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## Groton Community Calendar

### Wednesday, June 28

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

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Project/Game Night, 7 p.m.  
Legion hosts Clark, 6 p.m. (1); Jr. Legion hosts Clark, 8 p.m. (1)

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



"We often take for granted the very things that most deserve our gratitude."

CYNTHIA OZICK

### 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)

### Friday, June 30

Senior Menu: Chili, corn bread, coleslaw, vanilla pudding.

Softball hosts Clark (U8 at 6:00); T-Ball B&G Scrimmage, 6 p.m.

## **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 28, 2023

### World in Brief

The Supreme Court rejected a GOP-backed theory that would have allowed state legislatures to draw congressional maps without much oversight.

A New York appeals court rejected Donald Trump's attempt to end Attorney General Letitia James' civil fraud case against him and his family business. The court dismissed claims against Ivanka and said the case may be further narrowed.

White House hopefuls Donald Trump and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis deepened their rivalry and mocked each other during dueling campaign events in the early-voting state of New Hampshire.

Former NFL quarterback Ryan Mallett died in a suspected drowning in Destin, Florida, on Tuesday. He was 35. Mallett was drafted by the New England Patriots and played for the Baltimore Ravens and Houston Texans.

Protests erupted in Paris after 17-year-old delivery driver, Naël M, was fatally shot by police. The teenager reportedly failed to stop during a traffic check. About 24 people have been arrested, and the officer has been detained.

Smoke drifting from Canadian wildfires across parts of the U.S. is causing "very unhealthy" levels of air quality in Chicago, Detroit and Milwaukee.

Millions of South Koreans became a year or two younger overnight after the government aligned its age-counting laws with international standards and scrapped the traditional Korean system that deems babies one year old at birth.

The human remains found in a mountainous area of Southern California have been identified as missing actor Julian Sands.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, a Russian missile attack on a popular restaurant in the eastern Ukrainian city of Kramatorsk killed at least eight people, including three children..

### TALKING POINTS

"Justice is just the rule of the law, regardless of race, ethnicity and age. He should be convicted for the crimes that he made. I am past having any personal hatred for him," Ralph Yarl said of Andrew Lester, the white man who shot him in mid-April after he rang Lester's doorbell.

"In his zeal to befriend President Xi, [former President Donald] Trump congratulated the Communist Party on its 70th anniversary of conquering China. That sent a wrong message to the world. Chinese communism must be condemned, never congratulated. China was militarily stronger when President Trump left office than when he entered. That's bad," 2024 GOP presidential candidate Nikki Haley said while outlining her policy plans for China.

"You have defended the constitutional order, as well as the life, security and freedom of our citizens, steering our Motherland clear from upheavals and de facto stopping a civil war in its tracks. In that complicated situation, you acted in a firm and coordinated manner, proving your commitment to the people of Russia and to your military oath through your actions and showing responsibility for the destiny and future of Russia," Russian President Vladimir Putin told Russian service members who helped stop the Wagner Group's attempted rebellion..

### WHAT TO WATCH IN THE DAY AHEAD

President Joe Biden travels to Chicago to discuss "Bidenomics," his strategy for economic growth that the White House describes as "from the middle out and the bottom up, not the top-down."

Democratic presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is scheduled to participate in a NewsNation town hall hosted by anchor Elizabeth Vargas. The event will air at 9 p.m. ET.

Investors will closely watch for Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell's speech, from 9:30 a.m. ET, after he indicated two more rate hikes this year.

Actor Kevin Spacey is expected to go on trial in London to face sexual assault charges. Spacey pleaded not guilty to the charges, which stem from incidents that allegedly occurred between 2001 and 2013.

## Gov. Noem's "Freedom Works Here" Receives Over 1,300 Inquiries

PIERRE, S.D. – Governor Noem's "Freedom Works Here" national workforce recruitment campaign is already shattering expectations. In five days since the campaign's launch, over 1,300 people have submitted applications to find career opportunities in South Dakota.

"The state that has the workers will be the state that wins," said Governor Noem. "It is my responsibility as Governor to make sure that South Dakota will continue to grow and thrive for our kids and grandkids. The results of this workforce recruitment campaign after just five days shows that folks all over America see that what we're doing here in South Dakota is working – and they want to be a part of it."

The top three states for inquiries are California, Texas, and Florida. We have received applications from within South Dakota as well. The Freedom Works Here campaign is helping lifelong South Dakotans and new residents alike. A map showing where applicants are from can be found here.

"We've never had a recruitment marketing effort that has captured this many people in this way for the entirety of the marketing campaign – let alone in less than seven days," said Marcia Hultman, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR).

Businesses like Terex have reaped the benefits of our booming economy, but they still lack the workers that are critical to their continued success. The over 1,300 people who have already shown interest in coming to work here in South Dakota will be their solutions.

"Since the 1970s, thousands of families have built a solid future with Terex Utilities and our direct suppliers in Eastern South Dakota by manufacturing equipment that enables the utility industry to supply safe, reliable electricity to our country. In the past five years, Terex has invested significantly to more than double the size of our manufacturing capacity in Watertown. South Dakota has much to offer, and Terex is proud to be one of the state's leading manufacturing employers. Terex Utilities supports the Freedom Works Here initiative and commends Governor Noem for championing residency and employment in our state," said Eric Kluver, Terex Utilities Vice President and General Manager.

South Dakota has grown consistently over the last few years. At 1.9%, we have the lowest unemployment rate in American history. But we still have 25,000 open jobs. South Dakota businesses need workers – that is why Governor Noem started Freedom Works Here.

"The next step is to get these folks plugged into our workforce and our communities here in South Dakota," said Chris Schilken, the Commissioner of the Governor's Office of Economic Development. "We need businesses to work with us so that we can make sure all of our open jobs are listed."

If your South Dakota business has open jobs, find future talent here: <https://www.freedomworkshere.com/talent>.

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## **Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion Can't Catch Up To Smittys Junior Legion**

Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion watched the game slip away early and couldn't recover in a 5-1 loss to Smittys Junior Legion on Tuesday. Smittys Junior Legion scored on an error and a single by Donnie Soderlund in the first inning.

Smittys Junior Legion got things moving in the first inning. An error scored two runs for Smittys Junior Legion 2023.

Michael Dutenhoffer was credited with the victory for Smittys Junior Legion. The hurler lasted four innings, allowing one hit and one run while striking out six and walking one. Joran Foss threw one inning in relief out of the bullpen.

Brevin Fliehs took the loss for Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion. The righty surrendered four runs on six hits over five innings, striking out two.

