to himself as a pro-life president, but hasn't been especially clear on the subject during his 2024 bid for the Oval Office. He elicited criticism from Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America after he said the issue should be left up to state governments, not Congress.

SBA President Dannenfelser, however, said later in a written statement that she had a "terrific meeting" with Trump, during which he "reiterated that any federal legislation protecting these children would need to include the exceptions for life of the mother and in cases of rape and incest."

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



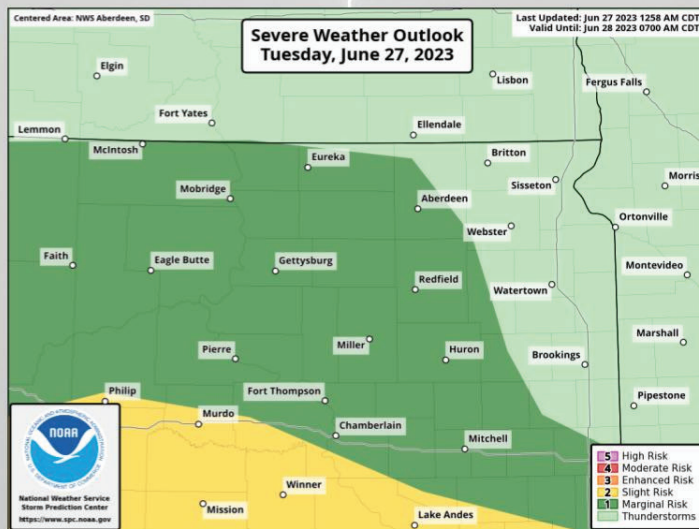


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Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
 30%	 70%	 60%		 20%		 20%
Patchy Smoke then Chance T-storms	T-storms Likely	T-storms Likely then Mostly Sunny	Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny then Slight Chance T-storms	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny then Slight Chance Showers
High: 82 °F	Low: 62 °F	High: 82 °F	Low: 61 °F	High: 84 °F	Low: 60 °F	High: 83 °F

## Storm Chances Again Today...



### Probability of Precipitation Forecast

	6/27 Tue							6/28 Wed					
	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm
Aberdeen	5	5	5	10	30	55	70	55	55	55	10	10	10
Britton	0	0	5	5	25	55	70	55	55	55	25	25	15
Brookings	0	5	5	5	20	35	35	40	35	15	10	10	10
Chamberlain	35	40	25	15	25	35	35	20	10	0	0	0	0
Clark	5	5	5	5	25	55	55	55	55	55	10	10	5
Eagle Butte	70	25	20	20	35	65	55	55	20	20	0	5	5
Ellendale	5	5	10	15	40	55	75	55	55	55	15	15	15
Eureka	30	25	15	20	45	70	60	55	50	50	5	10	10
Gettysburg	65	45	25	35	40	55	65	55	40	40	5	5	5
Huron	10	20	15	15	25	30	35	25	20	5	5	5	5
Kennebec	55	50	30	15	15	45	45	45	20	20	0	0	0
McIntosh	45	20	15	30	50	60	55	55	35	35	5	10	10
Milbank	0	0	0	5	15	45	50	55	60	55	35	35	20
Miller	55	45	25	20	30	55	55	55	55	55	0	0	0
Mobridge	70	40	15	30	50	70	55	55	35	35	0	5	5
Murdo	50	45	25	10	15	40	40	40	10	10	0	0	0
Pierre	70	50	30	15	20	55	55	55	20	20	0	0	0
Redfield	10	10	10	15	25	55	55	55	55	55	5	5	5
Sisseton	0	0	0	5	20	55	65	55	55	55	30	30	20
Watertown	0	0	5	5	20	50	50	55	55	55	20	20	10
Webster	0	0	5	5	25	55	60	55	55	55	15	15	15
Wheaton	0	0	0	5	15	50	50	60	55	55	45	45	40

weather.gov/abr  
 June 27, 2023 4:07 AM

You may notice some reduced visibilities today due to smoke. Storms chances return this morning across the southwestern portion of the area and tonight the threat for storms is mainly in northern counties. Some storms could become severe.

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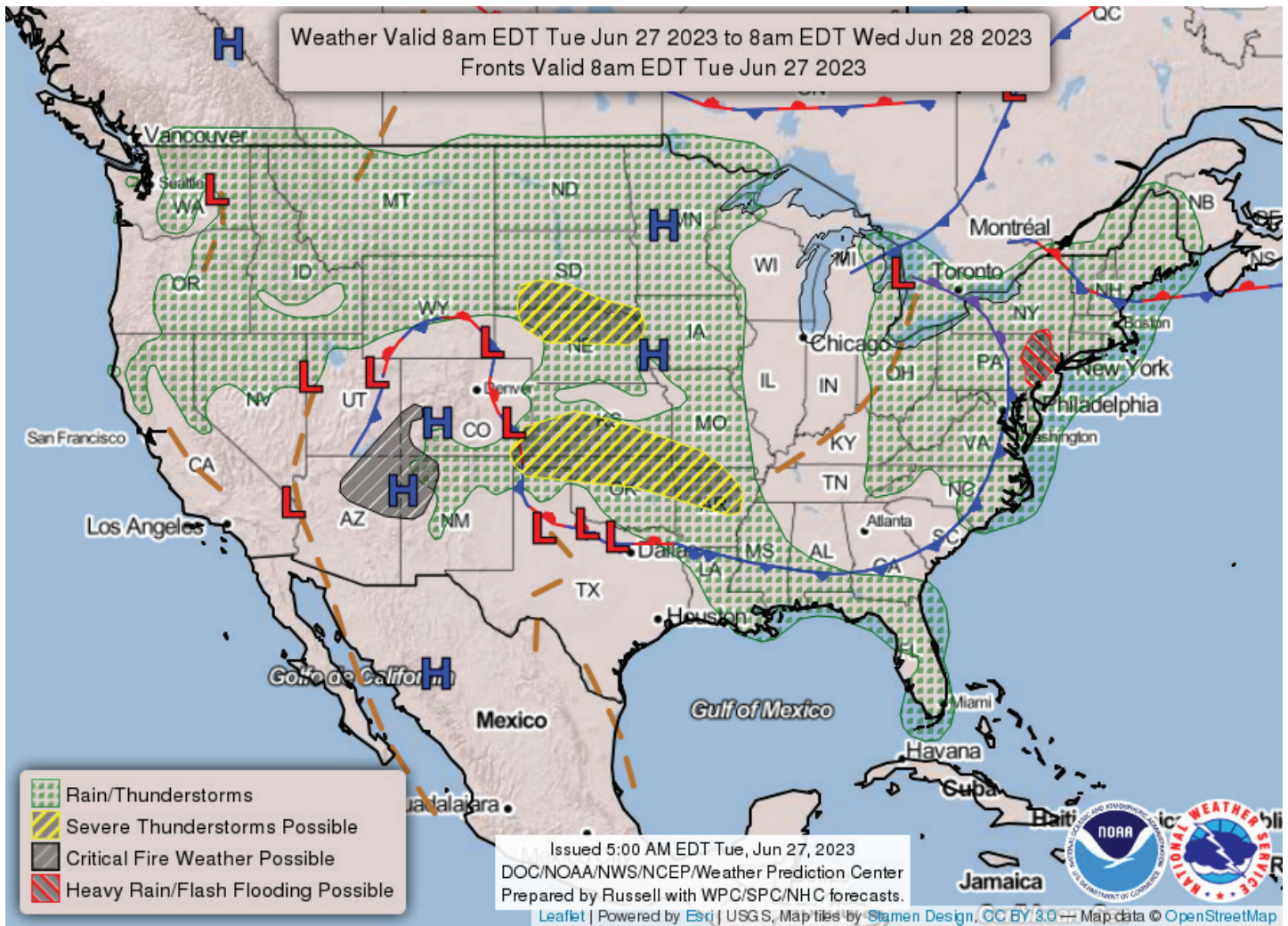
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 83 °F at 6:10 PM**  
**Low Temp: 55 °F at 6:22 AM**  
**Wind: 9 mph at 12:08 AM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

Day length: 15 hours, 42 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 104 in 1936  
Record Low: 42 in 2017  
Average High: 83  
Average Low: 58  
Average Precip in June.: 3.37  
Precip to date in June.: 2.63  
Average Precip to date: 10.62  
Precip Year to Date: 10.54  
Sunset Tonight: 9:26:55 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:44:31 AM



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## Today in Weather History

June 27, 1894: Three people were injured as a tornado destroyed a home 5 miles north of Houghton in Brown County. Lumber on a wagon was scattered for over a mile. This tornado was estimated to be an F2. Also, a second F2 tornado formed south of Aberdeen and moved northeast and went near Randolph, to beyond Bath. Several barns and two homes were destroyed along the narrow path. Three other small funnels were seen to touch down. Another tornado with estimated F2 strength moved ENE from northeast of St. Lawrence to Bonilla and Hitchcock. At least one home was destroyed. One person was killed in the destruction of her home, north of Wessington. An estimated F2 tornado hit 2 miles south of Henry. At least two small houses were blown away. There was another possible tornado 12 miles north of Henry. Numerous tornadoes continued into Minnesota.

June 27, 1928: A long-lived estimated F2 tornado moved southeast from 7 miles west of Faulkton, passing north and east of Orient. Buildings were damaged on nine farms. One home near Orient was riddled with timbers from a nearby grain elevator. This tornado was estimated to travel a distance of 40 miles.

1901 - There was a rain of fish from the sky at Tiller's Ferry. Hundreds of fish were swimming between cotton rows after a heavy shower. (David Ludlum)

1915: The temperature at Fort Yukon, Alaska soared to 100 degrees to establish a state record.

1957 - Hurricane Audrey smashed ashore at Cameron, LA, drowning 390 persons in the storm tide, and causing 150 million dollars damage in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi. Audrey left only a brick courthouse and a cement-block icehouse standing at Cameron, and when the waters settled in the town of Crede, only four buildings remained. The powerful winds of Audrey tossed a fishing boat weighing 78 tons onto an off-shore drilling platform. Winds along the coast gusted to 105 mph, and oil rigs off the Louisiana coast reported wind gusts to 180 mph. A storm surge greater than twelve feet inundated the Louisiana coast as much as 25 miles inland. It was the deadliest June hurricane of record for the U.S. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms moving out of Nebraska produced severe weather in north central Kansas after midnight. Thunderstorm winds gusting to 100 mph damaged more than fifty camping trailers at the state park campground at Lake Waconda injuring sixteen persons. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 80 mph at Beloit and Sylvan Grove. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - The afternoon high of 107 degrees at Bismarck, ND, was a record for the month of June, and Pensacola, FL, equalled their June record with a reading of 101 degrees. Temperatures in the Great Lakes Region and the Ohio Valley dipped into the 40s. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from the Ohio Valley to western New England. Thunderstorm spawned six tornadoes, and there were 98 reports of large hail and damaging winds. Tropical Storm Allison spawned six tornadoes in Louisiana, injuring two persons at Hackberry. Fort Polk LA was drenched with 10.09 inches of rain in 36 hours, and 12.87 inches was reported at the Gorum Fire Tower in northern Louisiana. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1995: The Madison County Flood on June 27, 1995, was the worst flash floods Virginia had seen since the remnants of Camille dropped up to 30 inches of rain one night in Nelson County in August 1969. The Nelson County flood ranked as one of the nation's worst flash floods of this century and resulted in the deaths of 117 people. The Madison County flood killed one person.

2011: Polar temperatures and unusual snowfall chill several cities in Brazil's southern states. Four cities in Santa Catarina state are blanketed in snow. The town of Urubici reported a temperature of 23.9 degrees Fahrenheit with a wind chill of 16.6 degrees below zero. In Florianopolis, the capital of Santa Catarina and a renowned sea resort, thermometers registered 21.2 degrees.

Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### "GRACE"

In 1918 a salesman traveling door to door selling "foot scrapers" stopped at the door of Eric Enstrom, a Minnesota photographer. He looked into the eyes of the salesman and noticed their kindness and was so impressed by the gentleness of the man that he invited him in to eat.

"Come in," said Enstrom, "I'm ready to sit down to dinner. Join me." As he walked to the table, an idea struck the photographer. He asked, "Will you please pose for a picture for me?"

"Yes," answered the salesman and sat down at the table. There was a pair of glasses on a Bible, a bowl of food and a piece of bread. "Would you please bow your head," and as he did, "the peddler," without giving thought to what he was doing, immediately began to thank God for what he had been given.

The photograph was taken in 1918 during World War I. Enstrom said he wanted to take the picture to remind people that even though they had to do without many things, they still had much to be thankful for. Enstrom wrote: "Though poor in earthly goods, this man has more of life's greatest treasures than most." He called the picture Grace.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to be grateful for all that we have. May we understand and realize that whatever we have, much or little, is because of Your goodness and grace. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.  
1 Thessalonians 5:18



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

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## 2023 Community Events

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

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## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.23.23

13 62 65 67 69 14

MegaPlier: 5x

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

NEXT 15 Hrs 50 Mins  
DRAW: 20 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.26.23

3 31 33 34 38 3

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$4,620,000**

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 5  
DRAW: Mins 20 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.26.23

1 8 24 29 36 1

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

NEXT 15 Hrs 20 Mins  
DRAW: 20 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.24.23

8 14 23 33 35

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

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 20  
DRAW: Mins 20 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.26.23

14 20 23 31 54 19

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

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 49  
DRAW: Mins 19 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.26.23

6 28 39 43 54 12

Power Play: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$462,000,000**

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 49  
DRAW: Mins 19 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### Conquer America's Most Scenic Hikes and Trails in These 10 States

Chris Alarcon | Wealth of Geeks undefined

The list of the best camping states in the US was recently released, making it the perfect time to explore the nation's most scenic hiking trails. When you want to plan the best possible vacation for your nature-loving family in these states, get out and discover America's abundance of natural beauty on foot.

Adventures On The Rock, a sustainable adventure travel company, compiled the data to determine the best places to camp and enjoy outdoor exploration.

They found Wyoming in the number one spot for the highest number of free campsites and RV parks, with Montana in second with the most hiking trails and New Mexico in third with high scores across several factors.

"This data provides a fascinating insight into which states offer nature lovers the most well-rounded camping experiences," an Adventures On The Rock spokesperson said.

Exploring America's Most Scenic Hikes and Trails in 10 States

Many people enjoy spending time outdoors exploring the best vacation spots for the most scenic views and natural vistas in the United States. The hiking experts at AllTrails.com offer more detailed information about the following scenic hikes in the country's best camping states.

North Dakota

With some of the nation's most stunning natural sights and thousands of miles of hiking trails, North Dakota has numerous scenic trails sure to take your breath away—from the views or the exertion, depending on your chosen path.

Maah Daah Hey Trail: 144 miles leading to prairies, valleys, jagged peaks, and riverways.

Petrified Forest Trail: 10.2 miles looping through the remains of a petrified forest in Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Many guests say buffalo often make an appearance.

Colorado

There's no shortage of unique landscapes and picturesque hiking trails in Colorado. Choose from thousands of scenic routes, including family-friendly and wheelchair-accessible options. The Rocky Mountains offer some of the nation's most iconic mountain views that should be a must-try addition to any hiker's list.

Emerald Lake Trail: 3.2 miles through Estes Park, passing several crystalline alpine lakes surrounded by the spectacular backdrop of Hallett Peak and Flattop Mountain.

Crater Lake on Cascade Creek Trail: 16 miles of strenuous hiking take you up switchbacks and through wildflower-strewn alpine meadows on your way to Crater Lake.

New Hampshire

Hikers in New Hampshire can choose from over a thousand trails with incredible scenic views or waterfalls. With 713 family-friendly hiking trails, you'll have plenty of choices to get the family out to experience nature's splendor firsthand.

Mount Willard: 3.1 miles of easy hiking with gorgeous views of the White Mountains.

Mount Eisenhower: 6.6 miles taking you to the summit, where you'll find 360-degree views of the White Mountains and the Presidential Range.

Utah

The unique geology of Utah's landscape makes it one of the nation's most desirable hiking destinations. Walk through the seemingly gentle waters that eroded towering slot canyons and take in natural arches, waterfalls, beautifully stark rock formations, and more.

Angels Landing Hike: 4.5 miles of challenging terrain take you through Zion National Park, ending with a mind-blowing 360-degree panoramic view of Zion Canyon.

The Narrows: 9-16 miles through the stunning Zion Narrows slot canyons. Prepare to hike through water at points, with canyon walls towering a thousand feet above your head.



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## South Dakota

South Dakota offers some of the nation's most recognizable vistas, including Mount Rushmore, the dramatic, rocky Badlands, and picturesque sights that showcase America's scenic beauty in various ways.

**Notch Trail:** 1.5 miles through Badlands National Park on this short, kid-friendly hike with great views.

**Mount Rushmore:** A 0.9-mile loop takes you to view the iconic Mount Rushmore. The trail is pavement and boardwalk, but if you're visiting the state, it can be a great side trip.

## Vermont

The natural forested landscape of Vermont boasts nearly a thousand diverse hiking trails through breathtaking landscapes, including more than 600 with picturesque views or waterfalls. If you want to set smart goals for your ideal scenic family vacation, Vermont is an excellent place to start.

**Sterling Pond Trail:** 2.1 miles of hiking takes you through the forest, past lakes and wildflower meadows, to stunning nature views.

**Sunset Ridge and Long Trail Loop:** 5.9 miles of hard hiking await if you take this path of incredible vistas. This trail is also popular for cross-country skiing in the winter.

## Idaho

Though many don't know it, Idaho houses the country's largest designated wilderness outside of Alaska, with over 20 million acres of national forest. Explore the mountainous landscapes, river views, and protected wilderness spaces on more than 1,200 trails with scenic views.

**Sawtooth Lake via Iron Creek Stanley Lake Trail:** 10.0 miles of moderately difficult hiking through the natural beauty of the Sawtooth Mountains with spectacular views of the alpine lake.

**Freddy's Stack Rock Trail:** 11.7 miles of trail looping through downhill switchbacks, piney woods, and sagebrush with breathtaking views.

## New Mexico

The southern Rocky Mountains extend into New Mexico, creating a diverse landscape of stunning views and more than 1,300 scenic hiking trails ranging from wheelchair-accessible to challenging. Whether you're looking to explore mountains, deserts, or forests, New Mexico has a beautiful vista waiting for you.

**Atakaya Mountain Trail:** A popular 6.2-mile trail through Santa Fe National Forest offers incredible views and a few challenging steep sections.

**Alkali Flat Trail:** 4.7 miles looping through White Sands National Park and skirting the final remnants of Lake Otero. In contrast to its name, the trail is not flat, so be prepared for dunes.

## Montana

With stunning terrain ranging from the Rocky Mountains to the Great Plains, Montana provides spectacular sights you can't find anywhere else. Discover glacial lakes, hot springs, and alpine hiking trails through unique environments.

**Avalanche Lake:** 5.9 miles through Glacier National Park on one of the park's most popular trails showcasing the crystal-clear blue waters of the lake and stunning vistas for the whole hike.

**Grand Prismatic Hot Spring:** 1.5 miles of easy trail through Yellowstone National Park takes you to the surreal hot springs, which will dazzle you with their sheer size and vibrant colors.

## Wyoming

If you're looking for a stress-free vacation spot, start the search in Wyoming, with its wealth of hiking trails, spectacular panoramic views, and extensive camping resources.

**Cascade Canyon Trail:** 9.1 miles through Grand Teton National Park, starting at a 200-foot-tall inspiration point with an unbelievable view of Jenny Lake and the park.

**Delta Lake via Lupine Meadows Access:** 7.4 miles of challenging trail. This route is unofficial, unmaintained, and one of Grand Teton National Park's most popular trails with amazing views.

"One of the key reasons people plan camping trips is for the adventure component. Exploring the great outdoors, observing different wildlife, and hiking trails are all part of the allure. However, safety should always be paramount, so it is crucial to research and plan ahead as much as possible before undertaking any camping trip," Adventures On The Rock representatives said.

Some of the most incredible natural sights can be found in the United States, where millions of acres of

protected national forests and parks.

Whether you're planning a vacation with your kids to traverse family-friendly trails or challenging your endurance across rugged terrain, these American scenic hikes and trails are an excellent place to start.

This article was produced by Financially Well Off and syndicated by Wealth of Geeks.

## Russia drops charges against Prigozhin and others who took part in brief rebellion

By The Associated Press undefined

Russian authorities said Tuesday they have closed a criminal investigation into the armed rebellion led by mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin, with no charges against him or any of the other participants.

The Federal Security Service, or FSB, said its investigation found that those involved in the mutiny "ceased activities directed at committing the crime," so the case would not be pursued.

The announcement was the latest twist in a series of stunning events in recent days that have brought the gravest threat so far to President Vladimir Putin's grip on power amid the 16-month-old war in Ukraine.

Over the weekend, the Kremlin pledged not to prosecute Prigozhin and his fighters after he stopped the revolt on Saturday, even though Putin had branded them as traitors.

The charge of mounting an armed mutiny carries a punishment of up to 20 years in prison. Prigozhin escaping prosecution poses a stark contrast to how the Kremlin has treated those staging anti-government protests in Russia.

Many opposition figures in Russia have received long prison terms and are serving time in penal colonies notorious for harsh conditions.

The whereabouts of Prigozhin remained a mystery Tuesday. The Kremlin has said he would be exiled to neighboring Belarus, but neither he nor the Belarusian authorities have confirmed that.

An independent Belarusian military monitoring project Belaruski Hajun said a business jet that Prigozhin reportedly uses landed near Minsk on Tuesday morning.

The media team for Prigozhin, the 62-year-old head of the Wagner private military contractor, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Belarus' authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko, a close Putin ally who brokered a deal with Prigozhin to stop the uprising, didn't immediately address Prigozhin's fate in a speech Tuesday.

Lukashenko, who has ruled Belarus with an iron hand for 29 years, relentlessly stifling dissent and relying on Russian subsidies and political support, portrayed the uprising as the latest development in a clash between Prigozhin and Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu. Their long-simmering personal feud has at times boiled over, and Prigozhin has said the revolt aimed to unseat Shoigu, not Putin.

Lukashenko framed the insurrection by Wagner as a significant threat, saying he placed Belarus' armed forces on a combat footing as the mutiny unfolded.

Like Putin, he couched the Ukraine war in terms of an existential threat to Russia, saying: "If Russia collapses, we all will perish under the debris."

In a nationally televised address Monday night, Putin once again blasted organizers of the rebellion as traitors who played into the hands of Ukraine's government and its allies. Although he was critical of Prigozhin, Putin praised the work of Wagner commanders.

That was "likely in an effort to retain them" in the Russian effort in Ukraine, because Moscow needs "trained and effective manpower" as it faces the early stages of a Ukrainian counteroffensive, according to a Washington-based think tank.