Fliehs and Braxton Imrie all had one hit to lead Groton Post 39 Jr. Legion.

Smittys Junior Legion tallied seven hits on the day. Soderlund and Grant Beyer each managed multiple hits for Smittys Junior Legion.

## **Groton Jr. Teeners Claws Back, but Falls Just Short Against Clark**

Groton jr. Teeners 14U's effort to come back from down five runs in the third inning came up just short, as they fell 5-4 to Clark Area 14U on Tuesday. Groton Jr. Teeners managed four runs in the failed comeback. Karson Zak, Easton Weber, and TC Schuster all picked up RBIs in the rally.

Groton Jr. Teeners couldn't keep up with Clark Area 14U early in the game. Clark Area 14U scored on a wild pitch by Ky Vandersnick in the first inning and a single by Watson Grantham in the second inning.

Clark Area 14U fired up the offense in the first inning. Ky Vandersnick's sac fly scored two runs for Clark Area 14U.

Max Bratland was the winning pitcher for Clark Area 14U. Max Bratland went six innings, allowing four runs on seven hits, striking out four and walking zero. Jakob Steen threw one inning in relief out of the bullpen.

Lincoln Krause was on the pitcher's mound for Groton jr. Teeners 14U. The righty surrendered five runs on four hits over three innings, striking out two. Nick Groeblichhoff threw three innings in relief.

Weber went 2-for-3 at the plate to lead Groton Jr. Teeners in hits.

Clark Area 14U racked up seven hits on the day. Grantham and Michael Severson each had multiple hits for Clark Area 14U.

## **Tight Game Between Clark and Groton Jr. Teeners Ends in a Tie**

Clark Area 14U tied the game on a single in the fourth inning as Groton Jr. Teeners tied Clark Area 14U 9-9 on Wednesday.

Groton Jr. Teeners got things started in the first inning. Groton Jr. Teeners scored one run when Ryder Schelle singled.

Groton Jr. Teeners collected six hits. Easton Weber and Schelle each racked up multiple hits for Groton jr. Teeners 14U. Schelle and Weber each collected two hits to lead Groton jr. Teeners 14U.

Clark Area 14U was sure-handed and didn't commit a single error. Jakob Steen made the most plays with five.



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## Letter to the editor: (A voice for Protecting Property Rights)

PUC, Landowners and Constituents,  
I am respectfully requesting that the SD PUC carefully reviews Summit Carbon's application. Please do not allow this application to move forward in September if construction and operation of the pipeline will produce adverse effects on the environment and/or the citizens. We are fortunate that the SD Public Utilities Commission is an outstanding group.

If built as Carbon Solutions intends its pipeline will come within 750' or less of constituents. They do not want this pipeline which brings with it the potential for loss of life in the event it leaks or ruptures.

CO2 pipelines differ from oil and gas, according to the Pipeline Safety Trust, they are more prone to rupture. We also do not want carbon sequestration, which is not well-regulated in South Dakota CO2 pipelines have never been constructed at the lengths proposed and raise grave concerns because they are under-regulated and pose numerous safety hazards and land use issues.

Laying this pipe at 4' when the frost line is 4' to 6' just seems to be problematic. I am for Property Rights, I join the request 'No Eminent Domain for Private Gain.'

Please protect Brown County and all South Dakota residents.

Doing nothing is not an option! We need to work together for Property Rights!

Carl Perry  
House of Representatives  
District 3 - Brown County

## GROTON'S EVENTS



July 4 Firecracker  
Tourney at Olive  
Grove Golf Course

July 9 Summer  
Fest/Car Show at  
the City Park



July 20 Pro Am  
Tourney at Olive  
Grove Golf Course

July 20 Summer  
Downtown Sip &  
Shop



Aug. 4 Wine on Nine  
at Olive Grove Golf  
Course

Aug. 10 Family Fun  
Fest

### COME SPEND A WEEKEND IN GROTON!

- 5 camping spots with full-service hookups
- play centers and permanent corn hole boards
- swimming pool with slide and diving board
  - 3 diamond baseball complex
- 9-hole golf course • bowling alley

**GROTON**  
Chamber Of Commerce

120 N Main St., Groton, SD 57445

605-397-8422

GrotonChamber.com



## With CRP acres dwindling nationally, Congress seeks reforms

Abbey Stegenga

South Dakota News Watch

**As the September expiration date of the 2018 Farm Bill approaches, several members of Congress hope to further the program's conservation efforts and strengthen enrollment incentives.**



**Carolyn Eck stands in front of the land she enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program in 2019 on her property northwest of Watertown. She currently has 140 acres in the program.** (Photo: Abbey Stegenga / SD News Watch)

Stegenga / SD News Watch)

land's overall health and quality.

Roughly four years into her contract, Eck said her CRP land has welcomed more wildlife and has acted as an educational tool on rehabilitation for farmers and environmental groups.

With a 37% decrease in the number of national CRP acres since 2007 and a continued need to preserve environmental health, landowners and several members of Congress hope to see program reforms in the next farm bill.

### **Payment max hasn't changed since CRP's first year in 1985**

Under legislation that's pending in Congress, future CRP participants could receive more than double the current payments. They also could receive more financial assistance in managing the land.

The CRP Improvement Act, which Republican Sen. John Thune of South Dakota and Democratic Sen. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota re-introduced in January, proposes several changes:

- Raise the current annual payment limitation of \$50,000, which was set in 1985 when the program started, to \$125,000 to account for inflation and increasing land prices.

HENRY, S.D. – For nearly 20 years, Carolyn Eck and her husband rented out their pastureland for cattle grazing northwest of Watertown, near Warner Lake. The land has not been tilled since before Eck moved to the property in 2003, she said.

It wasn't until 2018, when cattle had mowed down the pasture like every other year, that Eck believed something was amiss with her land. When she looked out upon her pasture, she was devastated.

"I just thought, 'Something isn't right.' It looked almost barren, starved. I don't know the accurate way to describe it," Eck said.

The following year, Eck enrolled 140 acres in the federal Conservation Reserve Program, which encourages landowners to protect environmentally sensitive land by not farming it.

Those enrolled in CRP enter a 10- or 15-year contract with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and receive an annual rental payment. In exchange, CRP participants plant species that create habitat for wildlife and improve the

- Partially reimburse farmers for establishing infrastructure needed to support livestock grazing on approved CRP land, such as fences and water distribution.

- Assist landowners in paying for mid-contract management activities, which are actions that landowners undertake to disturb the land. According to the USDA, management activities mimic events like storms, grazing and fires, which support the growth and diversity of native plants by naturally disturbing the land. However, the CRP Improvement Act would not help with costs related to haying or grazing management.