The Institute for the Study of War also noted that the break between Putin and Prigozhin is likely beyond repair and that providing the Wagner chief and his loyalists with Belarus as an apparent safe haven could be a trap.

Prigozhin's short-lived insurrection over the weekend has rattled Russia's leadership.

Putin sought to project stability in his speech, criticizing the uprising's "organizers," without naming Prigozhin. He also praised Russian unity in the face of the crisis, as well as rank-and-file Wagner fighters for

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not letting the situation descend into "major bloodshed."

Putin returned to this theme in a speech Tuesday to soldiers and law enforcement officers in the Kremlin, praising them for averting "a civil war." He again declared that the army and people didn't support the mutiny, but avoided mentioning Prigozhin by name.

On Monday, Prigozhin defended his actions in a defiant audio statement. He again taunted the Russian military but said he hadn't been seeking to stage a coup against Putin.

In another show of projecting authority, the Kremlin showed Putin meeting Monday night with top security, law enforcement and military officials, including Shoigu, whom Prigozhin had sought to remove.

Putin thanked his team for their work over the weekend, implying support for the embattled Shoigu. Earlier, the authorities released video of Shoigu reviewing troops in Ukraine.

It also wasn't clear whether he would be able to keep his mercenary force. In his speech, Putin offered Prigozhin's fighters to either come under Russia's Defense Ministry's command, leave service or go to Belarus.

Prigozhin said Monday, without elaborating, that the Belarusian leadership proposed solutions that would allow Wagner to operate "in a legal jurisdiction," but it was unclear what that meant.

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

## Ex-Audi boss convicted of fraud in automaker's diesel emissions scandal

By FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Former Audi boss Rupert Stadler was convicted of fraud Tuesday in connection with the automaker's diesel emissions scandal, making him the highest-ranking executive found guilty over cars that cheated on emissions tests with the help of illegal software.

A German court handed Stadler a suspended prison sentence of 21 months and ordered him to pay a fine of 1.1 million euros (\$1.2 million), some of which will go to charitable groups. The sentence resulted from an agreement between his lawyers, the judge and prosecutors after he pleaded guilty last month.

The former head of Volkswagen's luxury division admitted wrongdoing and regret for his failure to keep rigged cars off the market even after the scandal had become public knowledge.

The Munich regional court also sentenced the former head of engine development, Wolfgang Hatz, and a former Audi engineer, identified only as Giovanni P. for privacy reasons, to suspended prison sentences and fines.

They were accused of ensuring that diesel engines met emissions limits during testing but not on the road to save on construction costs. Prosecutors had objected to a plea agreement with Hatz. The verdicts are likely to be appealed.

The court already closed a case in April against a fourth defendant who had testified for the prosecution and ordered him to pay a fine.

It is the first criminal trial to conclude in Germany in connection with the diesel emissions scandal.

Stadler had been charged with fraud and false certification by prosecutors who said he let cars with rigged software be sold even after the the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency uncovered the fraud at Volkswagen and Audi in September 2015.

He was detained in 2018 and held for four months. The 60-year-old resigned as Audi chief and a member of the Volkswagen board later that year and has since paid the company some 4.1 million euros in damages for failing in his oversight duties.

His boss at the time, former VW chief executive Martin Winterkorn, has been charged by U.S. and German authorities, but Germany does not generally extradite its citizens to countries outside the European Union.

German proceedings against Winterkorn also have stalled because he is in poor health. Four other cases against former VW managers are ongoing in Braunschweig.

A spokesman for the Munich court, Laurent Lafleur, said Stadler's guilty plea together with the extensive

evidence heard during the trial could play an important role in other cases.

The diesel scandal cost Volkswagen more than \$30 billion in fines and settlements and saw two U.S. executives sent to prison.

It pushed the entire auto industry away from reliance on diesel engines, which had been almost half the auto market in Europe, and helped accelerate the shift to electric vehicles.

## Thousands of unauthorized vapes are pouring into the US despite the FDA crackdown on fruity flavors

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of different electronic cigarette devices sold in the U.S. has nearly tripled to over 9,000 since 2020, driven almost entirely by a wave of unauthorized disposable vapes from China, according to tightly controlled sales data obtained by The Associated Press.

The surge stands in stark contrast to regulators' own figures, which tout the rejection of some 99% of company requests to sell new e-cigarettes while authorizing only a few meant for adult smokers.

The numbers demonstrate the Food and Drug Administration's inability to control the tumultuous vaping market more than three years after declaring a crackdown on kid-friendly flavors. Most of the disposable e-cigarettes, which are thrown away after they're used up, come in sweet and fruity flavors like pink lemonade, gummy bear and watermelon that have made them the favorite tobacco product among teenagers.

They are all technically illegal, but their influx has turned FDA's regulatory model on its head. Instead of carefully reviewing individual products that might help adult smokers, regulators must now somehow claw back thousands of illegal products sold by under-the-radar importers and distributors.

Most disposables mirror a few major brands, such as Elf Bar or Puff Bar, but hundreds of new varieties appear each month. Companies copy each other's designs, blurring the line between the real and counterfeit. Entrepreneurs can launch a new product by simply sending their logo and flavor requests to Chinese manufacturers, who promise to deliver tens of thousands of devices within weeks.

Once a niche market, cheaper disposables made up 40% of the roughly \$7 billion retail market for e-cigarettes last year, according to data from analytics firm IRI obtained by the AP. The company's proprietary data collects barcode scanner sales from convenience stores, gas stations and other retailers.

More than 5,800 unique disposable products are now being sold in numerous flavors and formulations, according to the data, up 1,500% from 365 in early 2020. That's when the FDA effectively banned all flavors except menthol and tobacco from cartridge-based e-cigarettes like Juul, the rechargeable device blamed for sparking a nationwide surge in underage vaping.

But the FDA's policy — formulated under President Donald Trump — excluded disposables, prompting many teens to simply switch from Juul to the newer flavored products.

"The FDA moves at a ponderous pace and the industry knows that and exploits it," said Dr. Robert Jackler of Stanford University, who has studied the rise of disposables. "Time and again, the vaping industry has innovated around efforts to remove its youth-appealing products from the market."

Adding to the challenge, foreign manufacturers of the prefilled devices don't have to register with FDA, giving regulators little visibility into a sprawling industry centered in China's Shenzhen manufacturing center.

Under pressure from politicians, parents and major vaping companies, the FDA recently sent warning letters to more than 200 stores selling popular disposables, including Elf Bar, Esco Bar and Breeze. The agency also issued orders blocking imports of those three brands. But IRI data shows those companies accounted for just 14% of disposable sales last year. Dozens of other brands, including Air Bar, Mr. Fog, Fume and Kangvape, have been left untouched.

FDA's tobacco director, Brian King, said the agency is "unwavering" in its commitment against illegal e-cigarettes.

"I don't think there's any panacea here," King said. "We follow a comprehensive approach and that involves addressing all entities across the supply chain, from manufacturers to importers to distributors to retailers."

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The IRI data obtained by the AP provides key insights beyond figures released last week by government researchers, which showed the number of vaping brands in the U.S. grew nearly 50% to 269 by late 2022.

IRI restricts access to its data, which it sells to companies, investment firms and researchers. A person not authorized to share it gave access to the AP on condition of anonymity. The company declined to comment on or confirm the data, saying IRI doesn't offer such information to news organizations.

To be sure, the FDA has made progress in a mammoth task: processing nearly 26 million product applications submitted by manufacturers hoping to enter or stay on the market. And King said the agency hopes to get back to "true premarket review" once it finishes plowing through that mountain of applications.

But in the meantime disposable vape makers have exploited two loopholes in FDA's oversight, only one of which has been closed.

FDA's authority originally only referenced products using nicotine from tobacco plants. In 2021, Puff Bar and other disposable companies switched to using laboratory-made nicotine.

Congress closed that loophole last year, but the action gave rise to another backlog of FDA applications for synthetic nicotine products. Under the law, FDA was supposed to promptly make decisions on those applications. The agency has let most stay on the market while numerous others launch illegally.

An earlier loophole came from a decision by Trump's White House, which was made without the FDA's input, according to the previous director of the agency's tobacco program.

"It was preventable," said Mitch Zeller, who retired from the FDA last year. "But I was told there was no appeal."

In September 2019, Trump announced at a news conference a plan to ban non-tobacco flavors from all e-cigarettes — both reloadable devices and disposables. But political advisers to the president worried that could alienate voters.

Zeller said he was subsequently informed by phone in December 2019 that the flavor restrictions wouldn't apply to disposables.

"I told them: 'It doesn't take a crystal ball to predict that kids will migrate to the disposable products that are unaffected by this, and you ultimately won't solve the problem,'" Zeller said.

## JUUL'S FALL AND THE FLOOD OF DISPOSABLES

In retrospect, the government's crackdown on Juul now seems relatively simple.

In September 2018, FDA officials declared teen vaping an "epidemic," pointing to rising use of Juul, Reynolds American's Vuse and other brands.

Within weeks, FDA investigators conducted an unannounced inspection of Juul's headquarters. Congressional committees launched investigations, collecting hundreds of thousands of company documents.

By October 2019, Juul had dropped most of its flavors and discontinued all advertising.

"In a way, we had it good back then, but no one knew," said Dorian Fuhrman, co-founder of Parents Against Vaping E-cigarettes.

Parents, health groups and major vaping companies essentially agree: The FDA must clear the market of flavored disposables.

But lobbying by tobacco giant Reynolds American, maker of the best-selling Vuse e-cigarette, has made some advocates hesitant about pushing the issue.

Reynolds and Juul have seen sales flatline amid the surge in disposables, according to the IRI data. Disposable e-cigarettes generated \$2.74 billion last year.

The economic barriers to entry are low: Chinese manufacturers offer dozens of designs and flavors for as little as \$2 per device when ordering 10,000 or more. The devices sell in the U.S. for \$10 to \$30.

"If you have \$5 billion you probably can't start a traditional cigarette company," Jackler said. "But if you have \$50,000 dollars you can just send your artwork and logo to one of these companies and it will be on a pallet next week."

Esco Bars comes in flavors like Bubbleberry, Citrus Circus, Bahama Mama and Berry Snow.

The Austin, Texas company behind the brand, Pastel Cartel, racked up more than \$240 million in disposable sales before the FDA blocked its Chinese imports last month.

CEO Darrell Surrieff says his company has gone to great lengths to comply with FDA, spending \$8 million

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on an application that the agency refused to accept. He's appealing that decision and considering challenges to the import ban.

"We're a company that does very positive things for society and the community, and the government just attacked us," said Surriff, who added that he recently purchased new cars for several longtime employees.

Import alerts are one of the FDA's strongest tools to block illegal products, but industry experts say they're easy to skirt.

"Chinese companies tend to just rename their products and change their shipping address so then the products can easily be marketed again," said Marc Scheineson, a former FDA attorney who now consults for tobacco clients.

The FDA's import ban against Chinese manufacturer Elf Bar, the best-selling disposable in the U.S., demonstrates the weaknesses of the whack-a-mole approach. The alert doesn't mention several other brands made by the company, including Lost Mary and Funky Republic.

Made by iMiracle Shenzhen, Elf Bar alone has generated nearly \$400 million in U.S. sales since late 2021, the IRI data shows.

The company called the FDA's import ban "capricious" in a statement last month, adding that it "was given no opportunity to address any FDA concerns." Company representatives did not respond to the AP's interview requests.

National retail chains tend to avoid stocking disposables. But new distribution networks have sprung up, according to those in the industry. A wholesaler will import a shipping container of disposables and then sell the contents to smaller distributors, who then sell the products to local stores out of vans or trucks.

## OUTDATED AND UNFINISHED RULES

The 2009 law that gave FDA authority over the tobacco industry was focused on cigarettes and other traditional products made by a handful of huge U.S. companies.

The aim was to subject tobacco manufacturing and ingredients to the same kind of scrutiny and inspections as foods and medical supplies. Today's vaping manufacturers, based almost exclusively in China, weren't part of the discussion.

Fourteen years later, the FDA hasn't finalized manufacturing rules that would extend its authority to foreign vaping factories. In fact, regulators only released a draft regulation in March.

"FDA theoretically has the authority to inspect foreign manufacturing facilities," said Patricia Kovacevic, an attorney specializing in tobacco regulation. "But practically speaking, the inspection program that the FDA has in place only happens in the U.S."

Of more than 500 tobacco-related inspections conducted since FDA gained authority over e-cigarettes, only two were in China, according to the agency's public database. Those two inspections took place at Shenzhen factories used by major U.S. vaping firms, which have filed FDA applications for their products.

Currently, those applications are essentially the only way that FDA learns exactly where and how e-cigarettes are produced. Many disposables have simply skipped the process altogether.

The FDA itself recognizes the problem, stating in its proposed guidelines: "Covering foreign manufacturers is necessary to assure the protection of the public health," and noting "numerous reports of battery fires and explosions," with Chinese e-cigarettes.

The agency has been playing catch-up on the vaping issue for over a decade.

The FDA announced plans to start regulating the products in 2011, and it took regulators another five years to finalize rules.

Once implemented in August 2016, no new e-cigarettes were supposed to enter the U.S. and companies on the market had to submit applications for review by September 2020. Only products that could help smokers — by reducing cigarette exposure — while not appealing to youngsters were supposed to win authorization.

With limited resources, the FDA used "discretion" to delay decisions on many applications, allowing products — including major brands like Vuse — to stay on the market for years,

The backlog now includes thousands more e-cigarettes using synthetic nicotine. To date the FDA has

only authorized about two dozen e-cigarettes from three manufacturers. None are disposables.

"Any product that doesn't have authorization is on the market illegally," King says.

Industry representatives say FDA's refusal to approve more options has forced it into an untenable position.

"When an agency declares that everything on the market is illegal, it puts itself in the position of being completely unable to enforce its own regulations," said Tony Abboud, of the Vaping Technology Association.

#### SPLIT VIEWS ON A SOLUTION

Even with broad agreement that flavored disposables are a problem, there's little consensus on the solution.

In February, Reynolds petitioned the FDA to begin subjecting disposables to the same flavor restrictions as Vuse and other older products. Three weeks later, legislation that would have the same effect appeared in the U.S. House. (A Reynolds spokesman said the company did not lobby for the bill's introduction.)

Anti-vaping groups note that the company's Vuse, still available in menthol, was the second most popular e-cigarette among teens last year.

"They want groups like ours to call for a ban on all Chinese vapes so that they can take over the market," said Fuhrman, of Parents Against Vaping E-cigarettes. "We're not calling for that. We're calling on the FDA to do its job."

Indeed, FDA's King says the agency already has ample authority to regulate disposables.

"There's no loophole to close," King said, pointing out that FDA has recently shifted its focus to target disposable manufacturers.

But that assertion has stoked frustration about why the agency hasn't been more aggressive in using the legal tools it has available, including fines and court orders. Former agency officials note that some legal actions require cooperation from other agencies, including the Justice Department.

If there's less urgency around underage vaping than a few years ago that's likely because government data suggests an improving picture.

Since 2019, the government's annual survey has shown two big drops in vaping among middle and high school students, and FDA officials no longer describe the issue as an "epidemic."

Educators say vaping is still a big problem.

At Mountain Range High School near Denver, art teacher Kyle Wimmer says about 20% of his students report regularly vaping when he polls them using the classroom's anonymous computer system.

"Esco Bars and Elf Bars are absolutely taking over right now," he said.

Last school year, Wimmer collected 150 e-cigarettes from students who handed them over hoping to quit. Most don't make it more than a few weeks.

"The success rate is not very high," Wimmer said. "They don't want to do it anymore, but they can't stop because the nicotine is too high."

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Follow Matthew Perrone on Twitter: @AP\_FDWriter

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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.

## Meta launches more parental supervision tools for Instagram. Is it enough?

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

Instagram and Facebook's parent company Meta is adding some new parental supervision tools and privacy features to its platforms as social media companies face increasing scrutiny over their effects on teen mental health.

But many of the features require minors — and their parents — to opt in, raising questions about how effective the measures are. Instagram, for instance, will now send a notice to teens after they have blocked someone, encouraging them to let their parents "supervise" their account. The idea is to grab kids' atten-

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tion when they might be more open to parental guidance.

If a teen opts in, the system will let parents set time limits, see who their kid follows or is followed by, and allows them to track how much time the minor spends on Instagram. It does not let parents see message content.

Instagram launched parental supervision tools last year to help families navigate the platform and find resources and guidance. A sticking point in the process is that kids need to sign up if they want parents to supervise their accounts. It's not clear how many teen users have opted in and Meta has not disclosed any numbers.

Such supervision allows parents to see how many friends their child has in common with accounts the child follows or is followed by. So if the child is followed by someone none of their friends follow, it could raise a red flag that the teen does not know the person in real life.

This, Meta says, "will help parents understand how well their teen knows these accounts, and help prompt offline conversations about those connections."

Meta is also adding parental supervision tools already available on Instagram and on virtual reality product to Messenger. The opt-in feature lets parents see how much time their child spends on the messaging service and information such as their contact lists and privacy settings — but not who they are chatting with, for instance.

Such features can be useful for families in which parents are already involved in their child's online life and activities. Experts say that's not the reality for many people.

Last month, U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy warned that there is not enough evidence to show that social media is safe for children and teens and called on tech companies to take "immediate action to protect kids now."

Murthy told The Associated Press that while he recognizes social media companies have taken some steps to make their platforms safer, those actions are not enough. For instance, while kids under 13 are technically banned from social media, many younger children access Instagram, TikTok and other apps by lying about their age, either with or without their parents' permission.

Murthy also said it's unfair to expect parents to manage what their children do with rapidly evolving technology that "fundamentally changes how their kids think about themselves, how they build friendships, how they experience the world — and technology, by the way, that prior generations never had to manage,"

"We're putting all of that on the shoulders of parents, which is just simply not fair," Murthy said.

Also beginning Tuesday, Meta will encourage — but not force — children to take a break from Facebook, just as it already does on Instagram. After 20 minutes, teenage users will get a notice to take time away from the app. If they want to keep scrolling, they can just close the notification. TikTok also recently introduced a 60-minute time limit for users under 18, but they can bypass it by entering a passcode, set either by the teens themselves, or if the child is under 13, by their parent.

"What we are focused on is kind of a suite of tools to support parents and teens on how they how can they can best engage in safe and appropriate experiences online," said Diana Williams, who oversees product changes for youth and families at Meta. "We're also trying to build tools that teens can use themselves to learn how to manage and recognize how they're spending their time. So things like 'take a break' and 'quiet mode' in the evenings."

## The reason US response to the Russia rebellion has been decidedly cautious

By SEUNG MIN KIM and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — On the surface, the turmoil in Russia would seem like something for the U.S. to celebrate: a powerful mercenary group engaging in a short-lived clash with Russia's military at the very moment that Ukraine is trying to gain momentum in a critical counteroffensive.

But the public response by Washington has been decidedly cautious. Officials say the U.S. had no role



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in the conflict, insist this was an internal matter for Russia and decline to comment on whether it could affect the war in Ukraine. The reason: to avoid creating an opening for Russian President Vladimir Putin to seize on the rhetoric of American officials and rally Russians by blaming his Western adversaries.

Even President Joe Biden, known for straying from talking points, has stayed on script.

Biden told reporters Monday that the United States and NATO weren't involved. Biden said he held a video call with allies over the weekend and they are all in sync in working to ensure that they give Putin "no excuse to blame this on the West" or NATO.

"We made clear that we were not involved. We had nothing to do with it," Biden said. "This was part of a struggle within the Russian system."

Biden and administration officials declined to give an immediate assessment of what the 22-hour uprising by the Wagner Group might mean for Russia's war in Ukraine, for mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin or for Russia itself.

"We're going to keep assessing the fallout of this weekend's events and the implications from Russia and Ukraine," Biden said. "But it's still too early to reach a definitive conclusion about where this is going."

Putin, in his first public comments since the rebellion, said "Russia's enemies" had hoped the mutiny would succeed in dividing and weakening Russia, "but they miscalculated." He identified the enemies as "the neo-Nazis in Kyiv, their Western patrons and other national traitors."

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Russia was investigating whether Western intelligence services were involved in Prigozhin's rebellion.

Over the course of a tumultuous weekend in Russia, U.S. diplomats were in contact with their counterparts in Moscow to underscore that the American government regarded the matter as a domestic affair for Russia, with the U.S. only a bystander, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said.

Michael McFaul, a former U.S. ambassador to Russia, said that Putin in the past has alleged clandestine U.S. involvement in events — including democratic uprisings in former Soviet countries, and campaigns by democracy activists inside and outside Russia — as a way to diminish public support among Russians for those challenges to the Russian system.

The U.S. and NATO "don't want to be blamed for the appearance of trying to destabilize Putin," McFaul said.

A feud between the Wagner Group leader, Yevgeny Prigozhin, and Russia's military brass that has festered throughout the war erupted into the mutiny that saw the mercenaries leave Ukraine to seize a military headquarters in a southern Russian city. They rolled for hundreds of kilometers toward Moscow, before turning around on Saturday, in a deal whose terms remain uncertain.

Biden's national security team briefed him hourly as Prigozhin's forces were on the move, the president said. He said he had directed them to "prepare for a range of scenarios" as Russia's crisis unfolded.

Biden did not elaborate on the scenarios. But national security spokesman John Kirby addressed one concern raised frequently as the world watched the cracks opening in Putin's hold on power — worries that the Russian leader might take extreme action to reassert his command.

Putin and his lieutenants have made repeated references to Russia's nuclear weapons since invading Ukraine 16 months ago, aiming to discourage NATO countries from increasing their support to Ukraine.

"One thing that we have always talked about, unabashedly so, is that it's in nobody's interest for this war to escalate beyond the level of violence that is already visited upon the Ukrainian people," Kirby said at a White House news briefing. "It's not good for, certainly, Ukraine and not good for our allies and partners in Europe. Quite frankly, it's not good for the Russian people."

Biden spoke with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy over the weekend, telling him, "No matter what happened in Russia, let me say again, no matter what happened in Russia, we in the United States would continue to support Ukraine's defense and sovereignty and its territorial integrity." Biden said.

The Pentagon is expected to announce Tuesday that it is sending up to \$500 million in additional military aid to Ukraine, including more than 50 heavily armored vehicles and an infusion of missiles for air defense systems, U.S. officials said. They spoke on condition of anonymity because the aid had not yet been publicly announced.

Biden, in the first weeks after Putin sent tens of thousands of Russian forces into Ukraine in February 2022, had issued a passionate statement against the Russian leader's continuing in command. "For God's sake, this man cannot remain in power," he said then, as reports emerged of Russian atrocities against civilians in Ukraine.

On Monday, U.S. officials were careful not to be seen as backing either Putin or his former longtime protege, Prigozhin, in public comments.

"We believe it's up to the Russian people to determine who their leadership is," Kirby said.

White House officials were also trying to understand how Beijing was digesting the Wagner revolt and what it might mean for the China-Russia relationship going forward. China and Russia are each other's closest major partner. The White House says Beijing has considered — but not followed through on — sending Russia weaponry for use in Ukraine.