- Permanently install State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) under Continuous CRP. SAFE is a CRP initiative in which farmers establish wetlands, grasses and trees to create habitat and food sources for threatened or endangered wildlife species.

Owen Fagerhaug, South Dakota's Farm Service Agency conservation program manager, said a limitation prevents USDA from enrolling more than 25% of a county's eligible cropland acres in CRP. However, if the county agrees, the USDA can waive that limit to enroll land in Continuous CRP, which targets specific conservation practices, such as wetland buffers. If the bill passes, SAFE acres would also be able to bypass the county CRP acreage limit.

Currently, the CRP Improvement Act sits with the U.S. Senate's Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry. The bill was referred to the committee after Thune and Klobuchar re-introduced it in January.

If Congress cannot come to an agreement by the 2018 Farm Bill's expiration, it could extend the current farm bill for several months while members decide the fate of the 2023 Farm Bill.

### A conservation-centered program

South Dakota currently has the most CRP acreage it has had since the program's inception in 1985 and is among the highest nationwide.

South Dakota had 2,104,715 acres enrolled in CRP as of May, accounting for 9.15% of total CRP acres in the U.S. The Rushmore State now has the third-largest number of CRP acres, behind Texas and Colorado, according to USDA data.

Still, Fagerhaug said South Dakota counties are not near the 25% acreage cap.

"(CRP) is a program to help environmentally sensitive land, improve wildlife habitat, soil erosion, water quality, wind erosion and just conservation in general," he said.

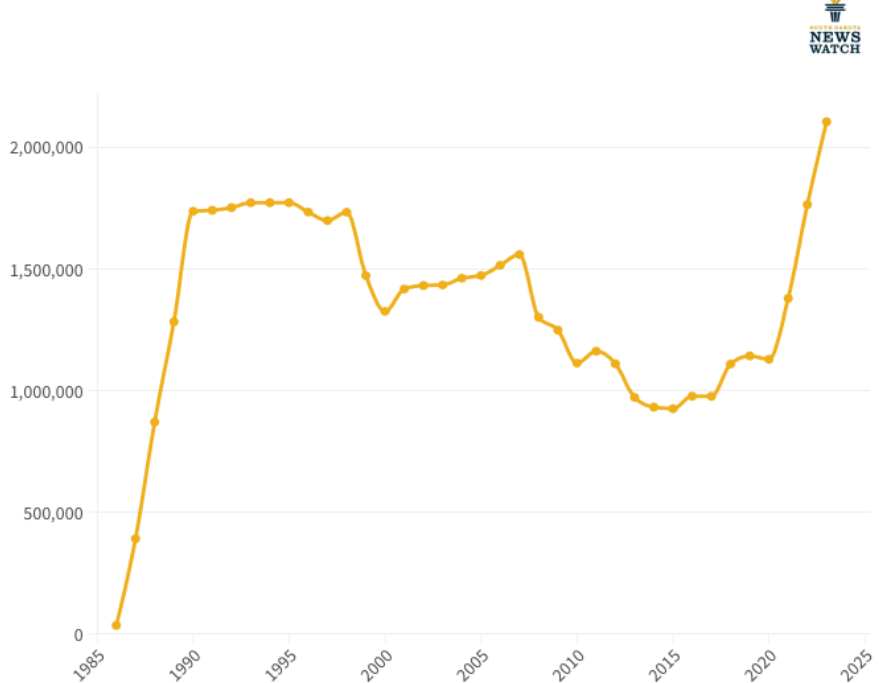
Fagerhaug said the term "environmentally sensitive" encompasses varying resource concerns that must be addressed to improve a landscape.

"That could be a buffer area around a wetland to help improve the water quality. That could be some field windbreaks or farmstead shelter belts to improve wind erosion, provide livestock shelter," Fagerhaug said.

Pete Bauman, a South Dakota State University Extension Natural Resources Field specialist, said CRP leads to a host of environmental benefits. CRP incorporates diverse plant species that attract pollinators, which in turn attract insects that bring in baby chicks, he said.

"We can use these lands without abusing them, and we still reap the benefits of the water quality, ero-

CRP land in South Dakota since 1986



Source: USDA • Graphic: Michael Klinski / SD News Watch





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sion control, wildlife habitat," Bauman said.

## Impacts are bigger than just the land

CRP also encourages South Dakota to claim ownership of its downstream impact on neighboring states, Bauman said.

"If you want clean water, you don't want it to run off a soybean field. You want it to soak into the ground. If it goes into the ground, it's a filter. The ground becomes a filter. If (water) runs off the ground, the ground becomes a source of pollution," said Dennis Hoyle, a third-generation Edmunds County farmer and long-time CRP landowner.

Hoyle, who has been a board member of the South Dakota Soil Health Coalition for eight years, has witnessed the difference in CRP soil firsthand.

After a heavy rainfall, he drove through his neighborhood and found sloughs filled with water that had run off the fields and into the wetlands. When he stopped by a section of his CRP land, he encountered a much different scene.

"I could have walked through that slough. I barely got my socks wet. Because (the water) stayed put. The land absorbed it," Hoyle said.

Rehabilitation, wildlife conservation and education motivated Eck to enroll in a 15-year CRP contract.

"Along the way, there's always something that we can learn from the land and so it's important. I think that's how I see it as an educational tool," Eck said.

## Conservation Reserve Program not without its critics

While many conservationists support CRP for its environmental effects, some critics say the program has several downfalls.

A 2012 research paper published by the Council on Food, Agricultural & Resource Economics, or C-FARE, notes that many of the studies on CRP's economic impact on rural communities occurred during the first 10 years of the program.

Several of the studies the paper lists from the 1990s found that CRP had negative impacts on rural economies.

One of the studies analyzed the "median household income, poverty and population" of 19 southwestern Minnesota counties that had 15% of their land in CRP in 1998. The report suggested that "CRP enrollment is associated with lower median household incomes and lower populations in farming-dependent counties."

More recent concerns with CRP center around the fact that CRP takes cropland out of production. As a result, some say the program also takes away farming opportunities from young producers.

At a House Agriculture Subcommittee hearing in May, Republican U.S. Rep. Brad Finstad of Minnesota said young farmers in his state have told him that higher rental rates cause competition between the federal government and beginning farmers looking to rent land.

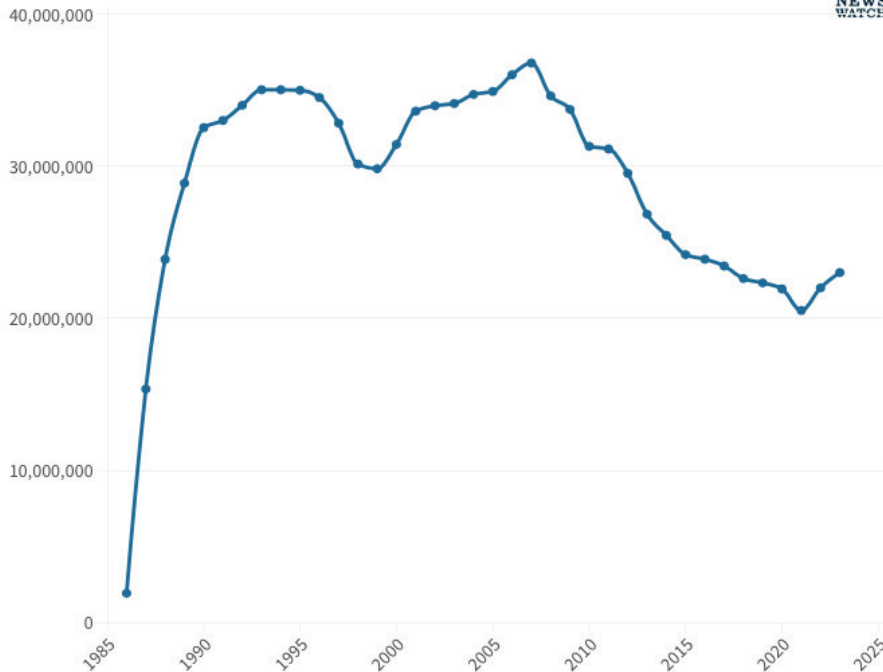
Research from the University of Florida says some opponents of CRP believe the program's budget should be cut to help decrease the federal budget deficit.



**Tall grasses border the fence surrounding Carolyn Eck's CRP land near Watertown. According to the USDA, CRP grasses reduce soil erosion, create wildlife habitat and improve water quality.** (Photo: Abbey Stegenga / SD News Watch)



## CRP land in the United States since 1986



Source: USDA • Graphic: Michael Klinski / SD News Watch



South Dakota's annual CRP rental payments totaled nearly \$104 million in 2022. The national total reached \$1.7 billion that year, according to the USDA.

News Watch contacted six people who may have had concerns about CRP but received only one response from someone who would not speak about it on the record.

### Other CRP-focused bills proposed

With 2023's status as a farm bill year, Midwestern legislators aren't the only ones looking to improve CRP:

- U.S. Sens. Cory Booker, D-N.J., and Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa., introduced the CRP Reform Act in May. The legislation would ensure CRP focuses on enrolling highly-erodible land rather than highly-productive land. It would also cap the total

number of CRP acres at 24 million for the 2024-2028 fiscal years, down from the 27 million acre cap of 2023.

- U.S. Reps. Kim Schrier, D-Wash., and Dan Newhouse, R-Wash., introduced the Eliminating Needless Administrative Barriers Lessening Efficiency for Conservation Act in April. The bill would ensure the permanent installment of SAFE under CRP, similar to the CRP Improvement Act.

- U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., proposed the CRP Amendments Act in April, which would expand CRP to include a subprogram for the conservation of citrus agricultural land.

### CRP's beginnings: 'There were farmers that ... just quit'

CRP got its start with the Food Security Act of 1985.

Throughout the 1980s, the U.S. agriculture industry suffered a farming crisis. Many farmers fell into debt as the country experienced a suppressed farm economy, high interest rates and inflation, Bauman said.

"There were farmers that sold out, just quit. The farm crisis got its name legitimately. It was tough," Hoyle said. "I heard of a few farmers that went around behind the barn and didn't come back."

Hoyle recalls buying a tractor and financing it at a 9% interest rate around 1979. A year later, the interest had risen to 19%.

"Giving up was never an option. This is all I wanted to do. When I was 3, I decided what I was going to do, and I've done it," Hoyle said.

Hoping to alleviate their financial burdens, some farmers planted more crops, from fence row to fence row.

"So if you're a producer, if you're a farmer, the only way you think you can dig yourself out of that hole is to produce more. And it wasn't working," Bauman said.

In an effort to increase production, many farmers plowed and planted land that previously went unfarmed because it was lesser quality cropland.

"When you start breaking and farming what you might call marginally productive lands, you have two things going against you: you have much higher input costs to produce that crop and then you've got the threat of lower yield," Bauman said.

Marginal lands are likely to include slopes and hilltops, be erosion prone or have low-land drainage, he said. The establishment of the CRP program attempted to place marginal land back under a perennial

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cover to reduce erosion, soil loss and overall production, Bauman said.

## **CRP's introduction entices landowners**

At the time of the first CRP sign-up, the program paid double what rent paid, Hoyle said.

"My dad has always been conservation minded. And he thought, 'Okay, here's a chance we can rest our land, be good for wildlife and get paid at a profit,'" he said.

CRP's infancy was largely successful, as the program had more than 32 million acres enrolled by 1990. With marginally productive land and input costs higher than normal, an option to not farm that land again enticed farmers to enroll in CRP, Bauman said.

"And then I suppose the reality is the non-permanence of it. That knowing that 10 or 15 years down the road, if you really felt it was important to break that grass back out, I guess



**Grasses grow along the sides of a road near Carolyn Eck's land near Watertown.** (Photo: Abbey Stegenga / SD

News Watch)



**A bee lands on a delphinium near Caroline Eck's house near Watertown.** (Photo: Abbey Stegenga / SD News Watch)

that probably appealed to some people," Bauman said.

Nearly 38 years later, proposed legislation could ensure the program continues to support landowners and their acres.

"I don't know that (the bill) is going to save any small town or family farm," Hoyle said. "But CRP is good for wildlife. It's good for the soil, good for the environment, so there's a benefit there."

— This article was produced by South Dakota News Watch, a non-profit journalism organization located online at [sdnewswatch.org](http://sdnewswatch.org).

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**GROTON**  
**VET CLINIC**

1503 N Broadway, Groton, 605/397-8145



Aberdeen  
225-6772  
1-800-843-1865

Redfield  
1-800-247-4650

Webster  
1-800-658-2252



JOHN DEERE

## July Groton Community Calendar

### Saturday, July 1

Amateurs host Redfield DQ, 7 p.m.

### Sunday, July 2

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.

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

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

United Methodist: Worship with communion (Conde at 8:30 a.m., Groton at 10:30 a.m., coffee hour at 9:30 a.m.)