"I think it'd be fair to say that recent developments in Russia had been unsettling to the Chinese leadership," said Kurt Campbell, coordinator for the Indo-Pacific at the White House National Security Council, speaking at a forum hosted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. "I think I'll just leave it at that."

China values Russia as a friend in part to keep from standing alone against the U.S. and its allies in disputes. With Russia's invasion and resulting international sanctions sapping Russian resources and now sparking a rebellion, McFaul said, Ukraine and its allies could make the case: "Xi Jinping, you know, if you want your buddy to stay in power, maybe this is the time to put some pressure on him to wrap up this war."

AP Diplomatic Writer Matthew Lee contributed to this report.

## **An ex-convict returned from war and a Russian village lived in fear. Then police say he killed again**

By DASHA LITVINOVA Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — When Ivan Rossomakhin returned home from the war in Ukraine three months ago, his neighbors in the village east of Moscow were terrified.

Three years ago, he was convicted of murder and sentenced to a long prison term but was freed after volunteering to fight with the Wagner private military contractor.

Back in Novy Burets, Rossomakhin drunkenly wandered the streets of the hamlet 800 kilometers (about 500 miles) east of Moscow, carrying a pitchfork and threatening to kill everyone, residents said.

Despite police promises to keep an eye on the 28-year-old former inmate, he was arrested in a nearby town on charges of stabbing to death an elderly woman from whom he once rented a room. He reportedly confessed to committing the crime, less than 10 days after his return.

Rossomakhin's case is not isolated. The Associated Press found at least seven other instances in recent months in which Wagner-recruited convicts were identified as being involved in violent crimes, either by Russian media reports or in interviews with relatives of victims in locations from Kaliningrad in the west to Siberia in the east.

Russia has gone to extraordinary lengths to replenish its troops in Ukraine, including deploying Wagner's mercenaries there. That has had far-reaching consequences, as was evident this weekend when the group's leader sent his private army to march on Moscow in a short-lived rebellion. Another has been the use of convicts in battle.

The British Defense Ministry warned of the fallout in March, saying "the sudden influx of often violent offenders with recent and often traumatic combat experience will likely present a significant challenge for Russia's wartime society" as their service ends.

Wagner leader Yevgeny Prigozhin said he had recruited 50,000 convicts for Ukraine, an estimate also made by Olga Romanova, director of the prisoner rights group Russia Behind Bars. Western military officials say convicts formed the bulk of Wagner's force there.

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Law enforcement and justice officials who spent time and resources to prosecute these criminals can feel humiliated by seeing many of them walk free without serving their sentences, she said.

"They see that their work is not needed," Romanova added.

Some convicts who are caught committing crimes after returning home sometimes try to turn the tables on police by accusing them of discrediting those who fought in Ukraine — now a serious crime in Russia, she said.

Asked if that deters those in law enforcement, Romanova said: "You bet. A prosecutor doesn't want to go to prison for 15 years."

Yana Gelmel, lawyer and rights advocate who also works with convicts, said in an interview that those returning from Ukraine often act with bravado and bluster, demanding special treatment for having "defended the motherland."

She paints a grim life in Russia's prisons, with rampant and incessant violence, extreme isolation, constant submission to guards and a strict hierarchy among inmates. For prisoners in those conditions, "what would his mental state be?" Gelmel asked.

Add in the trauma of being thrown into battle — especially in places like Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine, the longest and bloodiest of the conflict, where Wagner forces died by the thousands,

"Imagine -- he went to war. If he survived ... he witnessed so much there. In what state will he return?" she added.

Meanwhile, prison recruiting for duty in Ukraine apparently continues — just not by Wagner, rights groups say. The Defense Ministry is now seeking volunteers there instead and offering them contracts.

Romanova said the ministry had recruited nearly 15,000 convicts as of June, although officials there did not respond to a request for comment.

Unlike Wagner, the Defense Ministry soon will have legal grounds -- laws allowing for enlisting convicts into contractual service have been swiftly approved by the parliament and signed by Putin last week.

And unlike Wagner, the ministry is offering 18-month contracts, but many recruits haven't been given anything to sign, ending up in a precarious position, Romanova said.

Enthusiasm among inmates to serve hasn't waned, she said, even after thousands were killed on the battlefield.

"Russian roulette is our favorite game," Romanova said, grimly. "National entertainment."

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

## Power couple Zooey Zephyr and Erin Reed are spreading hope to fellow transgender people

By DREW COSTLEY, HANNAH SCHOENBAUM and AMY BETH HANSON Associated Press  
MISSOULA, Mont. (AP) — Zooey Zephyr and Erin Reed walk hand in hand at a Pride parade in the college town of Missoula, Montana, wearing smiles as sunny as the day is rainy. Adoring fans cheer them along the route.

Reed stops and raises a small Pride flag. Zephyr cups her hands together in a heart over her chest in appreciation. Zephyr, a transgender state lawmaker, later gives a speech to hundreds attending the event. Tears well in people's eyes as they speak with the couple afterward.

Sage Scarborough hugs a book and grins after getting Zephyr's autograph.

"I feel like it makes us as a generation feel represented when we have people like her in power and up there giving very inspirational, motivational words of wisdom," says Scarborough, 20.

Zephyr and Reed, both 34, have emerged as a vanguard, a power couple spreading hope to fellow transgender people amid a year in which hundreds of bills were proposed or passed that restrict their rights in health care and other realms. Their appearances at Pride events this month throughout the country replicate scenes like the one in Missoula.

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Largely unknown just a few months ago, the two women now rate among the most prominent figures in the world of LGBTQ+ advocacy. They've appeared at dozens of events, including the GLAAD Media Awards in New York City in May. People lined up to meet them after speaking in Florida, Ohio and Los Angeles, and even recognized them during their recent trip to Glacier National Park. Documentary film crews follow them around. They recently rubbed elbows at a bar in the nation's capital with Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and his husband, Chasten, during Pride festivities.

Zephyr, a Democrat, surged into the spotlight this spring when she was silenced by her Republican colleagues in the Montana Legislature after she refused to apologize for saying some lawmakers would have blood on their hands for supporting a ban on gender-affirming health care for trans youths.

Reed watched it all unfold from her home in Gaithersburg, Maryland, where she has cemented herself as one of the nation's leading independent researchers monitoring the torrent of anti-LGBTQ+ bills.

Now, the recently engaged couple make a formidable duo, using their platform to push back against legislation and inspire their community to continue fighting.

"The question I've been asked a thousand, thousand times is, 'Are you OK? How are you holding up?'" Zephyr said at Missoula Pride in June. "I can say honestly with all my heart, I have a lightness in the work and a joy and hope that I have not felt in a long time."

Zephyr adds that she has "seen the response in individuals coming up to me in the quiet corners of the Capitol, saying, 'We see you, we know what's happening, this isn't right, we have to stay quiet, but this isn't right.'"

Zephyr plans to run for reelection to the Montana House and says she is "willing to explore" the possibility of holding other public offices in the future. Some supporters have pitched her running for Congress to represent western Montana, and while she hasn't ruled it out, Zephyr says, her immediate focus is finding "rooms that my voice can do good in."

Zephyr appeared on "The View," visited the White House and was featured at the Pride Night for the Seattle Sounders in the past month. Reed circulates a policy newsletter and has amassed a following of more than 400,000 on TikTok, where she posts videos about legislation and encourages other trans people to testify in legislatures.

"It's like having trans guardian angels," Cam Ogden, a 23-year-old trans woman, says.

Ogden, a college student in Columbus, Ohio, did not intend to become an activist when she started sitting in on committee meetings at the state legislature in 2021 to learn about the bills affecting her life.

Reed first spotted Ogden on the legislature's live feed, rolling her eyes in the back of the room as lawmakers spread falsehoods about gender-affirming care. The two connected on social media and became fast friends.

But when a legislator outed Ogden as transgender at a public meeting after a closed-door conversation, Reed and Zephyr jumped in as mentors as Ogden navigated her leap into activism — and the harassment that came with it.

"My intention wasn't to be super public when I started doing this stuff, and then I got kind of dragged in," Ogden says. "That's where Zoey and Erin ended up being like life preservers. They do that for a lot of people."

Reed says, "People come up to us and say, 'Thank you, you really helped me understand.' Or, 'Thank you, you really helped me explain things to my mom.' And sometimes the mom will be there and will agree and nod."

Zephyr says they've been told their advocacy gives people the courage to be themselves or come out to family.

Their romantic relationship has augmented their political activism from the start.

They met online in 2022 while organizing a response to a move by Texas to investigate parents of transgender youths, and trans advocacy remains a focal point in their lives. They started dating long distance between Montana and Maryland, often falling asleep and waking up while still on a video chat.

"I remember thinking that she was really cute and that I really liked her. And so, like, I brushed my hair behind my ear and I thought I was really slick and sly," Reed recalls.

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But Zephyr says she caught on and thought, "Oh, that's cutesy, like, 'I like you' cutesy."

Reed now shares what she learns about national legislative trends with Zephyr to help frame her understanding of Montana bills. And Zephyr says that because she works across issues, she can easily identify how language used to advance anti-LGBTQ+ legislation mirrors that on abortion restrictions, intelligence she then shares with Reed.

"My god, we click so well professionally and personally," Reed says.

Their path to public advocacy hasn't been easy. Both women have experienced swatting attempts on their homes in Missoula and Gaithersburg and have endured more frequent harassment as their platforms have grown.

But they have held each other up through those hard times, with a shared understanding of the unique challenges they face at the intersection of politics and personal identity. The negativity that their opponents cast on them is now overshadowed by overwhelming support, Reed says: "Our joy is our resistance."

Reed, Zephyr says, was a vital source of support when she was silenced and then banned from the Montana House floor toward the end of the legislative session.

"Every photo you've seen of my head held high, every press conference where I say I feel light in the work, I wouldn't be able to do that if I wasn't coming home at the end of the night to someone who supported me and helped me so deeply," Zephyr says.

During a trip Reed made to Montana in May after the legislative session concluded, the couple got engaged at a "queer prom" in Missoula, surrounded by their biggest supporters. Zephyr, who proposed on one knee, felt compelled by everything she had just endured.

"I felt very strongly coming out of that, I was like, 'I need to spend my life with her,'" Zephyr says. "And it felt like I was planting a flag of love."

Their living arrangements are to be determined; Reed has a 7-year-old son. They'll make wedding plans after Pride Month ends. And they don't plan to elope, Zephyr says.

It'll be "a nice, big, queer wedding," Reed says. "It's going to be wonderful."

Costley reported from Washington, D.C., and Schoenbaum from Raleigh, North Carolina.

## What is it like living in Mecca? For residents, Islam's holiest sites are simply home

By RIAZAT BUTT Associated Press

MECCA, Saudi Arabia (AP) — For Zainab Abdu, the holiest sites in Islam were the backdrop for her weekends growing up.

Raised in Mecca, Abdu remembers roller-skating with friends near the Grand Mosque where the Kaaba is located. The desert plains and valleys that throng with pilgrims every year are where, in the off season, she and family and friends had picnics, rode horses and played soccer.

"The Haram (Grand Mosque) is my home," said the 29-year-old pharmacist. "It's my childhood. But people can't imagine how normal life is for us. We do things that everyone else does."

Mecca is Islam's holiest city and a focal point for followers of the faith. It's the birthplace of Prophet Muhammad, where Muslims believe he first received God's revelations of the Quran. It's the location of the Kaaba, the black, cube-shaped structure that Muslims around the world turn to five times a day when praying.

It's also where around 2 million people live, work, and do ordinary activities like laundry, grocery shopping, homework, putting the trash out and paying the bills.

Away from the pilgrim-dominated areas, the city's modern neighborhoods spread out among boulevards with strip malls, gyms, schools and a university. The city has little of the glitz of Gulf cities like Dubai or Doha, or even Riyadh. The malls are modest, though bubble tea shops and well known chains like Sephora are moving in. One mall's food court had a sign proclaiming that the U.S. fast-food chicken chain Popeyes

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was opening soon.

Daily life does make concessions to the city's sacredness. Mecca has no cinemas, despite the government lifting a nationwide ban on movie theatres in 2018. For a cinema, residents go to the coastal city of Jeddah, about 70 kilometers (35 miles) away. Wedding halls are tucked away from sacred areas.

"It is a holy city and that needs to be respected," Abdu said. "There is music at birthdays and other celebrations, but it won't be loud."

And once a year, the city's population effectively doubles for up to a month as Hajj pilgrims from around the world flow in, as is happening this week. Security tightens in the streets to direct traffic as massive crowds move around the Grand Mosque and out to the holy sites in the nearby desert like Mina, Muzdalifa and Mount Arafat.

For Abdu, it means allowing extra time for traffic and avoiding certain routes because of road closures, even though she doesn't live near the Grand Mosque. She also braces for hours of overtime because of the influx of pilgrims suffering from colds, flu symptoms, upset stomachs or muscular pains — all typical Hajj ailments. Born in Jeddah, Abdu has lived in Mecca since she was six.

Meccans used to have more personal interaction with the Hajj pilgrims. But the measures authorities have put in to control and organize the crowds have imposed a distance. Huge investment pouring in has transformed Mecca.

Back in the day, "people had their homes open" to pilgrims, said Fajr Abdullah Abdul-Halim, a 57-year-old who was born and raised in Mecca. "If someone was sick they used to treat them in their homes. Those were beautiful times."

Abdul-Halim's family home was close to the Grand Mosque, so they could watch pilgrims circling the Kaaba from their roof. Meccan families would just hang out around the Grand Mosque, since there were few other public spaces. Abdul-Halim recalled going there with her parents and siblings every afternoon for prayers and staying until the evening prayers.

Now a move to Jeddah after marriage and the passing of relatives in Mecca means she has fewer reasons to visit the city. The neighborhoods around the mosque have been transformed and are unrecognizable after the construction of monumental hotels, skyscrapers, highways and other infrastructure the past decade.

Both Abdul-Halim and Abdu said they used to do Hajj easily, with little to no advance planning. But the days when locals could just join in freely are over; now they must apply for a spot like everyone else and pay fees starting at \$1,060 per person.

Still, there is a special pride in living in the city. Abdu recalled how in elementary school "we were told to set a good example for people because of Mecca's status."

"I'm always told I'm lucky, I can go (to the Grand Mosque) every day. People are so excited that I live here. Sometimes I feel I don't go enough, but I'm so grateful. It's a gift," she said. "When it's the Hajj, it's like opening your home to guests. When those guests leave, you feel sad."

A few days before Hajj's official start Monday, Bangladeshi taxi driver Jahid Rojin sighed as his car crawled away from the Grand Mosque complex and headed to the city's Aziziyah neighborhood.

"It's always like this during the Hajj," he said in Urdu, gesturing to streets teeming with sweaty pilgrims. Born in Dhaka, Rojin has lived in Mecca for 16 years, part of a significant South Asian community permanently residing there.

During Hajj season, the rent he pays his taxi's owner jumps to around \$1,600 a month from \$1,000. He had to move out of his apartment because his landlord wanted to rent it out to pilgrims and make some extra money. But, he said, he'll go back to his home once pilgrims leave, and traffic, prices and everything else will return to normal.

And he says there is an upside.

"The blessings and rizq (sustenance) you get from being in Mecca cannot be matched anywhere else in the world, anywhere else in Saudi Arabia," he said, as he charged a desperate woman more than triple the regular journey fare to share his cab with two other passengers. "I'm very lucky to live here. I know that."

—

Associated Press writer Bassem Mroue in Beirut contributed to this report.

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

## California's law aimed at fast food wages is on hold. Lawmakers may have found a way around it

By ADAM BEAM Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — A new California law aimed in part at boosting salaries for fast food workers has been delayed for nearly two years following industry resistance. Now the Democrats who control the state Legislature might have figured out how to raise worker pay anyway.

Gov. Gavin Newsom signed the law last year. It created a 10-member council with the authority, among other things, to increase the state's \$15.50 minimum wage to a maximum of \$22 per hour for some fast food workers. Some experts quickly hailed the law as one of the "most significant pieces of employment legislation passed in a generation."

But unlike in most states, California voters have the power to overturn some laws passed by the Legislature. Business groups who opposed the law gathered enough signatures to qualify a referendum in 2024. In the meantime, the law does not take effect.

Business groups were confident the law would ultimately be blocked at the ballot box. But tucked inside California's more than \$300-billion operating budget is a provision to resurrect a long-dormant regulatory commission that would have powers similar to that of the fast food council.

The Industrial Welfare Commission regulates wages, hours and working conditions in California. It has been dormant for most of this century. The Democratic-controlled Legislature stripped its funding in 2004 when Arnold Schwarzenegger was governor, making it more difficult for the Republican to influence the state's wage regulations. The commission has not issued any orders since.

California's budget, scheduled to be voted on this week, includes \$3 million to bring that commission back to life. The commission has the power to investigate wages paid across various employment sectors. If it finds wages are "inadequate to supply the cost of proper living," it can convene industry-specific wage boards to gather findings and make recommendations. The commission can then issue orders specific to wages, hours and working conditions.

The funding would come with conditions. It would require the commission to prioritize industries in which more than 10% of workers are at or below the federal poverty level, a definition that includes California's fast food workers, according to the University of California-Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education.

It also ordered the commission to complete its work by the end of October 2024, days before voters are scheduled to vote on whether to uphold the fast food law. And because that funding is part of a budget bill, it could not be blocked by voters.

Matt Haller, president of the International Franchise Association, said he sees that as a clear attempt by the Legislature to bypass the industry's efforts to block the law creating the fast food council.

"We're concerned about any attempt to create some Frankenstein version" of that law, Haller said, noting that more than a million California voters signed a petition to block it. "It speaks to (labor unions') desire to create political control over our business model."

State Sen. Maria Elena Durazo, a Democrat from Los Angeles and chair of the budget subcommittee responsible for labor issues, said lawmakers were not targeting the fast food industry by restoring the commission's funding. She said lawmakers were seeking to improve conditions for all California workers. More than a third of California's residents don't make enough money to meet their basic needs, according to a report from the United Ways of California.

"The fast food industry is one of the industries with the problem, but it's not the only industry," Durazo said, adding that the commission "should always be looking at what the wages (are) of workers."

"There comes a time when they should step up and do something about it and we're just giving them

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About 32,000 have returned from Ukraine, Prigozhin said last week, before his abortive rebellion against the Defense Ministry. Romanova estimated it to be about 15,000 as of early June.

Those prisoners agreeing to join Wagner were promised freedom after their service, and President Vladimir Putin recently confirmed that he was "signing pardon decrees" for convicts fighting in Ukraine. Those decrees have not been made public.

Putin recently said recidivism rates among those freed from prison through serving in Ukraine are much lower than those on average in Russia. But rights advocates say fears about those rates rising as more convicts return from war are not necessarily unfounded.

"People form a complete absence of a link between crime and punishment, an act and its consequences," Romanova said. "And not just convicts see it. Free people see it, too — that you can do something terrible, sign up for the war and come out as a hero."

Rossomakhin wasn't seen as valorous when he returned from fighting in Ukraine but rather as an "extremely restless, problematic person," police said at a meeting with fearful Novy Burets residents that was filmed by a local broadcaster before 85-year-old Yulia Buyskikh was slain. At one point, he even was arrested for breaking into a car and held for five days before police released him March 27.

Two days later, Buyskikh was killed.

"She knew him and opened the door, when he came to kill her," her granddaughter, Anna Pekareva, wrote on Facebook. "Every family in Russia must be afraid of such visitors."

Other incidents included the robbery of a shop in which a man held a saleswoman at knifepoint; a car theft by three former convicts in which the owner of the vehicle was beaten and forced to sign it over to them; the sexual assault of two schoolgirls; and two other killings besides the one in Novy Burets.

In Kaliningrad, a man was arrested in the sexual assault of an 8-year-old girl after taking her from her mother, according to a local media report and one of the girl's relatives.

The man had approached the mother and bragged about his prison time and his Wagner service in Ukraine, according to the relative, who spoke to AP on condition of anonymity out of safety concerns. The relative asked: "How many more of them will return soon?"

In its recruiting, Wagner usually offered convicts six-month contracts, according to media reports and rights groups. Then they can return home, unlike regular soldiers, who can't terminate their contracts and leave service as long as Putin's mobilization decree remains in effect. It wasn't immediately clear, however, whether these terms will be honored after Prigozhin's unsuccessful mutiny.

Prigozhin, himself a former convict, recently acknowledged that some repeat offenders were Wagner fighters — including Rossomakhin in Novy Burets and a man arrested in Novosibirsk for sexually assaulting two girls.

Putin recently said the recidivism rate "is 10 times lower" among the convicts that went to Ukraine than for those in general. "The negative consequences are minimal," he added.

There isn't enough data yet to assess the consequences, according to a Russian criminology expert who spoke on condition of anonymity out of safety concerns.

Incidents this year "fit the pattern of recidivist behavior," and there's a chance that those convicts would have committed crimes again upon release, even if they hadn't been recruited by Wagner, the expert said. But there's no reason to expect an explosive spike in crime because a significant number of the ex-convicts probably can refrain from breaking the law for some time, especially if they were well-paid by Wagner, the expert said.

He expects crime rates to rise after the war, but not necessarily due to the use of convicts. It's something that usually happens following conflicts, he said.

The Soviet Union sent 1.2 million convicts to fight in World War II, according to a 2020 research paper by Russia's state penitentiary service. It did not say how many returned, but the criminology expert told AP a "significant number" ended up behind bars again after committing new crimes for years afterward.

Romanova from Russia Behind Bars says there have been many troubling episodes involving convicts returning to civilian life after a stint in Ukraine.



the funding to address it because it's a much bigger problem," she said.

The Service Employees International Union, or SEIU, had sponsored the fast food law last year. David Huerta, president of SEIU California and SEIU-United Service Workers West, did not comment on whether the union has pursued the funding as a way to accomplish the goals of the fast food law. But he said the funding is part of "workers in low-wage industries ... rising up to demand the wages they need to provide for their families."

"SEIU members thank Governor Newsom and legislators for listening to workers and taking the bold action needed to make progress against a growing tide of inequality and poverty experienced by low-wage workers and people of color," Huerta said.

California's new fiscal year begins Saturday. Newsom and legislative leaders reached an agreement late Monday a new operating budget, which includes restoring funding for the Industrial Welfare Commission. Newsom's office declined to comment Monday on restoring funding for the commission.

The Industrial Welfare Commission has continued to exist despite not having any money to operate. It has 17 wage orders that are still in effect, including setting a minimum wage and other factors for the manufacturing, agricultural and housekeeping sectors, according to a legislative analysis.

If signed into law, the Industrial Welfare Commission could have impacts beyond the fast food industry. Several business groups have come out against it, including the California Chamber of Commerce, the California Retailers' Association, the California Manufacturers and Technology Association, the California Restaurant Association and the California Building Industry Association.

Those groups particularly don't like that the the Legislature would limit the Industrial Welfare Commission from issuing "any standards that are less protective than existing state law."

"This limitation will only create unnecessary confusion," the business groups said in a statement.

## **Judge to weigh whether Trump's New York criminal case should be moved to federal court**

NEW YORK (AP) — A U.S. judge is set to hear arguments Tuesday over President Donald Trump's attempt to move his criminal case in New York out of the state court, where he was indicted, to a federal court where he could potentially try to get the case dismissed.

Judge Alvin K. Hellerstein will listen to the afternoon arguments, though he isn't expected to immediately rule.

Trump's lawyers sought to move the case to Manhattan federal court soon after Trump pleaded not guilty in April to charges that he falsified his company's business records to hide hush money payouts aimed at burying allegations of extramarital sexual encounters.

While requests to move criminal cases from state to federal court are rarely granted, the prosecution of Trump is unprecedented.

The Republican's lawyers say the charges, while related to his private company's records, involve things he did while he was president. U.S. law allows criminal prosecutions to be removed from state court if they involve actions taken by federal government officials as part of their official duties.

Trump is alleged to have falsified records to cover up payments made in 2017 to his former personal lawyer, Michael Cohen, to compensate him for orchestrating payouts in 2016 to porn star Stormy Daniels and Playboy model Karen McDougal. Trump has denied having had affairs with either woman.

Trump's lawyers have said those payments to Cohen were legitimate legal expenses and not part of any cover-up.

The Manhattan district attorney's office, which brought the case, has argued that nothing about the payoffs to either Cohen or the women involved Trump's official duties as president.

If a judge agrees to move the case to federal court, Trump's lawyers could then try to get the case dismissed on the grounds that federal officials are immune from criminal prosecution over actions they take as part of their official job duties.

Moving the case to federal court would also mean that jurors would potentially be drawn not only from

Manhattan, where Trump is wildly unpopular, but also a handful of suburban counties north of the city where he has more political support.

In state court, a criminal trial was set for March 25 in the thick of the primary season before next year's November presidential election.

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg pursued the case after Trump left office. He is the first former president ever charged with a crime.

## **Trump valet set for arraignment in classified documents case**

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — A valet for Donald Trump is set to be arraigned Tuesday on charges that he helped the former president hide classified documents that the Justice Department wanted back.

Walt Nauta was charged earlier this month alongside Trump in a 38-count indictment filed by Justice Department special counsel Jack Smith. Though Trump has already entered a not guilty plea to the charges, a judge postponed the arraignment for Nauta to give him time to find a Florida-based lawyer.

The indictment accuses Nauta of conspiring with Trump to conceal records that he had taken with him from the White House to his Florida property, Mar-a-Lago.

Prosecutors allege that Nauta, at the former president's direction, moved boxes of documents bearing classification markings so that they would not be found by a Trump lawyer who was tasked with searching the home for classified records to be returned to the government. That, prosecutors said, resulted in a false representation to the Justice Department that a "diligent search" for classified documents had been done and that all documents responsive to a subpoena had been returned.

Nauta is a Navy veteran who fetched Trump's Diet Cokes as his valet at the White House before joining him as a personal aide at Mar-a-Lago. He is regularly by Trump's side, even traveling in Trump's motorcade to the Miami courthouse for their appearance earlier this month and accompanying him afterwards to a stop at the city's famed Cuban restaurant Versailles, where he helped usher supporters eager to take selfies with the former president.

Meanwhile, the Justice Department last week proposed a Dec. 11 trial date for Trump, requesting a postponement from a judge's initial date in August.

And on Monday, U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon denied a Justice Department request to file under seal the names of 84 potential witnesses they want Trump to be ordered to have no contact with as the case moves forward.

She said that in her view, the Justice Department did not explain why it needed to file the list with the court or why it was necessary to seal the list from public view.

Tucker reported from Washington.

## **Trump and DeSantis to hold dueling campaign events in New Hampshire after squabbling over timing**

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and HOLLY RAMER Associated Press

HOLLIS, N.H. (AP) — Former President Donald Trump and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis will hold dueling campaign events Tuesday in New Hampshire after some squabbling over the close timing of the appearances.

DeSantis, who released an immigration and border security policy proposal on Monday, was set to appear at a town hall event in Hollis, while Trump, the leading GOP presidential candidate, was scheduled to speak at a lunch in Concord hosted by a Republican women's club and attend the opening of his campaign's state office in Manchester.

The New Hampshire Federation of Republican Women, which is hosting Trump, issued a statement last week saying it was disappointed with the DeSantis campaign for scheduling a town hall around the same

time as its own event — 40 miles (64 kilometers) away and a couple of hours before.

The group branded it “an attempt to steal focus from” the organization’s sold-out “Lilac Luncheon” fundraiser and said that other presidential candidates had scheduled around the event. It also said it had asked DeSantis to reschedule, to apparently no avail.

Two members of the women’s group, however, posted on Twitter that they disagreed with the statement. One, former state lawmaker Melissa Blasek, said she was resigning her membership in the group over what she called “a cheap campaign stunt” that appeared to be motivated by the Trump campaign, which sent out its own press release sharing the statement.

When asked to comment on the statement, the DeSantis campaign did not address the issue but said the governor is working to ensure his message “reaches every last primary voter in New Hampshire, and we have a top-notch organization in the state to help him do that.”

“We are confident that the governor’s message will resonate with voters in New Hampshire as he continues to visit the Granite State and detail his solutions to Joe Biden’s failures,” the campaign’s press secretary Bryan Griffin said in a statement.

Since launching his campaign last month, DeSantis has largely sought to project himself as more conservative than the former president in an attempt to dethrone him as the party’s dominant figure. The governor has asserted he would appoint more conservative Supreme Court justices than the three Trump appointed to the court, criticized Trump for implying the six-week abortion ban in Florida is “too harsh” and accused Trump of having generally “moved left.”

While conservative bona fides are important in heavily GOP states like Iowa, the leadoff caucus state, they’re politically trickier in New Hampshire, a political battleground state.

Trump’s first-place finish in New Hampshire’s 2016 Republican primary — after losing Iowa to Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas — helped propel him to dominance in the party. But his Democratic rivals ended up winning the state in both the 2016 and 2020 general elections.

And while DeSantis has spoken about the abortion ban he signed while on the campaign trail among conservative audiences and in Iowa and South Carolina, he has generally not raised it when speaking to crowds in more moderate New Hampshire.

On Monday, DeSantis held a campaign event in the Texas border city of Eagle Pass to unveil his first major policy plan, a proposal on immigration and border security that calls for ending birthright citizenship, finishing the U.S.-Mexico wall and sending U.S. forces into Mexico to combat drug cartels. The plan largely mirrors Trump’s policies and faces long odds, requiring the reversal of legal precedents, approval from other countries or even an amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

## States clamp down on freight trains, fearing derailments and federal gridlock

By MARC LEVY and JOSH FUNK Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Spurred on by train derailments, some states with busy criss-crossing freight railroads are pursuing their own safety remedies rather than wait for federal action amid industry opposition and questions about whether they even have authority to make the changes.

The activity comes after a train carrying toxic chemicals derailed on Feb. 3 along the Ohio-Pennsylvania border, prompting new legislation and reviving long-stalled efforts as backers voice skepticism that the federal government is capable of helping.

Legislatures in at least a dozen states have advanced measures in recent weeks, including some in states such as Minnesota that have witnessed disruptive derailments.

Some of the new requirements include provisions long resisted by the railroad industry. It contends it’s capable of making improvements and that its growing efficiency — including significantly longer trains and a much smaller workforce — doesn’t compromise safety.

In large part, states want limits on the length of trains that routinely stretch more than 2 miles long

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and on how much time trains can block road crossings — which can disrupt traffic and block emergency response vehicles.

They are also pursuing rules to maintain the current standard of two-person crews, bolster the trackside detectors used to identify equipment problems and require more notice to local emergency responders about hazardous freight.

The railroads argue that the industry's overall safety record has been improving even as trains have grown longer and crew sizes shrank over the decades. So Norfolk Southern CEO Alan Shaw said in an interview that he doesn't think it makes sense to regulate those areas.

"We're going to follow the science and we're going to follow the data," Shaw said. "We're looking for investments in safety that are going to drive favorable outcomes."

And the state efforts to regulate rail are fraught with legal uncertainty over whether only the federal government can enforce such requirements. And Congress and federal regulators are considering similar measures.

Ohio moved quickly, with the Republican-controlled government enacting a new law within two months of the Norfolk Southern train derailment in East Palestine.

The evacuation from the fiery crash extended into Pennsylvania, where the state House of Representatives approved a wide-ranging safety bill in early June.

The sponsor, Rep. Rob Matzie, a Democrat whose western Pennsylvania district is home to a major rail freight handling hub, said he is satisfied with the state's legal standing.

He said he is sick of hearing that the East Palestine derailment is an isolated incident, that the rail companies are making improvements or that the federal government will order safety improvements.

"It's now time for this state to act," Matzie told colleagues during floor arguments. "We can't wait for federal regulations, which always seem to be in the works, but never quite get done. Or for federal laws that will never ever see the light of day."

States maintain that Congress long ago gave them the authority to regulate aspects of rail safety that federal regulations don't cover and that courts require federal law to be clear about when that responsibility rests exclusively with a federal agency.

Railroads, however, argue that federal law broadly gives federal agencies exclusive jurisdiction to regulate rail transportation and that state laws ostensibly aimed at rail safety often do not actually improve safety.

Prior experiences haven't exactly inspired confidence that the federal government will act quickly.

For instance, a 2008 law requiring the deployment of positive train control systems — equipment designed to prevent train-to-train collisions, over-speed derailments and other accidents — wasn't fully implemented until almost 2021.

Then in 2018, then-President Donald Trump's administration dropped a proposed rule that would have required trains hauling highly flammable liquids like crude oil to be fitted with advanced braking systems.

Two rail union officials — Jason Doering and Matt Parker — who have both lobbied for legislation in Nevada for years said it's important for states to act because they're not optimistic that Congress will pass meaningful reforms over the strong lobbying of the railroads in a polarized political climate. Plus, they said "the federal government's approach to rail safety has historically been more reactionary than proactive."

The Norfolk Southern derailment in East Palestine spurred legislation in Congress that advanced out of committee in the Democratic-controlled Senate, but its future in that chamber — not to mention the Republican-controlled House — is uncertain amid industry opposition.

Sen. Sherrod Brown, an Ohio Democrat who is a lead sponsor, said earlier this month that they are still trying to line up support and predicted "pressure by the rail lobby and, frankly, from some Republican leaders to weaken or kill the bill."

Even though government data shows that derailments have declined in recent years, there were still 1,049 of them last year — roughly three a day. More than three quarters of them happen at slow speeds in railyards and don't cause significant damage.

The industry contends that it remains the safest way to transport hazardous materials over land. Norfolk Southern and all the major railroads have announced steps to improve safety— such as by installing more

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trackside detectors that railroads use to spot problems and prevent derailments — though regulators and lawmakers have urged them to do more.

Investigators are still working to determine exactly what caused the East Palestine derailment. In a preliminary report, they said the likely cause was an overheating bearing on one of the railcars — but wasn't flagged by a trackside detector early enough to prevent an accident.

Joseph L. Schofer, a retired professor of civil and environmental engineering from Northwestern University, said some rules being proposed at the state and federal level — for instance, minimum crew size — have nothing to do with the East Palestine derailment because that train actually had three people in its crew.

He also said state-to-state rules will result in chaos.

"What one state does to regulate the industry will have impacts on all states," Schofer said. "Logically we ought to be able to establish a comprehensive, integrated rule set, based on a firm understanding of the rail industry as an integrated whole."

Some bills were percolating before the East Palestine derailment.

In March, Utah Gov. Spencer Cox signed legislation creating an Office of Rail Safety, with backers citing disputes with railroads over widening roads at hundreds of rail crossings, but also derailments there.

"This is the most substantive state safety bill for my industry in over 50 years," a union representative, Danny Brewer, told lawmakers at a February hearing.

The new law empowers state employees to take over the safety inspections otherwise performed by federal inspectors, and also to scrutinize rail crossings and seek federal penalties for trains blocking highway crossings without justification.

New York is advancing wide-ranging legislation that includes standards for more safety equipment after Gov. Kathy Hochul called for rail safety measures, citing the East Palestine derailment.

In Minnesota, Gov. Tim Walz signed a bill that requires railroads to promptly provide information to public safety agencies about hazardous materials being transported.

The Kansas Senate approved a bill to limit trains to 8,500 feet, but it is sitting in a House committee at least until the session resumes in January. Gov. Laura Kelly supports it, her office said.

Some measures have hit roadblocks.

In Nevada, Republican Gov. Joe Lombardo vetoed legislation passed by the Democratic-controlled Legislature on party-line votes that would have capped train length at 7,500 feet. Lombardo said in his veto message that the bill was a "policy overreach" and possibly unconstitutional.

In Pennsylvania, the House-approved bill faces doubters in a Republican-controlled Senate where top Republicans suggest that it goes beyond state enforcement powers.

"There's some concern that what the House passed lacks enforceability," Senate Majority Leader Joe Pittman, a Republican, said in an interview. "And I don't think we're ever well-served to pass bills that can't have proper enforcement."

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On Twitter, follow Marc Levy at @timelywriter and follow Josh Funk at @funkwrite.

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Associated Press reporter Stephen Groves in Washington contributed to this report. Funk contributed from Atlanta and Omaha, Nebraska.

## A scientist's 4-decade quest to save the biggest monkey in the Americas

By DIARLEI RODRIGUES and DIANE JEANTET Associated Press

CARATINGA, Brasil (AP) — The emerald-green canopy shifts and rustles as a troop of willowy, golden-gray monkeys slides through a tropical ecosystem more threatened than the Amazon.

Karen Strier started studying the biggest monkey in the Americas four decades ago, when there were just 50 of the animals left in this swath of the Atlantic forest, in southeastern Brazil's Minas Gerais state.

Strier immediately fell in love with the northern muriqui, dedicating her life to saving it and launching

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one of the world's longest-running primate studies.

"I love everything about them; they're beautiful animals, they're graceful, they even smell good, like cinnamon," the American primatologist told The Associated Press on a recent field trip. "It was a complete and total sensory experience that appealed to my mind as a scientist, and to my mind as a person."

Scientists then knew almost nothing of the species, except that it was on the verge of extinction. Rampant deforestation had dramatically reduced and fragmented its habitat, creating isolated pockets of muriquis.

To Strier's surprise, the northern muriqui turned out to be radically different from large primates studied by Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey, the primatologists who made chimpanzees and mountain gorillas, respectively, globally famous emblems of conservation.

Research was focusing on primates from Africa and Asia, where dominant males frequently fought one another to impose or maintain their power in highly hierarchical societies. Strier herself had spent six months studying baboons in Kenya.

"Muriquis are at the far other extreme of peacefulness," she said.

In 1983, her first year of research, the biologist spent 14 months in the rainforest observing muriquis. This slender vegetarian can measure up to 5 feet (1.5 meters) from head to tail, and weigh up to 33 pounds (15 kilograms). While muriquis can live as long as 45 years, females can only give birth every three years, slowing down efforts to repopulate the species.

She noticed that males spent a lot of time in peaceful proximity — often within arm's reach. And when there's a contest for food, water or a female, males don't fight like most other primates, but wait, avoid one another, or hug.

This unusually friendly behavior has earned them the nickname "hippie monkey" among both ordinary people in the area, and scientists.

Some also refer to them as "forest gardeners," for their role as seed dispersers. They eat fruits from high trees that many other animals cannot reach, and defecate the seeds on the forest floor.

Gender roles among muriquis also were unusual among large primates, Strier's initial research found. Much like bonobos, muriqui females are the same size as males, meaning they have a lot of autonomy, and in muriqui societies, females break off from the group to seek partners.

"We now see a lot more variations among primates, and I think the muriquis helped open that door to understanding better some of this diversity," Strier said.

Inside the 2,300-acre (950-hectare) Feliciano Miguel Abdala reserve, a privately protected area where Strier has based her research program, the northern muriqui population has grown nearly fivefold, to 232. That's about one-fifth of the critically endangered species' overall population.

"There are very few (primate projects) that have run that long, continuously, and of that kind of quality in the world," said American primatologist Russell Mittermeier, chief conservation officer at Re:wild, who introduced Strier to the muriquis.

Strier and her team know each of the reserve's 232 muriquis by name, and which monkey they are related to, not by tagging or marking them, but based on detailed illustrations of their facial pigments and other physical traits.

After drought and a yellow fever outbreak killed 100 muriquis — about a third of the reserve's population — in just five years, Strier has strongly advocated for the creation of forest corridors and supporting species reintroduction projects.

In 2016, Fernanda Pedreira Tabacow, a former student and right arm of Strier's, heard that there were only two muriqui males left in a patch of forest in Ibitipoca, southwest of the Feliciano Miguel Abdala reserve. She knew that, without any intervention, they were doomed.

"I thought that was the last breath of the species here," Tabacow said.

To give them a chance to survive, Tabacow relocated a female into the area, but she disappeared before the animals could mate. With that experiment having failed, it was time for more drastic measures. They placed both males in a nearly 15-acre (6-hectare) enclosed area in their native forest along with three females that got lost in their searches for a partner, plus two young orphans.

A year later, in 2020, the experiment bore its first fruit, with the birth of an infant murrelet. The final objective, once there are at least a dozen members in the group, is to release them into the wilderness, Tabacow says.

"The information we had (from Strier's research) facilitated everything, we avoided many mistakes that could have been made," said Tabacow, who also works with Strier in the reserve. "As this project is unprecedented, we have no models to follow, but we have great knowledge about how the species behaves."

Earlier this month, primatologists, environmentalists and other murrelet enthusiasts from Brazil and abroad converged on the small city of Caratinga to celebrate Strier's 40th year of uninterrupted study. She started by thanking peers and the many students who are carrying forward her work.

She also used her stage to advocate for the creation of a forest corridor linking the Feliciano Miguel Abdala reserve to another area 25 miles (40 kilometers) away, urging the Environment Ministry representative to follow suit. Underscoring the need for the northern murrelet to have a greater range, she spoke of the "terrifying" yellow fever outbreak several years back.

"We couldn't find the murrelets, and the howler (monkeys) were almost all gone, and the sense of being in a silent forest...." Strier recalled. "We had had such success, and it could all disappear in a few months. The fragility of the murrelets, still, made me realize it was super important to not let our guard down. I just got even more committed. We're not done."

## Was that actually a tsunami that hit Florida? Yes, but not the kind you think

By ISABELLA O'MALLEY Associated Press

An unexpected culprit toppled beach chairs along the sand at normally calm Clearwater Beach, Florida, last Wednesday. West Coast surfers might snicker at the cause, but the National Weather Service confirms the rare 4-foot (1.2 meter) wave was caused by a kind of tsunami, just not the kind you usually hear about.

It was a meteotsunami, a type caused by storms with strong gusting winds, rather than the dramatic tsunamis triggered by earthquakes.

WHAT IS A METEOTSUNAMI?

According to Paul Close, senior forecaster at the National Weather Service in the Tampa Bay area, when a line of storms tracks over the ocean, there can be 30- to 50-mph (48- 80-kph) winds near the leading edge. The winds push the water, increasing the wave height near the coast before it eventually crashes onto shore.

Meteotsunamis only last about an hour because once the leading edge of the storm passes onto land, the action subsides.

The meteotsunami was about 2.5 feet (0.8 meters) higher than the forecast wave height and around 4 feet (1.2 meters) higher than average sea level.

Six-foot (1.8 meter) and higher meteotsunamis have been recorded around the world.

The weather service does not issue specific advisories for meteotsunamis. If the agency forecasts that a storm will have substantial impact, it issues a coastal flood watch or warning.

WHEN DO METEOTSUNAMIS FORM?

Close said that stronger storms and squall lines — groups of storms that track in a line with intense winds and heavy rain — are more common during the winter around Florida.

"They don't happen that often this time of year, but the current atmospheric pattern has been kind of unusual with all the heat out in Texas and the cool and damp weather in the Northeast," Close said.

This time of year, winds from the east are more common, he said. But the winds have been from the west almost all of June.

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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.

## Putin says the aborted rebellion played into the hands of Russia's enemies

By The Associated Press undefined

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday blasted organizers of a weekend revolt, the gravest threat yet to his power, as traitors who played into the hands of Ukraine's government and its allies.

Speaking in a stern tone and looking tired in a five-minute TV address near midnight, Putin sought to project stability. He tried to strike a balance between criticizing the uprising's perpetrators to prevent another crisis, and not antagonizing the bulk of the mercenaries and their hardline supporters, some of whom are incensed at the Kremlin's handling of the situation.

Putin, whose troops are stretched thin in the face of a Ukrainian counteroffensive, praised the rank and file mercenaries for not letting the situation descend into "major bloodshed." And he said the nation had stood united, although there had been localized signs of support for the uprising.

Earlier in the day, the head of the mercenary Wagner Group, Yevgeny Prigozhin, who led the rebellion, defended his short-lived insurrection. He again taunted Russia's military, but said he hadn't been seeking to stage a coup against Putin. On Friday, Prigozhin had called for an armed rebellion to oust the military leadership.

Putin's address was announced by his spokesman in advance and billed by Russian state media as something that would "define the fate of Russia." In fact, the address didn't yield groundbreaking developments.

Abbas Gallyamov, a former Kremlin speechwriter turned political analyst, called the address weak. In a Facebook post, he said it was a sign that Putin is "acutely dissatisfied with how he looked in this whole story and is trying to correct the situation."

The Kremlin later showed Putin meeting with top security, law enforcement and military officials, including Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, whom the uprising had tried to remove. Putin thanked members of his team for their work over the weekend, implying support for the embattled Shoigu. Earlier, the authorities released a video of Shoigu reviewing troops in Ukraine.

Putin, who declined to name Prigozhin, said mutiny organizers had tried to force the group's soldiers "to shoot their own."

He said "Russia's enemies" had hoped the mutiny would divide and weaken Russia, "but they miscalculated."

Western officials have been muted in their public comments on the mutiny, and President Joe Biden said Monday that the U.S. and NATO were not involved. Speaking at the White House, Biden said he was cautious about speaking publicly because he wanted to give "Putin no excuse to blame this on the West and blame this on NATO."

"We made clear that we were not involved, we had nothing to do with it," he said.

Prigozhin said he had been acting to prevent the destruction of Wagner, his private military company. "We started our march because of an injustice," he said in an 11-minute statement Monday, giving no details about where he was or what his plans were.

The injustice apparently was a government order requiring Wagner soldiers, if they want to remain fighting, to sign contracts with the Defense Ministry by July 1, which might effectively disband the group despite its battlefield successes in Ukraine. Prigozhin also accused Russia's military of attacking his troops, prompting his march.