### Monday, July 3

Senior Menu: Chicken and rice casserole, mixed vegetables, chocolate pudding with bananas, whole wheat bread.

Food Pantry Closed

### Tuesday, July 4

Olive Grove: His/Her Firecracker Tourney.

### Wednesday, July 5

Senior Menu: Beef stew, biscuit, Waldorf salad, muffin, tomato juice.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Circles potluck and joint Bible study, 6 p.m.; Game/Project night, 7 p.m.

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

Chamber Meeting, noon, at City Hall

Olive Grove: Kid's Lessons

Jr. Legion hosts Watertown, DH, 5 p.m.

U12BB hosts Borge, DH, 5:30 p.m.

U10 R/W hosts Webster, DH, 6 p.m.

### Thursday, July 6

Senior Menu: Ham, au gratin potatoes, broccoli and cauliflower blend, fruit, cookie.

U8 R&B hosts Hannigan/Borge, DH, 5:30 p.m.

City Council meeting, 7 p.m.

### Friday, July 7

Senior Menu: Chicken strips, tri-tators, peas and carrots, fruit, whole wheat bread.

Jr. Teeners at Vern Jark Memorial Tournament in Aberdeen

U12 State Tournament at Webster

T-Ball Scrimmage (B&G), 6 p.m.

### Saturday, July 8

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

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

Avantara Summer Event, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Jr. Teeners at Vern Jark Memorial Tournament in Aberdeen

U12 State Tournament at Webster

### Sunday, July 9

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.

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

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

United Methodist: Conde worship at 8:30 a.m., coffee hour 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship at 10:30 a.m.

Groton Summer Fest/Car Show, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., City Park

Amateurs at Northville, 5 p.m.

Jr. Teeners at Vern Jark Memorial Tournament in Aberdeen



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## Monday, July 10

Senior Menu: Lasagna rotini, spinach salad with dressing, ambrosia fruit salad, cookie, whole wheat bread.

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

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

Senior Citizens Meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.

Legion host Claremont, DH, 6 p.m.

U10 W/B at Columbia, DH, 6:30 p.m.

Softball hosts Claremont (U8 at 5:30 p.m., U10 at 7 p.m.); hosts Warner, DH

T-Ball at Columbia, 5:30 p.m.

School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

## Tuesday, July 11

Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes and gravy, oriental blend vegetables, frosted brownie, whole wheat bread, fruit.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Church Council, 7 p.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.

Olive Grove: Bridge, Ladies League at 6 p.m.

Legion at Aberdeen Smitty's, 1 game, 6 p.m.

Jr. Teener Regional Tournament, TBD

U10 R/B hosts Milbank, DH, 5:30 p.m.

Softball U12 hosts Clark, 6 p.m.

## Wednesday, July 12

Senior Menu: Chicken cordon bleu hot dish, broccoli and carrots, pears, chocolate pudding, whole wheat bread.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Campfire night, 7 p.m.

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

Olive Grove: Kid's Lessons; Men's League

Jr. Teener Regional Tournament, TBD

T-Ball B&G Scrimmage, 6 p.m.

## Thursday, July 13

Senior Menu: Salisbury steak, mashed potatoes, carrots, apricots, whole wheat bread.

Jr. Teener Regional Tournament, TBD

Softball hosts Webster (U8 at 6 p.m., U10 at 6 p.m. DH, U12 at 7:30 p.m. DH)

T-Ball Black at Andover, 6 p.m.

## Friday, July 14

Senior Menu: Hamburger gravy, mashed potatoes, green beans, tropical fruit, whole wheat bread.

Jr. Legion hosts Aberdeen Smitty's, DH, 5:30 p.m.

U10BB State Tourney in Parker

## Saturday, July 15

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

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

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

Jr. Legion at Brookings (vs. Harrison, 1 p.m.; vs. Brookings, 3 p.m.)

U10BB State Tourney in Parker

## Sunday, July 16

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

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

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

United Methodist: Conde worship at 8:30 a.m., coffee hour 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship at 10:30 a.m.

Amateurs host Miller, 6 p.m.

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Groton: (605) 397-8627

Meet the New Cake  
Batter Cookie  
Dough Blizzard®  
Treat

Get the Confetti - cake batter and cookie dough are  
learning to.



## DID YOU KNOW . . .

You can use the GDI Fitness Center by paying by the month and you can cancel any time without penalty. Call/Text Paul at 605-397-7460 for details!

### Monday, July 17

Senior Menu: Chicken Tetrizine, mixed vegetables, honey fruit salad, whole wheat bread.

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

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

Senior Citizens Meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.

Softball at Mellette (U10 at 5:30 p.m. DH, U12 at 7:30 p.m. (DH)

### Tuesday, July 18

Senior Menu: Scalloped potatoes with ham, green beans, sunset salad, whole wheat bread.

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.

Olive Grove: Ladies League at 6 p.m.

Region 6B Legion Tournament in Groton

T-Ball B&G Scrimmage, 6 p.m.

City Council meeting, 7 p.m.

### Wednesday, July 19

Senior Menu: Meatloaf, baked sweet potato, creamed peas, fruit cocktail, whole wheat bread.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Movie night, 7 p.m.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

Olive Grove: Kid's Lessons; Men's League

Amateurs at Aberdeen, 7 p.m.

Region 6B Legion Tournament in Groton

### Thursday, July 20

Senior Menu: Breaded chicken breast on bun, sliced tomato, potato salad, mandarin oranges, cucumber salad.

Water Tower Ribbon Cutting Ceremony, 11:30 a.m. to Noon followed by open house at City Hall, noon to 1:30 p.m.

Sip and Shop, Downtown Groton, 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Olive Grove: Pro Am

Region 6B Legion Tournament in Groton

### Friday, July 21

Senior Menu: Bratwurst on bun, mashed potatoes, green beans, tropical fruit, whole wheat bread.

Olive Grove: Ferney Open

Region 6B Legion Tournament in Groton

State Jr. Teener Tournament in Corsica

### Saturday, July 22

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

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

Region 6B Legion Tournament in Groton

State Jr. Teener Tournament in Corsica

### Sunday, July 23

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.

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

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

United Methodist: Conde worship at 8:30 a.m., coffee hour 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship at 10:30 a.m.

Amateur District in Groton

Region 6B Legion Tournament in Groton

State Jr. Teener Tournament in Corsica

### Monday, July 24

Senior Menu: Meatballs, mashed potatoes with gravy, mixed vegetables, tropical fruit, whole wheat bread.

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

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

Senior Citizens meet at Community Center with potluck at noon.