The feud between the Wagner Group leader and military brass has festered throughout the war, erupting into mutiny when mercenaries left Ukraine to seize a military headquarters in the southern Russia city of Rostov. They rolled seemingly unopposed for hundreds of miles toward Moscow before turning around after less than 24 hours on Saturday.

The Kremlin said it had made a deal for Prigozhin to move to Belarus and receive amnesty, along with his soldiers. There was no confirmation of his whereabouts Monday.

Prigozhin boasted that his march was a "master class" on how Russia's military should have carried out the February 2022 invasion of Ukraine. He also mocked the military for security breaches that allowed



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Wagner to march 780 kilometers (500 miles) toward Moscow without facing resistance.

It remained unclear what would ultimately happen to Prigozhin and his forces under the deal purportedly brokered by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko.

Prigozhin said Lukashenko proposed finding a way to let Wagner "continue its work in a lawful jurisdiction." That suggested Prigozhin might keep his military force, although it wasn't clear which jurisdiction he was referring to.

Though the mutiny was brief, it was not bloodless. Russian media reported that several military helicopters and a communications plane were shot down by Wagner forces, killing at least 15. Prigozhin expressed regret for attacking the aircraft but said they were bombing his convoys.

Russian media reported that a criminal case against Prigozhin hasn't been closed, despite earlier Kremlin statements, and some Russian lawmakers called for his head. In his address Monday, Putin didn't repeat threats he had made Saturday to punish the mutiny's leaders.

Andrei Gurulev, a retired general and current lawmaker who has clashed with the mercenary leader, said Prigozhin and his right-hand man, Dmitry Utkin, deserve "a bullet in the head."

And Nikita Yurefey, a city council member in St. Petersburg, said he filed a request with Russia's Prosecutor General's Office and the Federal Security Service, or FSB, asking who would be punished for the rebellion.

Russian media reported that Wagner offices in several Russian cities had reopened on Monday and the company had resumed enlisting recruits.

In a return to at least superficial normality, Moscow's mayor announced an end to the "counterterrorism regime" imposed on the capital Saturday, when troops and armored vehicles set up checkpoints on the outskirts and authorities tore up roads leading into the city.

For months, Prigozhin had blasted Shoigu and General Staff chief Gen. Valery Gerasimov with expletive-ridden insults, accusing them of failing to provide his troops with enough ammunition during the fight for the Ukrainian town of Bakhmut, the war's longest and bloodiest battle.

Prigozhin said most of his fighters refused to come under the Defense Ministry's command. He said Wagner had planned to hand over the military equipment it was using in Ukraine on June 30 after pulling out of Ukraine and gathering in Rostov, but they were attacked.

Russian political analyst Tatiana Stanovaya said on Twitter that 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 the military leadership.

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

It was unclear what the fissures opened by the 24-hour rebellion would mean for the war in Ukraine, where Western officials say Russia's troops suffer low morale. Wagner's forces were key to Russia's only land victory in months, in Bakhmut.

The U.K. Ministry of Defense said Monday that Ukraine had "gained impetus" in its push around Bakhmut, making progress north and south of the town. Ukrainian forces claimed to have retaken Rivnopil, a village in southeast Ukraine that has seen heavy fighting.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Monday after visiting troops in the war-torn Donetsk region that his military had advanced there as well as in Zaporizhzhia. "Today, our warriors have advanced in all directions, and this is a happy day," he said in his nightly address, without providing details.

The events of the weekend show the war is "cracking Russia's political system," said EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell.

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

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Associated Press writers Lorne Cook in Brussels and Jill Lawless in London contributed.

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

## Work begins to clean up train derailment in Montana's Yellowstone River

HELENA, Mont. (AP) — Work is underway to clean up rail cars carrying hazardous materials that fell into the Yellowstone River in southern Montana after a bridge collapsed over the weekend, officials said Monday.

Montana Rail Link is developing a cleanup plan and is working with its unions and BNSF Railway to re-route freight trains in the area to limit disruption of the supply chain, Beth Archer, a spokesperson for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, said in a joint statement issued with the Montana Department of Environmental Quality and Montana Rail Link.

Contractors and a large crane were on site to stabilize and remove cars from the river once a plan is set, officials said.

Some rail cars that did not go off the tracks were removed from the area, and two cars carrying sodium hydrosulfide had their contents transferred to other cars and moved to safety, Archer said.

Montana Rail Link will be responsible for all cleanup costs, CEO Joe Racicot told a news conference.

Sixteen cars derailed, and 10 of them ended up in the river downstream from Yellowstone National Park Saturday morning.

Six mangled cars that carried hot asphalt, three holding molten sulfur and one with scrap metal remained in the rushing water on Monday in an area surrounded by farmland near the town of Columbus, about 40 miles (about 64 kilometers) west of Billings.

Two of the cars were submerged, and a dive team was deployed to gather more information, Archer said in a statement.

Joni Sandoval, the EPA on-scene coordinator, told a news conference her agency has invited experts from federal and state fish and wildlife agencies to come to the site to assess how the derailment has affected wildlife.

The asphalt and sulfur solidified and sank in the cold water, officials said. Some asphalt globules were found downriver, but they are not water soluble and are not expected to impact water quality, the statement said.

Water samples taken Saturday showed the materials from the derailment had not affected water quality, Shasta Steinweden of the state Department of Environmental Quality said. The tests showed no presence of petroleum and sulfur levels were consistent with upstream water samples, she said.

Results from samples taken Sunday and Monday were still pending.

The cause of the collapse was under investigation. Part of the train had crossed the bridge before it failed, and some cars at the back remained on stable ground at the other end. No injuries were reported.

The collapse also cut two major fiber-optic lines. Global Net said late Sunday that it had developed a temporary workaround. Company officials did not return a call Monday seeking further information.

The White House was monitoring the situation and was prepared to offer any federal help that might be needed, spokesperson Karin Jean-Pierre said Monday.

The derailment comes just over four months after a freight train derailed near East Palestine, Ohio, sparking a fire that led to evacuations and the eventual burning of hazardous materials to prevent an uncontrolled explosion.

Freight railcar inspections are happening less often, union officials testified last week during a congressional hearing about the Ohio derailment.

Jean-Pierre said the U.S. Department of Transportation is looking into ways to prevent derailments.

The government has been "all hands on deck," she said.

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This story has been updated to correct that Archer works for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, not the Montana Department of Environmental Quality.

## First UN investigator at US detention center at Guantanamo says detainees face cruel treatment

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The first U.N. independent investigator to visit the U.S. detention center at Guantanamo Bay said Monday the 30 men held there are subject “to ongoing cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment under international law.”

The investigator, Irish law professor Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, said at a news conference releasing her 23-page report to the U.N. Human Rights Council that the 2001 attacks in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania that killed nearly 3,000 people were “crimes against humanity.” But she said the U.S. use of torture and rendition against alleged perpetrators and their associates in the years right after the attacks violated international human rights law — and in many cases deprived the victims and survivors of justice because information obtained by torture cannot be used at trials.

Ní Aoláin said her visit marked the first time a U.S. administration has allowed a U.N. investigator to visit the facility, which opened in 2002.

She praised the Biden administration for leading by example by opening up Guantanamo and “being prepared to address the hardest human rights issues,” and urged other countries that have barred U.N. access to detention facilities to follow suit. And she said she was given access to everything she asked for, including holding meetings at the facility in Cuba with “high value” and “non-high value” detainees.

The United States said in a submission to the Human Rights Council on the report that the special investigator’s findings “are solely her own” and “the United States disagrees in significant respects with many factual and legal assertions” in her report.

Ní Aoláin said “significant improvements” have been made to the confinement of detainees but expressed “serious concerns” about the continued detention of 30 men, who she said face severe insecurity, suffering and anxiety. She cited examples including near constant surveillance, forced removal from their cells and unjust use of restraints.

“I observed that after two decades of custody, the suffering of those detained is profound, and it’s ongoing,” the U.N. special rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism said. “Every single detainee I met with lives with the unrelenting harms that follow from systematic practices of rendition, torture and arbitrary detention.”

Ní Aoláin, concurrently a professor at the University of Minnesota and at Queens University in Belfast, Northern Ireland, said there was “a heartfelt response” by many detainees to seeing someone who was neither a lawyer nor associated with the detention center, some for the first time in 20 years. During the visit, she said, she and her team scrutinized every aspect of Guantanamo.

Ní Aoláin said many detainees she met showed evidence of “deep psychological harm and distress — including profound anxiety, helplessness, hopelessness, stress and depression, and dependency.”

She expressed grave concern at the failure of the U.S. government to provide torture rehabilitation programs to the detainees and said the specialist care and facilities at Guantanamo “are not adequate to meet the complex and urgent mental and physical health issues of detainees” ranging from permanent disabilities and traumatic brain injuries to chronic pain, gastrointestinal and urinary issues.

Many also suffer from the deprivation of support from their families and community “while living in a detention environment without trial for some, and without charge for others, for 21 years, hunger striking and force-feeding, self-harm and suicidal ideation (ideas), and accelerated aging,” she said.

Ní Aoláin expressed “profound concern” that 19 of the 30 men remaining at Guantanamo have never been charged with a single crime, some after 20 years in U.S. custody, and that the continuing detention of some of them “follows from the unwillingness of the authorities to face the consequences of the torture and other ill-treatment to which the detainees were subjected and not from any ongoing threat they are believed to pose.” She stressed repeatedly that using information obtained by torture at a trial is prohibited and she said the United States has committed to not using such information.

She also found “fundamental fair trial and due process deficiencies in the military commission system,”

expressed concern at the extent of secrecy in all judicial and administrative proceedings, and concluded the U.S. failed to promote fundamental fair trial guarantees.

Ní Aoláin made a long series of recommendations and said the prison at Guantanamo Bay should be immediately closed, a goal of the Biden administration.

Among her key recommendations to the U.S. government were to provide specialized rehabilitation from torture and trauma to detainees, ensure that all detainees whether they are "high-value" or "non-high value" are provided with at least one phone call every month with their family, and guaranteed equal access to legal counsel to all detainees.

The U.S. response, submitted by the American ambassador to the Human Rights Council, Michele Taylor, said Ní Aoláin was the first U.N. special rapporteur to visit Guantanamo and had been given "unprecedented access" with "the confidence that the conditions of confinement at Guantanamo Bay are humane and reflect the United States' respect for and protection of human rights for all who are within our custody."

"Detainees live communally and prepare meals together; receive specialized medical and psychiatric care; are given full access to legal counsel; and communicate regularly with family members," the U.S. statement said.

"We are nonetheless carefully reviewing the (special rapporteur's) recommendations and will take any appropriate actions, as warranted," it said.

The United States said the Biden administration has made "significant progress" toward closing Guantanamo, transferring 10 detainees from the facility, it said, adding that it is looking to find suitable locations for the remaining detainees eligible for transfer.

The report also covers the rights of the 9/11 victims and the rights of the detainees released from Guantanamo who have been repatriated to their home country or resettled.

Ní Aoláin stressed that victims of terrorism have a right to justice, and called it "a betrayal" that the U.S. use of torture would prevent many from seeing the perpetrators and their collaborators in court. She also said children whose families accepted compensation in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 and waived their rights should be able to pursue compensation and health care.

As for the 741 men who have been released from Guantanamo, she said, many were left on their own, lacking a legal identity, education and job training, adequate physical and mental health care, and continue to experience "sustained human rights violations," poverty, social exclusion and stigma.

The special rapporteur stressed that the United States has international law obligations before, during and after the transfer of detainees and must provide "fair and adequate compensation and as full rehabilitation as possible to the men who were detained at Guantanamo."

## **Malaria cases in Texas and Florida are the first US spread since 2003, CDC says**

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The United States has seen five cases of malaria spread by mosquitos in the last two months — the first time there's been local spread in 20 years.

There were four cases detected in Florida and one in Texas, according to a health alert issued Monday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Malaria is caused by a parasite that spreads through mosquito bites. Infected people can suffer fever, chills and flu-like illness. If it goes untreated, infected people can develop severe complications and die. The largest death toll in recent years has been seen in children in sub-Saharan Africa.

Health officials are warning doctors, especially those in southern states where the weather is more friendly to the tropical mosquito that spreads malaria, to be aware of the possibility of infection. They also should think about how to access the IV drug that is the first-line treatment for severe malaria in the United States, the CDC said.

The agency said that the people who were diagnosed received treatment and "are improving."

About 2,000 U.S. cases of malaria are diagnosed each year — the vast majority in travelers coming from

countries where malaria commonly spreads.

Since 1992, there've been 11 outbreaks involving malaria from mosquitoes in the U.S. The last one occurred in 2003 in Palm Beach County, Florida, where eight cases were reported

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.

## **Biden calls mutiny a 'struggle within the Russian system' and says US and NATO played no part**

By SEUNG MIN KIM, AAMER MADHANI and ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden declared Monday that the United States and NATO played no part in the Wagner mercenary group's short-lived insurrection in Russia, calling the uprising and the longer-term challenges it poses for President Vladimir Putin's authority "a struggle within the Russian system."

Biden and U.S. allies supporting Ukraine in its fight against Russia's invasion emphasized their intent to be seen as staying out of the mercenaries' stunning insurgency, the biggest threat to Putin in his two decades leading Russia. They are concerned that Putin could use accusations of Western involvement to rally Russians to his defense.

Biden and administration officials declined an immediate assessment of what the 22-hour uprising by the Wagner Group might mean for Russia's war in Ukraine, for mercenary chief Yevgeny Prigozhin or for Russia itself.

"We're going to keep assessing the fallout of this weekend's events and the implications from Russia and Ukraine," Biden said. "But it's still too early to reach a definitive conclusion about where this is going."

Putin, in his first public comments since the rebellion, said "Russia's enemies" had hoped the mutiny would succeed in dividing and weakening Russia, "but they miscalculated." He identified the enemies as "the neo-Nazis in Kyiv, their Western patrons and other national traitors."

And Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said the special services were already investigating whether Western intelligence services were involved in Prigozhin's rebellion.

Over the course of a tumultuous weekend in Russia, U.S. diplomats were in contact with their counterparts in Moscow to underscore that the American government regarded the matter as a domestic affair for Russia, with the U.S. only a bystander, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said.

American diplomats also stressed to Moscow that they expected Russia to ensure the safety of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow and Americans detained in Russia, Miller said.

In a video call between Biden and leaders of U.S.-allied countries over the weekend, all were determined to give Putin "no excuse to blame this on the West," Biden told reporters at the White House.

"We made clear that we were not involved. We had nothing to do with it," Biden said. "This was part of a struggle within the Russian system."

Michael McFaul, a former U.S. ambassador to Russia, said Putin in the past has alleged clandestine U.S. involvement in events — including democratic uprisings in former Soviet countries, and campaigns by democracy activists inside and outside Russia — as a way to diminish public support among Russians for those challenges to the Russian system.

The U.S. and NATO "don't want to be blamed for the appearance of trying to destabilize Putin," McFaul said.

A feud between Prigozhin and Russia's military brass that has festered throughout the war erupted into the mutiny that saw the mercenaries leave Ukraine to seize a military headquarters in a southern Russian city. They rolled for hundreds of kilometers toward Moscow, before turning around on Saturday, in a deal whose terms remain uncertain.

Biden's national security team briefed him hourly as Prigozhin's forces were on the move, the president said. He had directed them to "prepare for a range of scenarios" as Russia's crisis unfolded, he said.

Biden did not elaborate on the scenarios. But national security spokesman John Kirby addressed one

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concern raised frequently by the public, news media and others as the world watched the cracks opening in Putin's hold on power — worries that the Russian leader might take extreme action to reassert his command.

Putin and the Kremlin have made repeated references to Russia's nuclear weapons since invading Ukraine 16 months ago, aiming to discourage NATO countries from ratcheting up their support to Ukraine.

"One thing that we have always talked about, unabashedly so, is that it's in nobody's interest for this war to escalate beyond the level of violence that is already visited upon the Ukrainian people," Kirby said at a White House news briefing. "It's not good for, certainly, Ukraine and not good for our allies and partners in Europe. Quite frankly, it's not good for the Russian people."

In the aftermath of the mutiny, both Prigozhin and Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu made public comments Monday aiming to play down the crisis.

In an 11-minute audio statement, Prigozhin said he acted "to prevent the destruction of the Wagner private military company" and in particular in response to an attack on a Wagner camp that killed some 30 of his fighters.

Biden spoke with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy over the weekend, telling him, "No matter what happened in Russia, let me say again, no matter what happened in Russia, we in the United States would continue to support Ukraine's defense and sovereignty and its territorial integrity." Biden said. He said he intended to speak with Zelenskyy again late Monday or early Tuesday.

The Pentagon is expected to announce Tuesday that it is sending up to \$500 million in additional military aid to Ukraine, including more than 50 heavily armored vehicles and an infusion of missiles for air defense systems, U.S. officials said Monday. They spoke on condition of anonymity because the aid has not yet been publicly announced.

Biden, in the first weeks after Putin sent tens of thousands of Russian forces into Ukraine in February 2022, had issued a passionate statement against the Russian leader's continuing in command. "For God's sake, this man cannot remain in power," he said then, as reports emerged of Russian atrocities against civilians in Ukraine.

On Monday, U.S. officials were careful not to be seen as backing either Putin or his former longtime protege, Prigozhin, in public comments.

"We believe it's up to the Russian people to determine who their leadership is," Kirby said.

White House officials were also trying to understand how Beijing was digesting the Wagner revolt and what it might mean for the China-Russia relationship going forward. China and Russia are each other's closest major partner. The White House says Beijing has considered — but not followed through on — sending Russia weaponry for use in Ukraine.

"I think it'd be fair to say that recent developments in Russia had been unsettling to the Chinese leadership," said Kurt Campbell, coordinator for the Indo-Pacific at the White House National Security Council, speaking at a forum hosted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. "I think I'll just leave it at that."

China values Russia as a friend in part to keep from standing alone against the U.S. and its allies in disputes. With Russia's invasion and resulting international sanctions sapping Russian resources and now sparking a rebellion, McFaul said, Ukraine and its allies could make the case: "Xi Jinping, you know, if you want your buddy to stay in power, maybe this is the time to put some pressure on him to wrap up this war."

AP Diplomatic Writer Matthew Lee contributed to this report.

## Still Cruising: Tom premieres new 'Mission Impossible' adventure in Abu Dhabi

By NICK EL HAJJ Associated Press

ABU DHABI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The red carpet unfurled Monday in Abu Dhabi for Hollywood action megastar Tom Cruise, who was on hand for the Middle Eastern premiere of "Mission: Impossible

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— Dead Reckoning Part One.”

Cruise was met by an enthusiastic crowd of fans and movie buffs eager to catch a glimpse of the star at the Emirates Palace Hotel in the capital of the United Arab Emirates.

Dressed in a tailored tuxedo and flashing his signature smile, Cruise appeared moved by the exuberant reception, stopping to speak with many attendees. The evening’s buzz was punctuated by the “Mission: Impossible” theme, its familiar chords adding a layer of cinematic nostalgia to the night.

“I’m a cinephile, I love movies and the history of cinema and how this art form develops,” Cruise told The Associated Press on the red carpet. “I didn’t know whether the audience was going to embrace (the first Mission: Impossible movie), it was the first film I ever produced and I did it because I wanted to challenge myself in many ways as an actor, as a producer, as a storyteller.”

“Mission: Impossible – Dead Reckoning Part One” is the seventh installment of the blockbuster \$3.5 billion grossing franchise famed for jam-packed action and ever-daring stunts performed by the 60-year-old Cruise himself.

“We’ve had a lot of fun coming up with these moments,” said Cruise.

The Mission: Impossible series follows the globe-trotting adventures of Ethan Hunt, a secret agent of the Impossible Missions Force, or IMF, as he undertakes high-risk covert operations. Picture heart-racing action, sophisticated gadgets, and Cruise’s Hunt executing death-defying stunts at every turn.

Matching the topic of the moment, Hunt and his IMF team are tasked with tracking down a potent new artificial intelligence weapon in “Mission: Impossible — Dead Reckoning Part One.” Scenes include base-jumping off a cliff on a motorcycle, hurling a steam train off an exploded bridge, and drifting a yellow Fiat 500 through Rome’s winding streets.

In a nod to the locale, the film incorporates several action sequences in Abu Dhabi. The desert landscapes of Liwa, known as the Empty Quarter, set the stage for intense horseback chases and firearm confrontations. Cruise runs across the dune-shaped roof of Abu Dhabi International Airport’s new Midfield Terminal in another scene.

“When you see us shooting a sequence in Abu Dhabi, it’s about that culture, it’s about that country, and that’s why we keep coming back here,” said Christopher McQuarrie, who is returning for the third time as director of the high-octane spy series.

McQuarrie joined Cruise on the red carpet along with other Mission: Impossible co-stars, both new and returning. Hayley Atwell and Pom Klementieff made their franchise debut, while Simon Pegg reprised his role as Benji Dunn, a character known for infusing comedic relief into the franchise’s most tense scenes.

“When you have a film which is high-tension you need that to occasionally be injected in order to make it a little bit more enjoyable,” said Pegg.

Following pandemic delays, the production companies behind the franchise, Paramount Pictures and Skydance, pushed the film’s release from September of 2022 to July of 2023. A leaked video from the set featured Cruise launching an expletive-laden rant at colleagues after he reportedly spotted two crew members failing to respect social distancing rules. The star expressed his concern about the potential consequences, which included shutting down production and jeopardizing the then-struggling movie industry and the jobs it supports.

“We just had to write the rulebook on how to make a film during a pandemic,” said Pegg. “Make sure everything was super safe, that was Tom’s biggest challenge in a way was to make us all feel safe and be safe, somehow we muddle through.”

Cruise was praised by many for his role in revitalizing Hollywood following the industry’s pandemic-induced stagnation. This recognition came on the heels of his blockbuster film, “Top Gun: Maverick,” which not only marked Cruise’s first \$100 million debut but also signified the return of blockbuster movies to theaters as the most significant movie debut since the onset of the pandemic.

Abu Dhabi marks the third premiere location for “Mission: Impossible — Dead Reckoning Part One,” with the red carpet previously rolled out at the Spanish Steps in Rome and Leicester Square in London. The movie is set to open in U.S. theaters on July 12.

## Prosecutors seek the death penalty against man accused of slaying of 4 University of Idaho students

By REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Prosecutors say they are seeking the death penalty against a man accused of stabbing four University of Idaho students to death late last year.

Bryan Kohberger, 28, is charged with four counts of murder in connection with the deaths at a rental house near the Moscow, Idaho, university campus last November. Latah County Prosecutor Bill Thompson filed the notice of his intent to seek the death penalty in court on Monday.

A not-guilty plea was entered in the case on Kohberger's behalf earlier this year. A hearing in the case is scheduled for Tuesday.