Amateur District in Groton

Jr. Legion Region Tourney, TBD

School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

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## Tuesday, July 25

Senior Menu: Ranch chicken bread, rice pilaf, cauliflower and pea salad, blushing pears, whole wheat bread, fruit.

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.

Olive Grove: Bridge, Ladies League at 6 p.m.

Amateur District in Groton

Jr. Legion Region Tourney, TBD

## Wednesday, July 26

Senior Menu: Baked cod, parsley buttered potatoes, coleslaw, fruit cocktail, whole wheat bread.

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

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

Groton Golf Association fundraiser, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., at the golf course

Olive Grove: Kid's Lessons; Men's League

Amateur District in Groton

## Thursday, July 27

Senior Menu: Spaghetti with meat sauce, tossed salad with dressing, apple juice, mandarin oranges, whole wheat bread.

Amateur District in Groton

## Friday, July 28

Senior Menu: Ham salad croissant, tomato spoon salad, pineapple tidbits, cookie.

Olive Grove: BAE Tournament

State Legion Tournament in Redfield

## Saturday, July 29

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

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

State Legion Tournament in Redfield

## Sunday, July 30

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.

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

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

United Methodist: Conde worship at 8:30 a.m., coffee hour 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship at 10:30 a.m.

State Legion Tournament in Redfield

## Monday, July 31

Senior Menu: Beef stroganoff with noodles, green beans, Jell-O with fruit, whole wheat bread.

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

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

State Legion Tournament in Redfield

First allowable day for soccer practice



## Northern State University introduces 2-year program, full tuition scholarships to address childcare workforce demand

ABERDEEN, S.D. – Northern State University is launching a 2-year degree program in early childhood education to help meet the demand for qualified childcare providers in South Dakota.

In partnership with the South Dakota Department of Social Services, Northern's Early Childhood Education scholarship will provide full tuition, fees, and book scholarships to five students who start the program this fall. Scholarship recipients will commit to working in childcare in South Dakota for two years after earning their associate degree from Northern.

Dr. Anna Schwan, Interim Dean of the Millicent Atkins School of Education, explains that Northern's associate degree in early childhood education serves two purposes, "Firstly, the program immediately prepares students to become qualified childcare providers. Secondly, it serves as a career ladder for students to become elementary or special education teachers.

"All 60 credits in Northern's associate degree in early childhood education count toward a bachelor's in elementary or special education," notes Dr. Schwan.

Northern's associate degree in early childhood education will contribute to improving childcare in the region.

Dr. Nicole Schutter, assistant professor of education and program coordinator, emphasizes the importance of the early years in developing the social and emotional skills needed for success in the K-12 classroom.

"Preparing more students to provide quality childcare in the state will have a positive ripple effect throughout all grades, from preschool to college," explains Dr. Schutter.

Northern's early childhood education program stands out as the only 2-year program among the state universities in South Dakota.

The demand for early childhood educators has reached critical levels. South Dakota alone has over 100 open positions in early childhood settings, with most employers listing an associate degree in early childhood education as a preferred qualification.

Aberdeen Family YMCA Youth Development Center Director Mike Quast expresses enthusiasm about Northern's new program and the scholarship that will encourage more students to pursue the degree.

"Northern State University offering this new early learning program will encourage current and aspiring childcare providers in the community to pursue higher education," he said. "This, in turn, promotes a culture of continuous professional development, leading to an overall improvement in the quality of childcare services offered in our community."

"Head Start is thrilled that Northern State University will be offering an associate degree in early childhood education," explains Juli Schultz, executive director of Northeast South Dakota Head Start. Northern's 2-year degree in early childhood education "will be so beneficial to ensure preschools are offering programming with highly qualified individuals in the classrooms."

Both Quast and Schultz see Northern's program helping their current staff, as well those new to the profession.

"The degree is also a wonderful option for those already in the preschool world to continue their education," Schultz added. "This benefits our Head Start Program as we require our teaching staff to be properly certified."

For more information about Northern State University's associate degree in early childhood education program, please contact Dr. Nicole Schutter at [nicole.schutter@northern.edu](mailto:nicole.schutter@northern.edu) or to express interest in Northern's Early Childhood Education Scholarship visit [northern.edu/ECES](http://northern.edu/ECES).

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**HELP  
WANTED!**

## Farm Hand Wanted

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

## Help Wanted

THE GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT has openings for the following certified positions for the 23-24 school year: K-12 Vocal Music Teacher, HS Agriculture Teacher/FFA Advisor. Applicants should complete and submit the certified staff application form along with a current cover letter, resume, and three letters of recommendation. All materials should be submitted to Joe Schwan, Superintendent PO Box 410 Groton, SD 57445. EOE

## For Sale

2010 Hitchhiker Discover America 345 Uk 5th wheel trailer, 36 feet long, 3 slides, \$17,000 or best offer. Can be seen at 715 N 2nd Street, Groton by calling 605-216-6468.



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Leaning into pay and diversity, manufacturer expands amid workforce shortage

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR - JUNE 27, 2023 3:58 PM

MADISON — A manufacturer conducting a \$60 million expansion in South Dakota says it's attacking a workforce shortage by raising pay and embracing diversity.

Manitou is a manufacturer of construction equipment based out of France. It is expanding its operations in Madison and Yankton and will add about 125 jobs between the two sites. Currently, 510 of the company's 540 existing South Dakota positions are filled.

Plant manager Jeff Minnaert said the company is trying to distinguish itself by offering the highest wages and most comprehensive benefits packages in the area.

"Our goal is to be the employer of choice," he said. "If the people here don't enjoy working here, they're not going to tell others to work here."

The company has conducted three pay adjustments in recent years, with workers now ranging from \$21 to \$30 an hour, depending on experience.

With a historically low 1.9 percent unemployment rate in the state, attracting and retaining skilled workers has become difficult. Manitou's methods for dealing with the problem include expanding its workforce to include more females and workers from other nationalities.

The company has grown its female employment at the South Dakota plants from 1 to 40 in the last 20 years. And Minnaert said about 25 of the 250 workers are Hispanic U.S. citizens.

To foster that diversity, Manitou has bilingual employees to help non-English speakers and has converted instructions and signage to pictures rather than words.

Minnaert said the company still needs another 30 workers to keep the expansion plans moving along smoothly.

"We think we've got everything we need to bring them in. We just need to find them," he said.

Another focus for the company has been partnering with the state's educational institutions to recruit workers, such as engineers from South Dakota State University and welders from the state's technical colleges.