The bodies of Madison Mogen, Kaylee Goncalves, Xana Kernodle and Ethan Chapin were found on Nov. 13, 2022, at a rental home across the street from the University of Idaho campus. The slayings shocked the rural Idaho community and neighboring Pullman, Washington, where Kohberger was a graduate student studying criminology at Washington State University.

Police released few details about the investigation until after Kohberger was arrested at his parents' home in eastern Pennsylvania early Dec. 30, 2022. Court documents detailed how police pieced together DNA evidence, cellphone data and surveillance video that they say links Kohberger to the slayings.

Investigators said traces of DNA found on a knife sheath inside the home where the students were killed matches Kohberger, and that a cellphone belonging to Kohberger was near the victims' home on a dozen occasions before the killings. A white sedan allegedly matching one owned by Kohberger was caught on surveillance footage repeatedly cruising past the rental home around the time of the killings.

But defense attorneys have filed motions asking the court to order prosecutors to turn over more evidence about the DNA found during the investigation, the searches of Kohberger's phone and social media records, and the surveillance footage used to identify the make and model of the car. The motions are among several that will be argued during the hearing Tuesday afternoon.

In an affidavit filed with the motions, defense attorney Anne Taylor said prosecutors have only provided the DNA profile that was taken from traces found on the knife sheath, not the DNA profiles belonging to three other unidentified males that were developed as part of the investigation.

Defense attorneys are also asking for additional time to meet case filing deadlines, noting that they have received thousands of pages of documents to examine, including thousands of photographs, hundreds of hours of recordings, and many gigabytes of electronic phone records and social media data.

Idaho law requires prosecutors to notify the court of their intent to seek the death penalty within 60 days of a plea being entered. In his notice of intent, Thompson listed five "aggravating circumstances" that he said could qualify for the crime for capital punishment under state law; including that more than one murder was committed during the crime, that it was especially heinous or showed exceptional depravity, that it was committed in the perpetration of a burglary or other crime, and that the defendant showed "utter disregard for human life."

If a defendant is convicted in a death penalty case, defense attorneys are also given the opportunity to show that mitigating factors exist that would make the death penalty unjust. Mitigating factors sometimes include evidence that a defendant has mental problems, that they have shown remorse, that they are very young or that they suffered childhood abuse.

Idaho allows executions by lethal injection. But in recent months, prison officials have been unable to obtain the necessary chemicals, causing one planned execution to be repeatedly postponed. On July 1, death by firing squad will become an approved back-up method of execution under a law passed by the Legislature earlier this year, though the method is likely to be challenged in federal court.



## What is a heat dome? Scorching temperatures in Texas are expected to spread to the north and east

By JAKE BLEIBERG, KEN MILLER and ISABELLA O'MALLEY Associated Press

DALLAS (AP) — Scorching temperatures brought on by a “heat dome” have taxed the Texas power grid and threaten to bring record highs to the state before they are expected to expand to other parts of the U.S. during the coming week, putting even more people at risk.

“Going forward, that heat is going to expand ... north to Kansas City and the entire state of Oklahoma, into the Mississippi Valley ... to the far western Florida Panhandle and parts of western Alabama,” while remaining over Texas, said Bob Oravec, lead forecaster with the National Weather Service.

Record high temperatures around 110 degrees Fahrenheit (43 degrees Celsius) are forecast in parts of western Texas on Monday, and relief is not expected before the Fourth of July holiday, Oravec said.

Cori Iadonisi, of Dallas, summed up the weather simply: “It’s just too hot here.”

Iadonisi, 40, said she often urges local friends to visit her native Washington state to beat the heat in the summer.

“You can’t go outside,” Iadonisi said of the hot months in Texas. “You can’t go for a walk.”

### WHAT IS A HEAT DOME?

A heat dome occurs when stationary high pressure with warm air combines with warmer than usual air in the Gulf of Mexico and heat from the sun that is nearly directly overhead, Texas State Climatologist John Nielsen-Gammon said.

“By the time we get into the middle of summer, it’s hard to get the hot air aloft,” said Nielsen-Gammon, a professor at Texas A&M’s College of Atmospheric Sciences. “If it’s going to happen, this is the time of year it will.”

Nielsen-Gammon said July and August don’t have as much sunlight because the sun is retreating from the summer solstice, which was Wednesday.

“One thing that is a little unusual about this heat wave is we had a fairly wet April and May, and usually that extra moisture serves as an air conditioner,” Nielsen-Gammon said. “But the air aloft is so hot that it wasn’t able to prevent the heat wave from occurring and, in fact, added a bit to the humidity.”

High heat continues this week after it prompted Texas’ power grid operator, the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, to ask residents last week to voluntarily cut back on power usage because of anticipated record demand on the system.

The National Integrated Heat Health Information System reports more than 46 million people from west Texas and southeastern New Mexico to the western Florida Panhandle are currently under heat alerts. The NIHHS is a joint project of the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The heat comes after Sunday storms that killed three people and left more than 100,000 customers without electricity in both Arkansas and Tennessee and tens of thousands powerless in Georgia, Mississippi and Louisiana, according to [poweroutage.us](http://poweroutage.us).

Earlier this month, the most populous county in Oregon filed a \$1.5 billion lawsuit against more than a dozen large fossil fuel companies to recover costs related to extreme weather events linked to climate change, including a deadly 2021 heat dome.

Multnomah County, home to Portland and known for typically mild weather, alleges the combined carbon pollution the companies emitted was a substantial in causing and exacerbating record-breaking temperatures in the Pacific Northwest that killed 69 people in that county.

An attorney for Chevron Corp., Theodore J. Boutrous Jr., said in a statement that the lawsuit makes “novel, baseless claims.”

### WHAT ARE THE HEALTH THREATS?

Extreme heat can be particularly dangerous to vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly, and outdoor workers need extra support,

Symptoms of heat illness can include heavy sweating, nausea, dizziness and fainting. Some strategies

to stay cool include drinking chilled fluids, applying a cloth soaked with cold water onto your skin, and spending time in air-conditioned environments.

Cecilia Sorensen, a physician and associate professor of Environmental Health Sciences at Columbia University Medical Center, said heat-related conditions are becoming a growing public health concern because of the warming climate.

"There's huge issues going on in Texas right now around energy insecurity and the compounding climate crises we're seeing," Sorensen said. "This is also one of those examples where, if you are wealthy enough to be able to afford an air conditioner, you're going to be safer, which is a huge climate health equity issue."

In Texas, the average daily high temperatures have increased by 2.4 degrees — 0.8 degrees per decade — since 1993, according data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration amid concerns over human caused climate change resulting in rising temperatures.

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Miller reported from Oklahoma City. O'Malley reported from Philadelphia.

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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.

## **DeSantis unveils an aggressive immigration and border security policy that largely mirrors Trump's**

By VALERIE GONZALEZ and STEVE PEOPLES Associated Press

EAGLE PASS, Texas (AP) — Republican presidential candidate Ron DeSantis promised to end birthright citizenship, finish building the southern border wall and send U.S. forces into Mexico to combat drug cartels as part of an aggressive — and familiar — immigration policy proposal he laid out Monday in a Texas border city.

The sweeping plan, the Florida governor's first detailed policy release as a 2024 contender, represents a long-established wish list of Republican immigration proposals that largely mirrors former President Donald Trump's policies. Much of DeSantis' plan faces tall odds, requiring the reversal of legal precedents, approval from other countries or even an amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Still, DeSantis projected confidence on Monday, excoriating leaders in both political parties for failing to stop what he called an immigrant "invasion." He addressed his plans while touring Eagle Pass, a community that has emerged as a major corridor for illegal border crossings during Joe Biden's presidency.

"I have listened to people in D.C. for years and years and years, going back decades — Republicans and Democrats — always chirping about this yet never actually bringing the issue to a conclusion," DeSantis told an audience of roughly 100 residents, including local Democratic officials, school teachers and mothers of children lost to fentanyl overdoses. "What we're saying is no excuses on this."

He likened illegal border crossings to home break-ins and warned that drug traffickers trying to bring their product into the United States could wind up "stone cold dead."

"If somebody were breaking into your house to do something bad, you would respond with force. Yet why don't we do that at the southern border?" DeSantis asked. "So if the cartels are cutting through the border wall, trying to run product into this country, they're going to end up stone cold dead as a result of that bad decision.

"And if you do that one time, you're not going to see them mess with our wall ever again," he said.

The DeSantis campaign has promised to release more detailed policy rollouts in the coming weeks. But in leading with immigration, the two-term Florida governor is prioritizing a divisive issue that has long been a focus of the GOP's most conservative voters. The pro-immigrant group America's Voice condemned DeSantis for making "invasion" references that have been used by white supremacists.

Yet voters in the political middle have warmed to more aggressive immigration policies in recent months as illegal border crossing surged. Overall, 6 in 10 adults in the U.S. disapprove of Biden's handling of immigration, according to a recent AP-NORC poll.

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Still, it may be difficult for DeSantis to separate himself on immigration from the many other Republicans seeking the 2024 presidential nomination — especially Trump, the front-runner.

That didn't stop him from trying.

Speaking from a podium emblazoned with the words, "No Excuses" and "Stop the Invasion," DeSantis noted that there were more immigrants deported in the first four years of the Obama administration than in Trump's first term.

He made repeated references to the unfinished border wall, an indirect knock on the former president, who is now his chief rival in the crowded Republican presidential primary. Trump tried and ultimately failed to finish a border wall along the entire 1,950-mile (3,140-kilometer) U.S.-Mexico border during his four years in office.

Before the Monday announcement, the DeSantis campaign released new merchandise bearing the words, "Build The Wall. No Excuses."

Trump apparently watched DeSantis on television, describing his trip to the border as "a total waste of time."

"He is a failed candidate, whose sole purpose in making the trip was to reiterate the fact that he would do all of the things done by me in creating the strongest Border, by far, in U.S. history," Trump wrote on social media.

The fierce feud between Trump and DeSantis, which includes clashes over policy and personality, will continue on Tuesday as both men are scheduled to campaign in New Hampshire. But immigration has been central to their messages no matter where they are.

Trump emphasized immigration while delivering the keynote address to hundreds of enthusiastic religious conservatives at the Faith and Freedom Coalition's conference in Washington over the weekend. He promised to carry out "the largest domestic deportation operation on the border" and boasted about completing more than 300 miles (or 480 kilometers) of wall along the southern border during his administration while promising to build even more should he win another term.

Trump's policies worked to constrict immigration, but the number of people crossing the U.S.-Mexico border still swelled during his time in office before dropping during the COVID-19 pandemic.

And his policies caused clogs in the system that led to massive overcrowding; for instance, the immigration court case backlog alone grew from roughly 500,000 in June 2016 to 1.3 million cases by the end of 2020. There were massive human rights concerns, too, particularly with the Remain in Mexico program and the separation of children from their families at the border.

Facing reporters on Monday, DeSantis said he would be more "aggressive" than Trump in implementing strong immigration policies if elected president.

"I think a lot of the things he's saying, you know, I agree with," he said of Trump. "But I also think those are the same things that were said back in 2016."

Like Trump, DeSantis vowed to end the practice, as outlined in the Constitution, that grants citizenship to all babies born on U.S. soil. The 14th Amendment states: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and the State wherein they reside."

DeSantis promises to end the United States' so-called catch-and-release policy, which currently allows for the release of immigrants in the country illegally until their court dates. That's because federal immigration authorities have the money for just 30,000 beds, making it impossible to detain everyone who is arrested.

DeSantis also wants to reinstitute the Remain in Mexico policy to make asylum-seekers wait in Mexico for hearings in U.S. immigration court. Such a plan would need Mexico's approval.

He's calling for closing the "Flores loophole," which, among other things, requires families to generally be released from custody in 20 days. It is part of a federal court order, so it's unclear how he could close it.

DeSantis is also promising to use military force against drug cartels if necessary. He would "reserve the right to operate across the border to secure our territory from Mexican cartel activities," according to the plan, which also calls for the U.S. Navy and the Coast Guard to block precursor chemicals from entering Mexican ports if "the Mexican government won't stop cartel drug manufacturing."

DeSantis' plan says little about the millions of immigrants already living in the country illegally, aside from promising to deport those who have overstayed their visas. Deporting such people has been a challenge that has eluded authorities for decades.

In September, the small border city of Eagle Pass made international headlines when nine people drowned in their attempt to swim through the Rio Grande.

DeSantis was supportive of one audience member who suggested that the situation at the border constituted an "act of war."

"I think the state of Texas has the right to declare an invasion," DeSantis told the man. "You're going to see as president under Article 2 of the Constitution, you have a responsibility and a duty to protect the country. We are going to do that and we are going to do that robustly."

Peoples reported from New York. Associated Press writers Elliot Spagat in San Diego, Will Weissert and Colleen Long in Washington, and Jill Colvin in New York contributed to this report.

## Colorado Springs LGBTQ+ club mass killer gets life in prison, victim says 'devil awaits' defendant

By COLLEEN SLEVIN and JESSE BEDAYN Associated Press

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (AP) — The person who killed five people at a Colorado Springs nightclub in 2022 was sentenced to life in prison on Monday, after victims called the shooter a "monster" and "coward" who hunted down revelers in a calculated attack on a sanctuary for the LGBTQ+ community.

During an emotional courtroom hearing packed with victims and family members, Anderson Lee Aldrich pleaded guilty to five counts of murder and 46 counts of attempted murder – one for each person at Club Q on the night of the shooting. Aldrich also pleaded no contest to two hate crimes, one a felony and the other a misdemeanor.

"This thing sitting in this court room is not a human, it is a monster," said Jessica Fierro, whose daughter's boyfriend was killed that night. "The devil awaits with open arms."

The guilty plea comes just seven months after the shooting and spares victim's families and survivors a long and potentially painful trial.

More charges could be coming: The FBI confirmed Monday it was working with the U.S. Justice Department's civil rights division on a separate investigation into the attack.

People in the courtroom wiped away tears as the judge explained the charges and read out the names of the victims. Judge Michael McHenry also issued a stern rebuke of Aldrich's actions, connecting it to societal woes.

"You are targeting a group of people for their simple existence," McHenry said. "Like too many other people in our culture, you chose to find a power that day behind the trigger of a gun, your actions reflect the deepest malice of the human heart, and malice is almost always born of ignorance and fear."

The killings rekindled memories of the 2016 massacre at the Pulse gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, that killed 49 people.

Relatives and friends of victims were able to give statements in court Monday to remember their loved ones. Survivors spoke about how their lives were forever altered just before midnight on Nov. 19 when the suspect walked into Club Q and indiscriminately fired an AR-15-style semiautomatic rifle.

The father of a Club Q bartender said Daniel Aston had been in the prime of his life when he was shot and killed.

"He was huge light in this world that was snuffed out by a heinous, evil and cowardly act," Jeff Aston said. "I will never again hear him laugh at my dad jokes."

Daniel Aston's mother, Sabrina, was among those who said they would not forgive the crimes.

Another forgave Aldrich without excusing the crime.

"I forgive this individual, as they are a symbol of a broken system, of hate and vitriol pushed against us as a community," said Wyatt Kent, Aston's partner. "What brings joy to me is that this hurt individual will never be able to see the joy and the light that has been wrought into our community as an outcome."

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Aldrich's body shook slightly as the victims and family members spoke. The defendant also looked down and glanced occasionally at a screen showing photos of the victims.

Aldrich — who identifies as nonbinary and uses they and them pronouns — did not reveal a motivation and declined to address the court during the sentencing part of the hearing. Defense attorney Joseph Archambault said "they want everyone to know they're sorry."

The guilty plea follows a series of jailhouse phone calls from Aldrich to The Associated Press expressing remorse for the shooting.

District Attorney Michael Allen said Aldrich's statements were self-serving and rang hollow. And the prosecutor rejected the notion that Aldrich was nonbinary.

"There's zero evidence prior to the shooting that he was nonbinary," said Allen, who repeatedly called Aldrich a coward. "He exhibited extreme hatred for the people in the LGBTQ+ community, and so I think it was a stilted effort to avoid any bias motivated or hate charges."

Allen told the judge that the victims were targeted "for who they were an are."

"Hatred coupled with criminal action will not be tolerated," he added.

Aldrich's no contest plea on hate crimes charges effectively has the same impact as a conviction under Colorado law and doesn't absolve them of responsibility.

Aldrich originally was charged with more than 300 state counts, including murder and hate crimes. The U.S. Justice Department has been considering federal hate crime charges.

The status of those deliberations were unclear Monday but FBI special agent Mark Michalek confirmed there was an ongoing investigation. The U.S. Attorney's Office has requested no documents in the case be released, said Colorado Springs Police Chief Adrian Vasquez.

Allen said the federal death penalty was a "big part of what motivated the defendant" to plead guilty.

However, the Colorado plea deal and sentence would not preclude U.S. authorities from charging Aldrich with a federal crime that carries a death sentence, explained Robert Dunham, former head of the Death Penalty Information Center and now an adjunct professor of death penalty law at Temple Law School.

Double jeopardy, the prohibition against trying someone twice for the same crime, wouldn't apply, because federal and state jurisdictions aren't the same and because the charges wouldn't be identical. It isn't clear what specific crime Aldrich would face.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for Colorado said it could not comment on ongoing investigations.

The line to get through security and into the courthouse early Monday snaked through the large plaza outside as victims and others queued up to attend the hearing. One man wore a t-shirt saying "Loved Always & Never Forgotten."

The attack at Club Q came over a year after Aldrich was arrested for threatening their grandparents and vowing to become "the next mass killer" while stockpiling weapons, body armor and bomb-making materials.

The charges in that case were eventually dismissed after Aldrich's mother and grandparents refused to cooperate with prosecutors, evading efforts to serve them with subpoenas to testify. Aldrich was released and authorities kept two guns. But there was nothing to stop Aldrich from legally purchasing more firearms.

Aldrich told AP in one of the interviews from jail they were on a "very large plethora of drugs" and abusing 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 that was "completely off base."

District Attorney Allen said Aldrich knew exactly what they were doing during the attack and had drawn diagrams in advance indicating the best way to carry it out.

He emphasized that Aldrich didn't get any concessions in the plea agreement — sentenced to the maximum of five consecutive life sentences plus 2,208 additional years for the 46 counts of attempted murder. That amounts to the second longest sentence in state history behind only the one given the person who killed 12 people at a movie theater in a Denver suburb in 2012, Allen said.

That night, when Ashtin Gamblin stared into Aldrich's face, shots were already going off.

"I nuzzled up with my friend's body, soaking my clothes in his blood, terrified that this person might

come back," said Gamblin, who was shot nine times. "I hope for the worst things possible in prison, and even that won't be good enough."

Associated Press reporters Michael Tarm, out of Chicago, and Matthew Brown, out of Denver, contributed to this story.

## **Judge gives preliminary approval to \$290 million deal JPMorgan Chase reached with Epstein victims**

NEW YORK (AP) — A federal judge in New York City gave preliminary approval Monday to a \$290 million deal that JPMorgan Chase reached with sex victims of financier Jeffrey Epstein.

Judge Jed S. Rakoff praised lawyers on both sides for working out the deal announced earlier this month. He called it a "really fine settlement."

In lawsuits, lawyers for victims said JPMorgan gave Epstein loans and let him withdraw large sums of cash from 1998 through August 2013.

The bank continued to count Epstein as a client even after he was arrested and pled guilty in 2008 to sex crimes in Florida.

The bank has said it now regrets any interaction the bank had with Epstein while he was a client.

Lawsuits are still pending between the U.S. Virgin Islands and JPMorgan Chase, and the bank is still pursuing its lawsuit against a JPMorgan former executive.

Epstein was 66 when he apparently took his life in a federal jail in Manhattan in August 2019 while awaiting trial on sex trafficking charges that were brought against him a month earlier.

The settlement awaits final approval.

## **Fox News unveils primetime lineup with Jesse Watters in Tucker Carlson's former time slot**

Jesse Watters will fill the Fox News Channel time slot left vacant by the firing of Tucker Carlson, part of a dramatic revamp of the network's evening lineup announced on Monday.

Greg Gutfeld's late-night show that combines news and comedy will move up an hour to start at 10 p.m. Eastern, displacing Laura Ingraham. She'll shift to 7 p.m., the hour that Watters has occupied. Sean Hannity will stay in his 9 p.m. time slot, Fox said. The new lineup debuts on July 17.

The announcement comes roughly two months after Fox News fired Carlson shortly after settling a defamation lawsuit with the voting machine maker Dominion Voting Systems on the eve of trial. The case, which centered on the network's airing of false claims following the 2020 presidential election, exposed a trove of private messages sent between Fox hosts, including Hannity and Carlson, in which they criticized peers at the network.

Carlson has since begun doing occasional monologues for Twitter, although Fox is attempting to get him to stop the broadcasts.

Fox has seen its ratings tumble since Carlson exited. Carlson averaged 3.25 million viewers at 8 p.m. in the first three months of the year, and the string of guest hosts who replaced him the past two months usually reached under 2 million, making the network's command more tenuous.

The lineup change signals that Fox is doubling down on its opinionated evening programming strategy, with three sharp-tongued men filling the prime-time hours. It's something of a triumphant return for Watters, who got his start at the 8 p.m. hour, doing man-in-the-street interviews and other features for Bill O'Reilly before O'Reilly's firing in 2017.

It also means double duty for Gutfeld and Watters, who are both panelists on "The Five" and will continue there. The late-afternoon political talk show has become Fox's most popular program.

Keeping that show's chemistry intact appeared to be a priority for Fox. Gutfeld said in a Wall Street

Journal interview last week that he would no longer appear on "The Five" or do his late-night show if he were to get Carlson's old time slot.

Trace Gallagher, who has worked at Fox since the network began in 1996, will host a news show at 11 p.m., filling the hour that Gutfeld is leaving vacant.

"The unique perspectives of Laura Ingraham, Jesse Watters, Sean Hannity, and Greg Gutfeld will ensure our viewers have access to unrivaled coverage from our best-in-class team for years to come," Fox News CEO Suzanne Scott said in a statement.

## 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 most 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 of 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 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

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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.

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.

## **White Florida woman charged with manslaughter in shooting of Black neighbor**

A white woman accused of firing through her door and fatally shooting a Black mother in front of her 9-year-old son in central Florida was charged Monday with manslaughter and assault.

Susan Lorincz was arrested earlier this month following the fatal shooting of Ajike Owens in Ocala, Florida.



She was formally charged with one count of manslaughter with a firearm and one count of assault.

State Attorney William Gladson said his office contemplated filing a second-degree murder charge but that prosecutors concluded there was insufficient evidence that Lorincz had "hatred, spite, ill will or evil intent" toward Owens.

"As deplorable as the defendant's actions were in this case, there is insufficient evidence to prove this specific and required element of second-degree murder," Gladson said in a statement. "I am aware of the desire of the family, and some community members, that the defendant be charged with second-degree murder. My obligation as State Attorney is to follow the law in each case that I prosecute."

If convicted, Lorincz faces up to 30 years in prison. Amanda Sizemore, Lorincz's attorney from the public defender's office, said she had no comment at this time.