U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, toured the Madison manufacturing plant Monday to learn about the expansion. He said Manitou has set a positive example for other businesses grappling with the workforce shortage.

"They clearly understand that if they want to keep growing, they need to offer great wages," Johnson said. "And they clearly understand the value of embracing diversity."

Manitou's Yankton facility is adding 65,000 square feet, while the Madison facility is being expanded by 80,000 square feet. The estimated completion date for Madison is October 2023, and the spring of 2024 for Yankton.

Across the state, other efforts are underway to address the workforce shortage. Gov. Kristi Noem is spending \$5 million of state money on ads starring herself to address what she describes as a 25,000-worker shortage in the state.

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



## **COMMENTARY**

### **Legislative term limits punish success, rob voters of power**

**Ballot question would limit legislators to a lifetime total of 16 years in office**

**DANA HESS**

State Sen. Brent Hoffman would be pleased if, in the next election, voters would tell him that his days in the Legislature are numbered. Hoffman, a Republican from Sioux Falls, is the moving force behind an initiated constitutional amendment that would set term limits for state legislators at eight years in the House and eight years in the Senate. After serving 16 years — eight two-year terms — a lawmaker would be sent home for good.

To get the amendment on the ballot, Hoffman must collect upwards of 35,000 signatures. It's likely he'll succeed. Citizens will see "term limits" at the top of the petition and readily sign. Term limits, after all, are supposed to be a good thing.

Originally Hoffman didn't want to go the route of standing on the corner long enough to collect 35,000 signatures. That's why he sponsored Senate Joint Resolution 504 during the last legislative session. If endorsed by the Legislature, Hoffman's attempt to mess with term limits would have been placed directly on the ballot.

During testimony to the Senate State Affairs Committee, Hoffman encouraged his colleagues to be different from other state legislatures which have never endorsed term limits. States that currently have limit terms, he told them, could implement those restrictions because their citizens were able to put the measure on the ballot. According to Hoffman, those term limit ballot measures have always succeeded.

The Senate State Affairs Committee decided to err on the side of legislative tradition, defeating Hoffman's resolution on an 8-1 vote. The lone Democrat on the committee voted to kill the bill even though he said that making popular Republicans eventually unable to run for reelection would be good for his party.

The legislators on that committee, like all South Dakota legislators, are already dealing with term limits. In this state lawmakers are limited to four two-year terms in either chamber. When they reach that limit they can take a break before running again, or run for a seat in the other chamber.

That's been happening in the South Dakota Legislature since the current system was approved by voters in 1992. Lawmakers have been ping-ponging back and forth between chambers for years. Some of them even have more than the Hoffman-mandated 16 years of service.

Part of Hoffman's pitch to the Senate State Affairs Committee and likely part of his reasoning to get you to sign his petition, is that term limits are popular with voters. While he was vague about who was being polled and what the question was, Hoffman told the committee that voters give term limits their endorsement 60% to 80% of the time. What they are probably endorsing, in those polls, is the notion that the members of Congress are in dire need of term limits. Whether more stringent limits are needed in the South Dakota Legislature is a subject for debate.

Term limit backers like Hoffman see incumbency as a bludgeon that can be used against election opponents. They conveniently ignore the reality that reelection to office is a concrete sign that voters are happy with their representation.

One member of the Senate State Affairs Committee quizzed Hoffman about term limits for lobbyists or cabinet secretaries or department heads. Of course there are none, leaving them to act as the institutional memory for the Legislature. That way they can tell new lawmakers "this is the way we've always done it" when what they really mean is "this is the way to do it that will help my department/constituency."

There are only so many people in the state who love policy-making enough to leave their families and businesses to spend the winter commuting back and forth to Pierre. Artificially limiting that pool of candidates by kicking seasoned, veteran lawmakers out of office is not the way to ensure good government.

Voters have always held the key to limiting the terms of legislators. Hoffman's amendment takes that power away from voters, preferring to let the rules rather than the voting public have a say in who represents them in Pierre.

Let's hope that those voters look past the "term limits" heading on Hoffman's petition and consider the ramifications of giving bureaucrats and lobbyists the upper hand over a body that's supposed to be doing the people's business. Good candidates are hard to find. We shouldn't be showing them the door just because they have the temerity to keep winning elections.

*Dana Hess spent more than 25 years in South Dakota journalism, editing newspapers in Redfield, Milbank and Pierre. He's retired and lives in Brookings, working occasionally as a freelance writer.*

## Recreational rock climbing on federal lands would be regulated under bill in Congress

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY - JUNE 27, 2023 12:20 PM

WASHINGTON — A bipartisan bill that would establish standards for recreational rock climbing on federal lands is one step closer to becoming law.

The Protecting America's Rock Climbing Act was approved by the U.S. House Committee on Natural Resources in late June, giving a boost to the millions of climbing advocates working to safeguard the thriving sport and the access to some of the country's most impressive crags.

The bill, if passed by Congress, would require the U.S. secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior to set standards for recreational rock climbing activities in federally designated wilderness lands.

"Allowable activities" outlined in the bill include the placement, use and maintenance of fixed anchors and other equipment that climbers use to affix the ropes that tie into their harnesses.

The committee approved the bill in a 21-15 vote. Reps. John Curtis, a Utah Republican, and Joe Neguse, a Colorado Democrat, introduced the proposal in March.

"Colorado's natural areas are home to some world-renowned rock climbing locations. By requiring additional agency guidance on climbing management, we are taking steps to protect our climbers and the spaces in which they recreate," Neguse said in a press release upon the bill's introduction.

In his statement, Curtis underscored outdoor recreation as an "ever-growing industry" in his state.

"Ensuring access to these lands is vital not just for our economy, but also to ensure the millions of Americans who enjoy rock climbing can fully explore our nation's national treasures," he said.

The Outdoor Industry Association — a coalition of companies whose policy platforms range from climate to international trade — estimated in its inaugural "State of Climbing" report that the sport of climbing contributed \$12.4 billion to the U.S. economy in 2017. The report also credits climbers for creating a "significant economic impact" to communities near rural climbing destinations, including Lee County, Kentucky, and Sandrock, Alabama.

### Climbers and the Park Service

At issue is the lack of standard rules across federal agencies that manage U.S. wilderness and parks, said Erik Murdock, interim executive director of the Access Fund, a national rock climbing advocacy organization that represents roughly 8 million climbers and advocates for pro-climber laws and access.

"This bill is really important in order to provide clarity and to push back on some of the recent actions by the National Park Service to prohibit climbing," Murdock said. He highlighted an NPS proposal that considered banning fixed anchors on the 2,200-foot walls of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park — a sought-after climbing destination in Colorado.