Anthony Thomas, an attorney for Owens' family, said the decision against filing a second-degree murder charge was disappointing.

"We firmly believe that justice demands nothing less," Thomas said in a statement. "The failure of the prosecutor to charge Susan with what truly reflected her wanton, reckless behavior undermines our ability to even get real accountability."

Owens was killed June 2 in Ocala, about 83 miles (133 kilometers) north of Orlando.

After the shooting, Lorincz told investigators she had problems for two years with being disrespected by children in the neighborhood — including Owens' children, who are ages 12, 9, 7 and 3.

According to an arrest report from the Marion County Sheriff's Office, Lorincz said she had a headache the day of the shooting and that children were running and yelling outside her apartment. That night, while a few children were playing basketball, Lorincz threw a pair of roller skates at them, hitting one on the feet.

Owens then came over and knocked on her door. Lorincz told investigators that Owens threatened to kill her and banged on the door so hard she feared Owens would break it down.

Lorincz fired a single round from her .380-caliber handgun, the sheriff's report says, which went through the closed door and fatally struck Owens.

A judge has granted Lorincz a \$154,000 bond while ordering her to wear an ankle monitor and to stay away from Owens' family.

## 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 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 hus-

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band 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.

## Dolphin moms use baby talk to call to their young, recordings show

By CHRISTINA LARSON AP. Science Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — You know instantly when someone is speaking to an infant or small child. It turns out that dolphin mothers also use a kind of high-pitched baby talk.

A study published Monday found that female bottlenose dolphins change their tone when addressing their calves. Researchers recorded the signature whistles of 19 mother dolphins in Florida, when accompanied by their young offspring and when swimming alone or with other adults.

The dolphin signature whistle is a unique and important signal — akin to calling out their own name.

"They use these whistles to keep track of each other. They're periodically saying, 'I'm here, I'm here,'" said study co-author Laela Sayigh, a Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution marine biologist in Massachusetts.

When directing the signal to their calves, the mother's whistle pitch is higher and her pitch range is greater than usual, according to the study published in the journal, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

"That was true for every one of the moms in the study, all 19 of them," said biologist Peter Tyack, a study co-author from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland.

Obtaining this data was no simple feat. Over more than three decades, scientists placed special microphones multiple times on the same wild dolphin mothers in Florida's Sarasota Bay to record their signature whistles. That included years when they had calves and when they didn't — dolphin calves stay with their mothers for an average of three years in Sarasota, and sometimes longer. Fathers don't play a prolonged role in parenting.

"This is unprecedented, absolutely fantastic data," said Mauricio Cantor, an Oregon State University marine biologist who was not involved in the study. "This study is the result of so much research effort."

Why people, dolphins or other creatures use baby talk isn't certain, but scientists believe it may help offspring learn to pronounce novel sounds. Research dating back to the 1980s suggests that human infants may pay more attention to speech with a greater pitch range. Female rhesus monkeys may alter their calls to attract and hold offspring's attention. And Zebra finches elevate their pitch and slow down their songs to address chicks, perhaps making it easier to learn birdsong.

For the dolphin study, the researchers focused solely on the signature call, so they don't know if dolphins also use baby talk for other exchanges — or whether it helps their offspring learn to "talk" as it seems to do with humans.

"It would make sense if there are similar adaptations in bottlenose dolphins — a long lived, highly acoustic species," where calves must learn to vocalize many sounds to communicate, said Frants Jensen, a behavioral ecologist at Denmark's Aarhus University and a study co-author.

Another possible reason for using specific pitches is to catch the kids' attention.

"It's really important for a calf to know 'Oh, Mom is talking to me now' — versus just announcing her presence to someone else," added Janet Mann, a marine biologist at Georgetown University, who was not involved in the study.

Follow Christina Larson on Twitter at: @larsonchristina

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## Supreme Court unfreezes Louisiana redistricting case that could boost Black voting power before 2024

By KEVIN MCGILL, MARK SHERMAN and SARA CLINE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Monday lifted its hold on a Louisiana political remap case, increasing the likelihood that the Republican-dominated state will have to redraw boundary lines to create a second mostly Black congressional district.

For more than a year, there has been a legal battle over the GOP-drawn political boundaries, with a federal judge, Democratic Gov. John Bel Edwards and opponents saying that the map is unfair and discriminates against Black voters.

The map, which was used in Louisiana's November congressional election, has white majorities in five of six districts, all currently held by Republicans. This is despite Black people accounting for one-third of the state's population. Another mostly Black district could deliver another congressional seat to Democrats.

"I'm super excited," said Ashley Shelton, head of the Louisiana-based Power Coalition for Equity and Justice, one of the groups challenging the maps. "What this does is it puts us back on track to realize a second majority-minority district."

In a written statement, the Louisiana Legislative Black Caucus said, while work still needs to be done, it is "very confident" the state will have two majority-Black districts by the 2024 congressional election.

"As I have consistently stated, this is about simple math, basic fairness, and the rule of law," Edwards said Monday. "I am confident we will have a fair map in the near future."

Every 10 years, state lawmakers — armed with new U.S. Census Bureau information — redraw political boundaries for seats in the U.S. House, state Senate, state House, Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Public Service Commission. The process ultimately affects which political parties, viewpoints and people control the government bodies that write laws, set utility rates and create public school policies.

The Louisiana case had been on hold pending the decision in a redistricting case involving Alabama. Monday's order follows the court's rejection earlier in June of a congressional redistricting map in Alabama.

In both states, Black voters are a majority in just one congressional district. Lower courts had ruled that the maps raised concerns that Black voting power had been diluted, in violation of the landmark federal Voting Rights Act.

The justices had allowed the state's challenged map to be used in last year's elections while they considered the Alabama case.

In Louisiana, U.S. District Judge Shelly Dick struck down the map in June 2022 for violating the Voting Rights Act, saying "evidence of Louisiana's long and ongoing history of voting-related discrimination weighs heavily in favor of Plaintiffs." Dick ordered lawmakers to hold a special session to redesign the map and include a second majority-Black district. However, lawmakers failed to meet their deadline and, as a result, Dick said she would enact a map of her choosing.

The Louisiana case had been appealed to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans when the high court put the issue on hold. The justices said the appeal could go forward before next year's congressional elections.

U.S. Rep. Troy Carter, Louisiana's only Democratic and Black congressman, applauded the Supreme Court for lifting its hold.

"This decision shows that in a healthy democracy fair and equitable representation matters, whether to the people of Louisiana or anywhere else in the world," Carter tweeted.

The redistricting process in Louisiana proved to be a political tug-of-war, with the Republican-dominated Legislature and Democrats, including Edwards, fighting over the boundaries since February 2022. Along with the legal battle, the debate over the map included Edwards vetoing the boundaries and the Legislature overriding his veto — the first time in nearly three decades that lawmakers refused to accept a governor's refusal of a bill they had passed.

Republicans have stood by their statements that the map is fair, and argue that trying to include the state's widely dispersed Black population in two separate congressional districts would result in two districts with very narrow Black majorities that could actually diminish Black voting power.

McGill reported from New Orleans and Cline from Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Follow the AP's coverage of the U.S. Supreme Court at <https://apnews.com/hub/us-supreme-court>.

## Was your flight canceled amid bad weather? What you need to know about rebooking, refunds and more

The Associated Press undefined

WASHINGTON (AP) — Amid peak summer travel, thousands of air travelers faced flight cancellations and delays this weekend and Monday as thunderstorms rolled in across the U.S. East Coast and Midwest.

In addition to bad weather, a technology failing also contributed to to airline disruptions. The Federal Aviation Administration briefly paused operations at Washington, D.C.-area airports Sunday evening due to a problem with the communications system at a major air traffic control facility. Departures resumed after repairs were completed.

Beyond D.C., a chain of flights were also delayed or halted at other major travel hubs — including New York, Chicago and Atlanta — as thunderstorms moved across the country.

Nearly 2,000 U.S. flights were canceled on Saturday and Sunday combined, according to flight tracking service FlightAware, and more than 1,400 U.S. flights had been canceled as of 2:45 p.m. ET Monday. Thousands of additional travelers experienced delays.

Staying calm — and knowing your rights — can go a long way if your flight is canceled, experts say. Here's some of their advice for dealing with a flight cancellation:

**MY FLIGHT WAS CANCELED. WHAT NEXT?**

If you still want to get to your destination, most airlines will rebook you for free on the next available flight as long as it has seats, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation.

If you want to cancel the trip, you are entitled to a full refund, even if you bought non-refundable tickets. You're also entitled to a refund of any bag fees, seat upgrades or other extras.

Kurt Ebenhoch, a consumer travel advocate and former airline spokesperson, has stressed that travelers are eligible for a refund, not just vouchers for future travel. If you do take a voucher, make sure you inquire about blackout dates and other restrictions on its use.

**CAN I ASK TO BE BOOKED ON ANOTHER AIRLINE'S FLIGHT?**

Yes. Airlines aren't required to put you on another airline's flight, but they can, and sometimes do, according to the DOT. Jeff Klee, CEO of CheapAir.com, previously recommended researching alternate flights while you're waiting to talk to an agent. Agents are typically under a lot of pressure when a flight is canceled, so giving them some options helps.

Ebenhoch also suggested looking for alternative airports that are close to your original destination.

**IS THE AIRLINE REQUIRED TO GIVE ME A HOTEL ROOM, OR OTHER COMPENSATION?**

No. As announced last month, the Biden administration is seeking to require that airlines compensate travelers and cover their meals and hotel rooms if they are stranded for reasons within the carrier's control — but, as of now, each airline still has its own policies about providing for customers whose flights are canceled, according to the DOT.

Many airlines do offer accommodations, so you should check with their staff. The DOT also has an online dashboard that allows travelers to compare cancellation and delay policies of major carriers.

**I'M FACING A LONG WAIT TO REBOOK. WHAT SHOULD I DO?**

If someone in your traveling party is at a higher level in a frequent flier program, use the number reserved for that level to call the airline, Ebenhoch said. You can also try calling an international help desk for the airline, since those agents have the ability to make changes.

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HOW CAN I AVOID THIS IN THE FUTURE?

Ebenhoch said nonstop flights and morning flights are generally the most reliable if you can book them. If you're worried about making it to the airport in time for a morning flight, he said, consider staying at a hotel connected to the airport the night before. And consider flying outside of busy dates.

Klee recommended comparing airlines' policies on the DOT's service dashboard. He also suggests reserving multiple flights and then canceling the ones you don't use, as long as the airline will refund your money or convert it into a credit for a future flight.

ARE FLIGHT CANCELATIONS TRENDING LOWER IN 2023?

Flight cancellations trended lower throughout the spring of 2023 than last year, according to data from the FAA.

Industry officials argue that carriers have fixed problems that contributed to a surge in flight cancellations and delays last summer, when 52,000 flights were nixed from June through August. Airlines have hired about 30,000 workers since then, including thousands of pilots, and they are using bigger planes to reduce flights but not the number of seats.

Still, officials warn of lingering staffing shortages, notably among key air traffic controllers. The FAA is training about 3,000 more controllers, but they won't be ready for this summer's travel. The agency resorted to nudging airlines to reduce flights in the New York City area this summer, and it opened 169 new flight paths over the East Coast to reduce bottlenecks.

In a government audit published last week, the Transportation Department's Office of Inspector General found that the FAA has made "limited efforts" to have adequate staffing at critical air traffic control facilities, noting that the agency "continues to face staffing challenges and lacks a plan to address them, which in turn poses a risk to the continuity of air traffic operations."

## Angela Bassett, Mel Brooks to receive honorary Oscars

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

Angela Bassett may have gone home empty handed at the Oscars in March, but the two-time nominee will be getting a golden statuette this year after all – and in very good company too.

In November, Bassett, Mel Brooks and film editor Carol Littleton will receive honorary Oscars at the Governors Awards, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences said Monday.

Michelle Satter, the founding senior director of the Sundance Institute's Artist Programs, will also be given the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award at the untelevised event.

"The Academy's Board of Governors is thrilled to honor four trailblazers who have transformed the film industry and inspired generations of filmmakers and movie fans," Janet Yang, the academy's president, said in a statement.

Most recipients of the academy's honorary awards have not won competitive Oscars. Brooks, is an exception, however, having won an original screenplay Oscar for "The Producers." At the ceremony, in 1969, he said he wanted to "thank the academy of arts sciences and money for this wonderful award." In his speech, which had the audience in stitches, he also thanked Gene Wilder three times.

The 96-year-old, who began his career writing for Sid Caesar's "Your Show of Shows," and over the next 70 years would write, direct, act, produce for film, television and Broadway and write books, including a recent memoir, is among the rare breed of EGOT-winners. (Those are entertainers who have won Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony Awards.) He also received two other Oscar nominations, for writing the lyrics to John Morris's "Blazing Saddles" song and another screenwriting nod for "Young Frankenstein," which he shared with Wilder.

"Mel Brooks lights up our hearts with his humor, and his legacy has made a lasting impact on every facet of entertainment," Yang said.

Bassett, whose credits include "Boyz n the Hood," "Malcolm X," "Waiting to Exhale" and "How Stella Got Her Groove Back," received her first Oscar nomination for her portrayal of Tina Turner in "What's Love Got to Do With It" and her second earlier this year for playing the grieving queen in "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever." The 64-year-old told the AP earlier this year that "this moment has been so special, it's been a

highlight of my career.”

Yang said in a statement that, “across her decades-long career, Angela Bassett has continued to deliver transcendent performances that set new standards in acting.”

Littleton’s name might not be as immediately recognizable as the celebrities being honored alongside but has been working behind the scenes with top filmmakers for nearly five decades. The 81-year-old Oklahoma native worked frequently with both Lawrence Kasdan and Jonathan Demme, editing films like “Body Heat,” “The Big Chill,” “Swimming to Cambodia” and “The Manchurian Candidate.” She received her first and only Oscar nomination for “E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial,” the only film she’s edited for Steven Spielberg. She’s also married to cinematographer and former Academy president John Bailey.

The honorary awards are given, “to honor extraordinary distinction in lifetime achievement, exceptional contributions to the state of motion picture arts and sciences, or for outstanding service to the Academy.”

Satter, meanwhile, has led the Sundance Institute’s famed artist programs for more than 40 years, helping filmmakers at the earliest stages of their careers, from Paul Thomas Anderson to Ryan Coogler.

The Governors Awards will be held on Nov. 18 at the Fairmont Century Plaza in Los Angeles.

## Patricia Field, ‘Sex and the City’ designer on Carrie’s iconic looks, a must-have fashion item

By BROOKE LEFFERTS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Costume designer Patricia Field has never liked fashion rules.

The woman who famously combined a tutu with spiky heels on Sarah Jessica Parker in “Sex and the City,” and made a plaid bucket hat cool on Lily Collins in “Emily in Paris” has a way of making high fashion feel accessible to the masses. She explains how she does it in the new documentary, “Happy Clothes: A Film About Patricia Field,” which recently premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival.

The film is directed by Michael Selditch, who also directed the CNN docu-series “American Style” in 2019. While interviewing Field for that series, he found a bold character with a unique, unconventional style of mixing color and patterns and designer looks with street wear. While at first Field resisted the idea of a documentary crew following her around, she finally relented and says she’s pleased with the result.

The Emmy-winning Field, 81, was behind the inventive outfits on “Ugly Betty” and is known for styling films as well, including “The Devil Wears Prada,” which earned her an Oscar nod. The Associated Press sat down with Field and Selditch recently to talk about her process, that tutu, and which item everyone should have in their closet.

Answers have been shortened for brevity and clarity.

AP: How did you get Pat to agree to this documentary?

SELDITCH: I said to her, “You know, anybody can make a documentary on you. We can always find people to sit down and talk about working with you and say wonderful things and throw in archival footage. But that’s not exactly the documentary I want to make. I want to watch your process. I want to see you shop. I want to see you working with actors. I want to really make it verite and watch you work and get inside your head and be a fly on the wall.” And I said, “If we don’t do it now, when are you going to do it?”

AP: What is a typical costume fitting like for you?

FIELD: There’s a person and then there’s a character. But behind that character is the person, and it’s really important that they feel good because that is, in my mind, my responsibility. It’s not about dictating to actors what’s good and what’s not good. It’s about giving them choices and, of course, getting to know them. Once you get to know them, it becomes a little bit more automatic. Like Sarah Jessica Parker, I know her. I worked with her before. I know her taste. It’s about the relationship and making sure that the actor in front of that camera is comfortable, positive and ready to go.

AP: Your costumes on “Sex and The City” helped make designer brands feel more attainable by mixing high fashion accessories with basic off-the-rack clothes. Was that intentional?

FIELD: Let’s talk about mixing high and low. I think that you can’t just wear high or you can’t just wear

low. People say, "orange and red don't go together." Well, they go together in a fruit bowl! (smiles) It's nature. And what's wrong with it? So I go by this little philosophy of mine and I tend to not get distracted by mores or rules or whatever comes across. It's just my expression and if I feel good about it and the actor does, then it's fine.

AP: The white tutu and gold "Carrie" necklace have become iconic items. Do you know when you're putting something like that on an actor that it's going to hit?

FIELD: I don't always have that same formula of knowing beforehand what it's going to be. But I have my taste. It's not haphazard for me, and I guess it's my formula and I guess it works for me. It's very important. Dressing someone, man or woman, it's a two way street. They're in the clothes, they need to be happy. I offer the clothes, I have to be satisfied. It's always best to establish a positive relationship and when the actor trusts you, you're home free.

SELDITCH: One of the things I really love and admire about Pat is that she goes with her gut in her work and in her life. And I think that what you're looking at there, like the tutu, it's just in her gut, it felt right to her. Other people might be like, "Why?" But to her it felt right. And it turned out to be. And her gut isn't ordinary or obvious. It's fun and crazy and exciting. And that's one of the things that people respond to in Pat's work.

FIELD: I think the tutu industry will thank me. (laughs) I can't stop seeing tutus! Years go by and there's always tutus on the rack. I saw this (skirt) in the showroom, and I pulled it out of a basket on the floor and I immediately thought of Sarah Jessica because she's ballet trained and she's also fashion. She'll understand this. She's not going to treat this with a pair of ballet slippers. She's going to put on a pair of spiky heels and have this little thing. And I said, "Darren (showrunner Darren Star) if it's a hit — and I think it will be — that tutu will be classic through time."

AP: You worked with Molly Rogers on "SATC" and now she's the costumer for "And Just Like That..." Do you think she's been consistent with the style on the new show?

FIELD: I think she's great. She has experience. I've worked with Molly for many years. I met her in my shop on 8th Street and I hired her and we've been together ever since, doing different projects. It's a very long and loving relationship. There is definitely a consistency. But at the same time, it wouldn't be as good if she just tried to copy me. She is creative. She has her own way of looking at it. I think they're doing a great job. I would probably be very disappointed if they weren't.

AP: What's an accessory you think everyone should have?

FIELD: I like a belt because the belt defines the waist and you know, all this like loose, shapeless clothing-- I don't find it very exciting. So I'm definitely a belt girl.

## It's almost time to resume student loan payments. Not doing so could cost you

By CORA LEWIS and ADRIANA MORGA Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — After three years, the pandemic-era freeze on federal student loan payments will end this fall.

It might seem tempting to just keep not making payments, but the consequences can be severe, including a hit to your credit score and exclusion from future aid and benefits.

More than 40 million Americans will have to start making payments again under the terms of a debt ceiling deal approved by Congress, though many could see their balances reduced or erased if the Supreme Court allows President Joe Biden's student loan forgiveness plan to go ahead. A decision is expected this week, though the court appeared ready to reject the plan.

Student loan interest will start accruing on September 1 and payments will restart in October. That means tough decisions for many borrowers, especially those in already-difficult financial situations.

Experts say that delinquency and bankruptcy should be options of last resort, and that deferment and forbearance — which pause payments, though interest may continue to accrue — are often better in the short term.



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## WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T MAKE STUDENT LOAN PAYMENTS?

Once the moratorium ends, borrowers who can't or don't pay risk delinquency and eventually default. That can badly hurt your credit rating and make you ineligible for additional aid and government benefits.

If you're struggling to pay, advisers first encourage you to check if you qualify for an income-driven repayment plan, which determines your payments by looking at your expenses. You can determine this by visiting the Federal Student Aid website. If you've worked for a government agency or a non-profit organization, you could also be eligible for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, which forgives student debt after 10 years.

Carolina Rodriguez, Director of the Education Debt Consumer Assistance Program at the Community Service Society of New York, emphasizes that anyone temporarily unemployed should be able to qualify for a \$0 payment plan. And many others qualify based on income and family size.

"The repercussions of falling into delinquency can be pretty severe," Rodriguez said. "The federal government can administratively intercept tax refunds and garnish wages. And it can affect Social Security, retirement, and disability benefits. Does it make financial sense at that point? Probably not."

Rodriguez says her organization always advises against deferment or forbearance except once a borrower has exhausted all other options. In the long term, those financial choices offer little benefit, as some loans will continue to accrue interest while deferred.

Abby Shafroth, senior attorney and director of the Student Loan Borrower Assistance Project at the National Consumer Law Center, said that, of the two, deferment is generally a better option.

That's because interest generally does not accrue on Direct Subsidized Loans, the subsidized portion of Direct Consolidation Loans, Subsidized Federal Stafford Loans, the subsidized portion of FFEL Consolidation Loans, and Federal Perkins Loans. All other federal student loans that are deferred will continue to accrue interest.

"Forbearance allows you to postpone payments without it being held against you, but interest does accrue. So you're going to see your balance increase every month."

## WHAT ABOUT DECLARING BANKRUPTCY?

For most student loan borrowers, it's still very difficult to have your loans discharged, or canceled, through bankruptcy. Borrowers must prove a very hard standard of financial circumstances, called "undue hardship."

"That doesn't mean people shouldn't look into it," Rodriguez said. "But they may not be successful at discharging their loans."

For borrowers who show that level of financial strain, chances are they have other options, Rodriguez said.

She advises that borrowers make sure they are speaking to a bankruptcy attorney who understands student loan bankruptcy, which requires a different proceeding than other types of bankruptcy.

Shafroth, of the NCLC, says that new guidance on student loan bankruptcy has been coming out in recent years.

"Though it is difficult to get your loans discharged through the bankruptcy process, an increasing number of borrowers are eligible to get their loans discharged that way," she said. "A lot of people write that off as 'there's no way,' it's impossible.' But it's increasingly possible."

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A LOAN GOES INTO DEFAULT?

When you fall behind on a loan by 270 days — roughly 9 months — the loan appears on your credit report as being in default.

"At that point, it's not just behind, it's in collections," Shafroth said. "That's when you become ineligible to take out new federal student aid. A lot of people go into default because they weren't able to complete their degree the first time. This prevents them from going back to school."

Once a loan is in default, it's subject to the collection processes mentioned above. That means the government can garnish wages (without a court order) to go towards paying back the loan, intercept tax refunds, and seize portions of Social Security checks and other benefit payments.

## WHAT ARE OTHER OPTIONS IF I CAN'T MAKE PAYMENTS?

Shafroth said that many borrowers may still be eligible to have loans canceled via a patchwork of programs outside of the Biden administration's proposed debt relief program.

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"If your school closed before you could complete your program, you're eligible for relief. If your school lied to you or misrepresented the outcome of what your enrolling would be, you can file a borrower defense application, and request your loan be canceled on that basis," she said. "If you have a disability, you can sometimes have your loans canceled on that basis."

Shafroth encourages borrowers to look at the Student Aid website to see what their options might be before missing payments.

## WHAT IF MY LOANS WERE IN DEFAULT BEFORE MARCH 2020?

Under the Biden administration's Fresh Start program, borrowers with federal student loans who were in default before the pause have a chance to become current.

Borrowers who were in default will not be subject to collection processes or have wages garnished through about August 2024, or roughly one year after the payment freeze ends. These borrowers have also been granted permission to apply for federal student loans again, to complete degrees. Lastly, these defaulted loans are now being reported to credit bureaus as current.

That said, borrowers must take action if they want to stay out of default after this year-long leniency period ends.

To eliminate your record of default, you should contact the Education Department's Default Resolution Group online, by phone, or by mail, and ask the group to take the loans out of default via the Fresh Start policy. In four to six weeks, any record of default will be removed from your credit report, and the loans will be placed with a loan servicer. This will also give you access to income-driven repayment plans and Public Service Loan Forgiveness, if applicable.

## WHAT IF I WAS BEHIND ON PAYMENTS OR DELINQUENT BEFORE MARCH 2020?

The Fresh Start program also applies to borrowers who were delinquent prior to the payment pause. Those accounts will be considered current, and borrowers will have the option to enroll in income-driven repayment plans that can lower bills to as little as \$0, or to apply for deferment, forbearance or bankruptcy.

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## **If this Delaware senator wins a US House seat, she'll be the 1st trans member of Congress**

DOVER, Del. (AP) — Delaware state Sen. Sarah McBride announced Monday she's running for the U.S. House of Representatives. Already the first openly transgender state senator elected in the country, she'd be the first transgender member of Congress if she wins in November.

In a video posted to social media, McBride, a Democrat, said people deserve a representative "who sees them and who respects them." Her announcement also highlighted her support for paid family leave, which passed the state Senate last year.

"This law is a good start, but government should do more to make it easier for people to raise a family," she said. "So I'm running for Congress."

McBride was elected in 2020 in a heavily Democratic district stretching from northern Wilmington to the Pennsylvania border. There are several other transgender legislators around the country but she's the first trans member of any state Senate.

McBride interned at the White House under former President Barack Obama and made history at the 2016 Democratic National Convention as the first openly trans person to speak at a major party convention.

McBride has long-standing ties to Delaware's best-known political family. She worked on the late Beau Biden's campaigns for state attorney general, and Beau's father, President Joe Biden, wrote the foreword to her memoir. She also worked on the campaign of former Gov. Jack Markell.

She succeeded fellow Democrat Harris McDowell, who held the Senate seat since 1976 and endorsed

McBride's candidacy.

McBride's campaign generated interest and money from around the country, bringing in more than \$270,000 in donations as of early October 2020, eclipsing fundraising totals even for candidates for state-wide office in Delaware.

A former student body president at American University, McBride started in politics as a volunteer for Matt Denn, former legal counsel to Delaware's governor, during his successful 2004 campaign for insurance commissioner. Denn, who later served as lieutenant governor and attorney general, worked with McBride's father at a Wilmington law firm known for its close ties to the Democratic Party establishment.

## Supreme Court lets lawsuits over team doctor's sexual abuse proceed against Ohio State

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Monday left in place a decision that allows more than 230 men to sue Ohio State University over decades-old sexual abuse by a university doctor, the late Richard Strauss.

Two cases involving the abuse were on a list of many cases the court said it would not hear. And, as is typical, the court did not comment in saying it would not hear the cases.

Ohio State University had urged the court to review a ruling by the Sixth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that revived lawsuits that had been dismissed. The men who sued are among hundreds of former student-athletes and other alumni who say they were abused by Strauss, who worked at the school from 1978 to 1998.

They say university officials failed to stop him despite complaints raised as early as the late 1970s. Many of them allege Strauss abused them during required physicals and other medical exams at campus athletic facilities, a student health center, his home and an off-campus clinic.

Strauss killed himself in 2005 at age 67. The university in 2018 announced an investigation into Strauss' abuse and the university's conduct. It has apologized to his victims and reached over \$60 million in settlements with at least 296 people.

But the university eventually sought to have the remaining unsettled cases dismissed, arguing that the time limit for the claims had long passed.

The remaining plaintiffs have argued that they filed timely claims and that the time limit didn't start running until the 2018 investigation into Strauss' abuse made his conduct public. The men say that was when they first learned that the school had been aware of Strauss' abuse and failed to protect them from him. Many also only realized then that they'd been victims of abuse since Strauss disguised his abuse as medical care, their lawyers said.

In a statement, lawyers for the plaintiffs said they were pleased the Supreme Court decided not to hear the cases. "We look forward to returning to the trial court, having our clients' stories heard, and gathering further evidence of OSU's widespread cover-up of Dr. Strauss's serial predation," they said.

## 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.

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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 company that focuses on obesity treatment.

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 had obesity and were 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 (96.16 kilograms), the higher doses also resulted in weight loss of between 15 pounds (6.80 kilograms) to 20 pounds (9.07 kilograms), compared to about 10 pounds (4.54 kilograms) 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 (15.88 kilograms), versus about 6 pounds (2.72 kilograms) 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.

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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.

## **EU urges caution as mercenary revolt raises doubts about Russian president's grip on power**

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — European Union ministers urged caution Monday after a failed revolt by mercenaries in Russia raised questions about Russian President Vladimir Putin's grip on power and whether the mercenaries might install themselves just over the border in Belarus.

At talks in Luxembourg, some EU foreign ministers likened the short-lived uprising led by Wagner Group leader Yevgeny Prigozhin to Putin unleashing a Frankenstein's monster or ghost of his own creation. Several also noted that many questions remain, including Prigozhin's precise whereabouts and whether he's taking troops with him.

Many seemed to agree that a key response to the crisis in Russia was to help Ukraine draw any possible advantage from the situation.

"We are analyzing this carefully," German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock told reporters. "There are also risks involved, which we are still unable to assess at the moment. For us Europeans, the only thing that matters is to support Ukraine."

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, who chaired the meeting, said that the monster that Putin created with Wagner is "acting against his creator." He added that "the political system is showing fragilities, and the military power is cracking."

"It's now the moment to support Ukraine, more than ever," Borrell said.

Austrian Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg told reporters that Putin "can't get rid of the ghosts he summoned, and they're going to haunt him now." He cited the revolt as proof that "there are cracks in the power structure" in Russia.

Addressing the ministers by video-link, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba urged them to take advantage of the latest developments.

"Russia is getting weaker every day. It is critically important now to provide Ukraine with all the weapons it needs," he said, including artillery and missiles, but also tougher sanctions.

Prigozhin was granted exile in Belarus, just 35 kilometers (22 miles) from Lithuania's capital Vilnius. It remains unclear what charges he might face, if any. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, who brokered the deal, gave few details.

Russian leaders, whether civilian or military, have not commented on the situation.

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Wary of the insecurity that this might mean for his country, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis said he wants to see "very specific plans" from his allies to reinforce NATO's eastern flank, including Estonia, Latvia and Poland.

"We're seeing how fast things can transpire. It took half a day for a military detachment to move 200 kilometers (125 miles) away from Moscow. So imagine, how fast can they do that crossing Belarus and appearing on Lithuania's border," he said.

Still, Landsbergis insisted that the West should not be distracted by events in Russia, even if the revolt has revealed "a grey zone" of unpredictability inside the country. "All we have to do is keep focused on Ukraine," he said.

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

During the meeting, the ministers endorsed a 3.5-billion-euro (\$3.8-billion) top up of a special fund that helps to reimburse any of the 27 EU countries that provide weapons and ammunition to Ukraine. Officials estimate that the EU has provided Ukraine a total of about 75 billion euros (\$82 billion) worth of weapons, ammunition, economic and other assistance since Russia invaded in February 2022.

Kirsten Grieshaber in Berlin contributed to this report.

Associated Press writer Kirsten Grieshaber in Berlin contributed to this report.,

## **Trump is honored by Republicans as the Man of the Decade in a Michigan county he lost twice**

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Former President Donald Trump was honored as the Man of the Decade in a Michigan county he lost twice as he returned to the state looking to reclaim territory that helped propel him to the White House but that slipped from his grasp four years later.

Campaigning for a return to the presidency while facing a federal indictment for allegedly mishandling classified documents, Trump spoke on Sunday in suburban Detroit, where he lost ground between 2016 and 2020 and would need to win it back if he becomes the 2024 Republican nominee. He would have to reverse the recent trend in Michigan that has seen Democrats make some of their biggest gains nationally since Trump's reelection loss.

Trump spoke at the Oakland County GOP's Lincoln Day Dinner, where he was honored by the party as its Man of the Decade. Trump frequently attacked President Joe Biden throughout his speech Sunday, saying the Democrat was a "catastrophe" for Michigan and auto production in the state. Trump also criticized Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, a co-chair of Biden's reelection campaign, for approving state funds for a foreign company.

It was Trump's first campaign appearance in Michigan, one of three states, along with Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, that flipped in 2016 to put him in the White House and Biden four years later.

Trump's popularity in Michigan has taken a hit since 2016.

"By Trump's calculations, he needs to win Michigan again to be the president. But he's been very disruptive here," said Dave Trott, a former GOP congressman. "Trump largely is the reason why the Michigan Republican Party is dead."

Last year, Trump's endorsed candidates in Michigan were among the loudest in repeating his unfounded claims that the 2020 election was rigged.

Trump's choice for attorney general, Matthew DePerno, spent the final months of his campaign under investigation into whether he should be criminally charged for attempting to gain access to voting machines after the 2020 election. Secretary of State candidate Kristina Karamo, a former community college

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professor, was handpicked by Trump as the Republican nominee for secretary of state after claiming she saw election fraud as a poll challenger in Detroit.

In November, the statewide candidates he backed were overwhelmingly defeated, including Tudor Dixon, who lost by more than 10 percentage points to Whitmer.

Michigan Republicans controlled all levels of state government from 2011 to 2019. Now, they are powerless for the first time in 40 years. The shift has been particularly evident in Oakland County, home to the largest number of Republican voters in the state.

"People who know Michigan electoral politics would say that it's pretty important that if Republicans are going to carry the state, they need to win Oakland County," Trott said.

While Trump lost the county in 2016 and 2020, Biden received nearly 100,000 more votes than Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton did there and won the state by about 155,000 votes, or 2.8 percentage points.

Trott, who represented Oakland County in the U.S. House from 2015 to 2019, initially endorsed Trump in 2016 but later said Trump was "unfit for office." Trump's support among Republicans in the Legislature has declined, with 25 lawmakers having already publicly backed Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis for president. Trump said Sunday that DeSantis has "no personality" and that his campaign is "falling like a rock."

Among state GOP officials, however, support for Trump has not wavered. In February, Republican precinct delegates selected Karamo to lead the party after she lost by 14% in the midterms. One of the first moves by new party leadership was a vote to change the state's traditional process of allocating all presidential delegates based on a primary open to the public.

Under a new plan widely expected to help Trump, Michigan will award just 16 of the state's 55 delegates based on the results of the Feb. 27 primary. The distribution of the remaining 39 delegates will come four days later in closed-door caucus meetings, conducted by the same party members who selected Karamo to lead the party.

"The plan gives Trump a significant leg up over the rest of the field. He's a grassroots favorite in the state and he's made Michigan his political playground for the last seven years," said Jason Cabel Roe, a former executive director of the Michigan GOP.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Karamo said she will remain impartial in the primary. She contends the party was forced to make the change after Michigan Democrats voted to move the state's primary from the second week of March to Feb. 27, a violation of the Republican National Committee's rules that could have resulted in a loss of delegates.

When asked whether Trump or his team had lobbied for the presidential primary change, Karamo refused to answer. She said she doesn't "discuss conversations with the different campaigns."

"We want to protect the voice of Michigan voters. So whether or not it may help one candidate over another, that's totally irrelevant," Karamo said.

According to Karamo, the Michigan GOP "worked on" the plan with the RNC and expects the national party to approve the new primary setup.

The RNC said its conversations with the state party "focused on rules and process rather than the substance and language of Karamo's specific plan — the sort of guidance they offer each state party as they begin to formulate their individual paths forward for delegate selection."

"We look forward to reviewing each state and territory's plans," RNC spokesperson Emma Vaughn said in a statement.

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Follow Joey Cappelletti at <http://twitter.com/Cappelletti7>

## Tenants say a 3-year ban on evictions kept them housed. Landlords say they're drowning in debt

By JANIE HAR Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Retiree Pamela Haile has paid property taxes, insurance and other bills on a house she lets out in Oakland, but for more than three years her tenants have paid no rent thanks to one of the longest-lasting eviction bans in the country.

The eviction moratorium in the San Francisco Bay Area city expires next month and Haile can't wait. The 69-year-old estimates she is owed more than \$60,000 in back rent, money she doubts she will ever see. Moreover, the tenants have trashed her house and it will cost tens of thousands of dollars to make it habitable, she says.

"It's unbelievable and it's like, how can they have the nerve to just let something like this happen? If this happened to them, how would they feel?" Haile said of her tenants. "Dealing with this whole thing gets me so upset."

Eviction moratoriums were put in place across the U.S. at the start of the pandemic in 2020 to prevent displacement and curb the spread of the coronavirus. Most expired long ago, but not in Oakland or neighboring San Francisco and Berkeley, all places where rents and rates of homelessness are high.

While it's more common to see tenants converging on city halls in California to demand greater protections, in Oakland and surrounding Alameda County small-property landlords staged protests earlier this year demanding an end to the moratoriums.

Many of the landlords were Black, like Haile, or Asian American, and they said the eviction bans had saddled them with debt and foreclosure worries while their tenants, who have jobs, live rent-free.

They scolded elected leaders for allowing tenants to self-certify that their inability to pay was tied to the pandemic. Unlike large corporate landlords, these small-property owners said they didn't have the means to evict, and were eaten up by worry.

"There is nothing natural about being forced to house and have people live in your property for over three years and not pay," said Michelle Hailey, who is also Black and owns a triplex where both her tenants stopped paying. "There is nothing natural, ethical or even humane about that."

Alameda County let its moratorium expire at the end of April. In Oakland it ends July 15. Tenants must start paying rent in August in most cases, but cannot be evicted for back rent if their financial hardship was caused by the pandemic.

Moratorium backers called the bans a lifesaver that kept countless families housed and off the streets. They said low-income residents are still struggling from the pandemic and need protections from ruthless landlords.

Nationwide, eviction filings have come roaring back since the bans ended — to more than 50% higher than the pre-pandemic average in many cities, according to Princeton University's Eviction Lab, which tracks filings in three dozen cities and 10 states.

In California's Alameda County, filings topped 500 in May, compared to 65 in April before the ban ended. That surpassed filings that averaged in the 300s before the pandemic in 2019.

In Oakland, a city rich in Black history, some Black families who migrated from the South during World War II were able to purchase homes, despite redlining and other discriminatory practices by banks and government.

But a recession and subprime mortgage crisis followed by rapidly rising home prices and gentrification pushed out many Black residents, and homelessness escalated.

Carroll Fife, a Black city councilwoman and housing advocate, called for a housing overhaul that focuses on homes for people instead of profit for a few. She acknowledged that some people "took advantage of the moratorium," but says most renters desperately needed the help.

Hailey, the triplex owner, considers herself lucky because she was able to recoup some money through a rent-relief program. The tenants moved out, but she has a stack of bills and can't afford to renovate.

She purchased the property in 1999 after earning big for writing some songs included on the first Destiny's



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Child album. The artist figured the triplex would provide steady income as well as help fund her retirement.

"So this was my entire plan, and I've just kind of watched it go up in smoke," said Hailey, 59. "We've never had a situation where you would have government-sanctioned freedom to not pay your rent."

Haile doesn't know why the family who rented the house her parents left her stopped paying rent in April 2020. The property management company said they couldn't ask because of the eviction ban.

Reached by The Associated Press, the tenant, Martha Pinzon, said at the advice of a community nonprofit she stopped paying after she lost her hotel housekeeper job during the pandemic-triggered shutdown in March 2020. Even now, she can't afford the \$1,875 monthly rent on her pay as a custodian at a homeless shelter.

Pinzon's 19-year-old daughter, Brigitte Cortez, said the moratorium gave her mother "peace of mind" during the pandemic. She said the property management company has for years ignored their requests for repairs.

"We've had a lot of troubles in this house since we've moved in," she said, adding that they are looking for a new place to live.

Haile says the tenants never asked for repairs.

John Williams, 62, hopes that three years of worry and stress are coming to an end.

Williams, who is part of a lawsuit against Oakland and Alameda County over the bans, said his tenant stopped paying the \$1,500 monthly rent when the pandemic started. She offered no explanation while operating a storage business out of the apartment and would not cooperate so he could get money from the city's rent-relief program, he said.

As a Black man, Williams had experienced rental discrimination and he thought his Victorian duplex in West Oakland would be a way for him to retire and house others. He started renting to the mom with two kids in 2013.

In late 2020, he tried to sell the house, but she refused to move, and the sale fell through. In late 2021, Williams was so stressed he was hospitalized, placed on disability and could not work. He was forced to move into the unit above his tenant. It no longer felt like his house.

The tenant did not return messages from the AP left at a phone number for a business she operates.

Williams supports the purposes of the eviction ban, but wishes the city had considered landlords like him. He was about to lose his home on May 1, but was saved by a state mortgage-relief program that started accepting applications this year from landlords who reside in their duplexes and triplexes.

He plans to leave the city.

"I don't want to be a home provider in Oakland," he said. "This has been a really hard time."

## Today in History: June 27, Thurgood Marshall retires

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, June 27, the 178th day of 2023. There are 187 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 27, 2016, the U.S. Supreme Court issued its strongest defense of abortion rights in a quarter-century, striking down Texas' widely replicated rules that sharply reduced abortion clinics.

On this date:

In 1844, Mormon leader Joseph Smith and his brother, Hyrum, were killed by a mob in Carthage, Illinois.

In 1880, author-lecturer Helen Keller, who lived most of her life without sight or hearing, was born in Tuscumbia, Alabama.

In 1942, the FBI announced the arrests of eight Nazi saboteurs put ashore in Florida and Long Island, New York. (All were tried and sentenced to death; six were executed while two were spared for turning themselves in and cooperating with U.S. authorities.)

In 1944, during World War II, American forces liberated the French port of Cherbourg (SHEHR'-boorg) from the Germans.

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In 1950, the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution calling on member nations to help South Korea repel an invasion from the North.

In 1957, Hurricane Audrey slammed into coastal Louisiana and Texas as a Category 4 storm; the official death toll from the storm was placed at 390, although a variety of state, federal and local sources have estimated the number of fatalities at between 400 and 600.

In 1974, President Richard Nixon opened an official visit to the Soviet Union.

In 1991, Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, the first Black jurist to sit on the nation's highest court, announced his retirement. (His departure led to the contentious nomination of Clarence Thomas to succeed him.)

In 2005, BTK serial killer Dennis Rader pleaded guilty to 10 murders that had spread fear across Wichita, Kansas, beginning in the 1970s.

In 2006, a constitutional amendment to ban desecration of the American flag died in a Senate cliffhanger, falling one vote short of the 67 needed to send it to states for ratification.

In 2011, former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich (blah-GOY'-uh-vich) was convicted by a federal jury in Chicago on a wide range of corruption charges, including the allegation that he'd tried to sell or trade President Barack Obama's U.S. Senate seat. (Blagojevich was later sentenced to 14 years in prison; his sentence was commuted by President Donald Trump in February 2020.)

Ten years ago: The Senate passed, 68-32, comprehensive legislation offering the hope of citizenship to millions of immigrants living illegally in America's shadows; however, the measure became stalled in the GOP-led House. President Barack Obama visited Senegal, where he urged African leaders to extend equal rights to gays and lesbians but was bluntly rebuked by Senegal's president, Macky Sall, who said his country "still isn't ready" to decriminalize homosexuality. Kevin Rudd was sworn in as Australian prime minister a day after toppling rival Julia Gillard.

Five years ago: Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy, whose vote often decided cases on abortion, gay rights and other contentious issues, announced his retirement. The Supreme Court ruled that government workers can't be forced to contribute to labor unions that represent them in collective bargaining. Joe Jackson, the patriarch of the singing Jackson family, died in Las Vegas at the age of 89.

One year ago: Ukrainian officials said scores of civilians were feared killed after a Russian missile strike hit a crowded shopping mall in the central city of Kremenchuk. Ukraine's president said the number of victims was "unimaginable," citing reports that more than 1,000 civilians were inside at the time of the attack. The Supreme Court said a high school football coach who sought to kneel and pray on the field after games was protected by the Constitution. Opponents said the decision would open the door to "much more coercive prayer" in public schools. Ken Williams, who wrote or co-wrote hundred of tunes for a vast array of performers, including The Main Ingredient's hit "Everybody Plays the Fool," died at age 83.

Today's Birthdays: Former Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt is 85. Singer-musician Bruce Johnston (The Beach Boys) is 81. Fashion designer Vera Wang is 74. Actor Julia Duffy is 72. Actor Isabelle Adjani is 68. Country singer Lorrie Morgan is 64. Actor Brian Drillinger is 63. Writer-producer-director J.J. Abrams is 57. Former Sen. Kelly Ayotte (AY'-aht), R-N.H., is 55. Olympic gold and bronze medal figure skater Viktor Petrenko (peh-TREHN'-koh) is 54. Latin singer Draco Rosa is 54. Actor Edward "Grapevine" Fordham Jr. is 53. TV personality Jo Frost is 53. Actor Yancey Arias is 52. Actor Christian Kane is 51. Actor Tobey Maguire is 48. Gospel singer Leigh Nash is 47. Christian rock singer Zach Williams is 45. Musician Chris Eldridge (Punch Brothers) is 41. Reality TV star Khloe Kardashian (kar-DASH'-ee-uhn) is 39. Actor Drake Bell is 37. Actor Sam Claflin is 37. Actor India de Beaufort is 36. Actor Ed Westwick is 36. Actor Matthew Lewis (Film: "Harry Potter"; TV: "Ripper Street") is 34. Actor Madylin Sweeten is 32. Pop singer Lauren Jauregui (Fifth Harmony) (TV: "The X Factor") is 27. R&B singer H.E.R. is 26. Actor Chandler Riggs is 24.