In response to a request for comment, the NPS pointed States Newsroom to its testimony against the bill, citing concerns that the legislation could impose "significant administrative burdens" and would have the "practical effect of amending the Wilderness Act, which is not only unnecessary but could potentially have deleterious consequences."

"The Department feels it has sufficient authorities under the Wilderness Act to fully support recreational climbing opportunities in designated wilderness opportunities in a manner that balances tribal, recreational, environmental, and wilderness preservation values and interests and therefore does not believe legisla-

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tion is necessary," said Michael T. Reynolds, NPS deputy director of congressional and external relations, in his statement to Congress.

Some park managers and wilderness advocates have long argued against the bolting of anchors to natural rock areas. The NPS wrote in its August 2022 draft plan for the Black Canyon area that anchors and other structures could "diminish" the natural landscape and threaten the "solitude" of the remote areas. The plan detailed an application and selection process for the installation of any new fixed anchors.

But the climbing community credits itself for major wins in land conservation across the U.S. According to Access Fund figures, the organization has purchased and conserved 90 climbing areas and just last year raised \$3.6 billion for public lands conservation.

"What this particular (legislation) is doing is essentially codifying what climbers have been doing for decades in wilderness areas across the country, which is working in partnership with landowners to responsibly place fixed anchors to protect climber safety, to ensure sustainable climbing access, and essentially, to ensure access to these climbing routes that have historical significance for the climbing community," said Ginette Walker Vinski, board president of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Climbers Coalition.

## Prospects in the Senate

An amendment proposed to the Senate's America's Outdoor Recreation Act recognizes that fixed anchors used for climbing are "appropriate" in wilderness areas, and extends that standard across lands managed by the USDA's Forest Service as well as agencies within Interior.

The amendment, by Democratic Sen. John Hickenlooper of Colorado, received unanimous support in the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources in May.

"Outdoor recreation is enormously important to Colorado — for our communities, our economies, and our way of life," Hickenlooper said just after the vote. "Rock climbing is a vital part of our outdoor recreation tradition and our economy."

The Outdoor Recreation Act, a vehicle for several outdoor recreation proposals that was originally sponsored by committee Chair and West Virginia Democrat Sen. Joe Manchin III, has yet to reach the Senate floor. The committee's ranking member Sen. John Barasso, a Wyoming Republican, is the co-sponsor.

*Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.*



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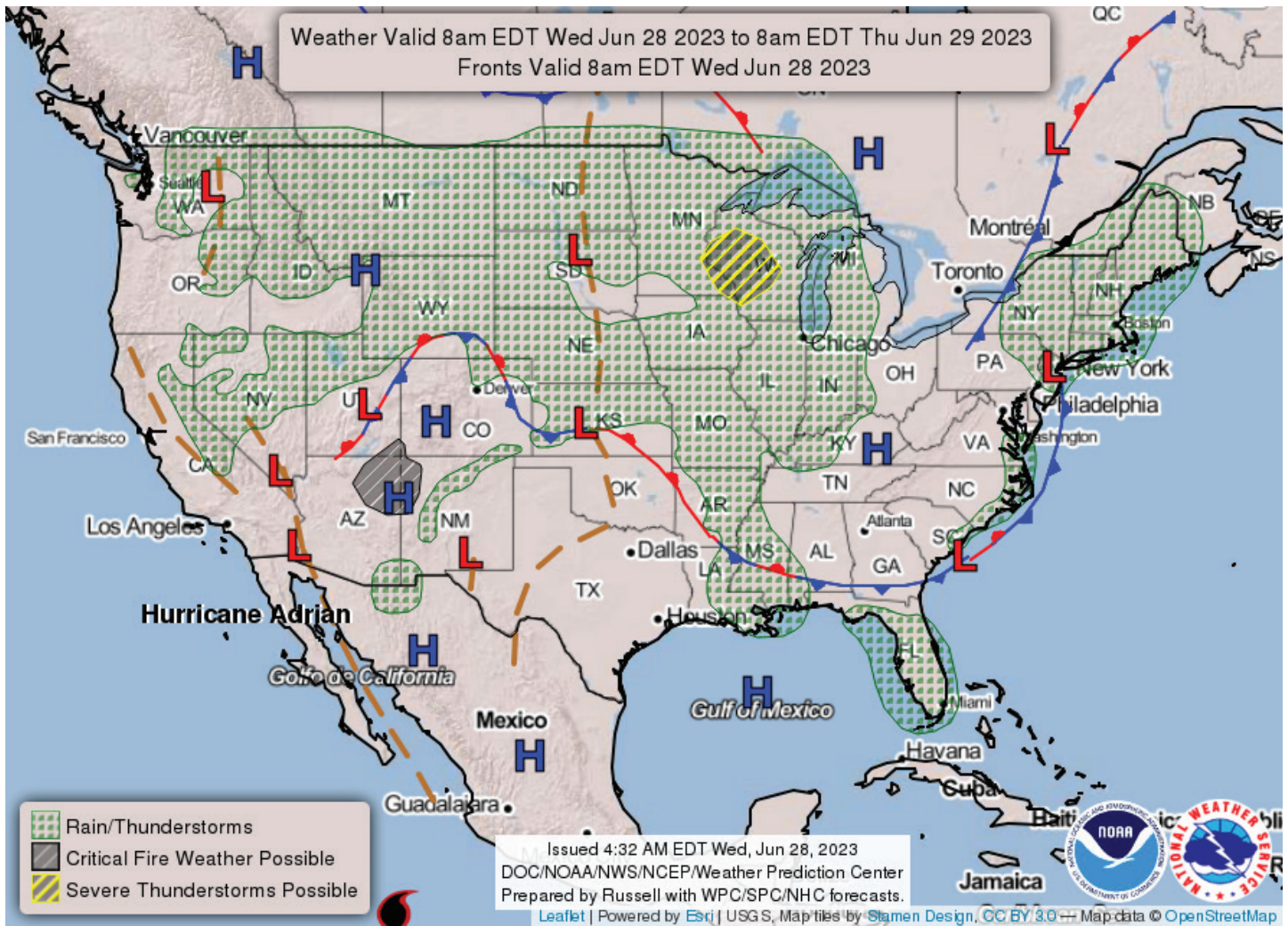
## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 81 °F at 3:24 PM**  
**Low Temp: 58 °F at 5:23 AM**  
**Wind: 23 mph at 11:21 PM**  
**Precip: : 0.61**

Day length: 15 hours, 42 minutes

## Today's Info

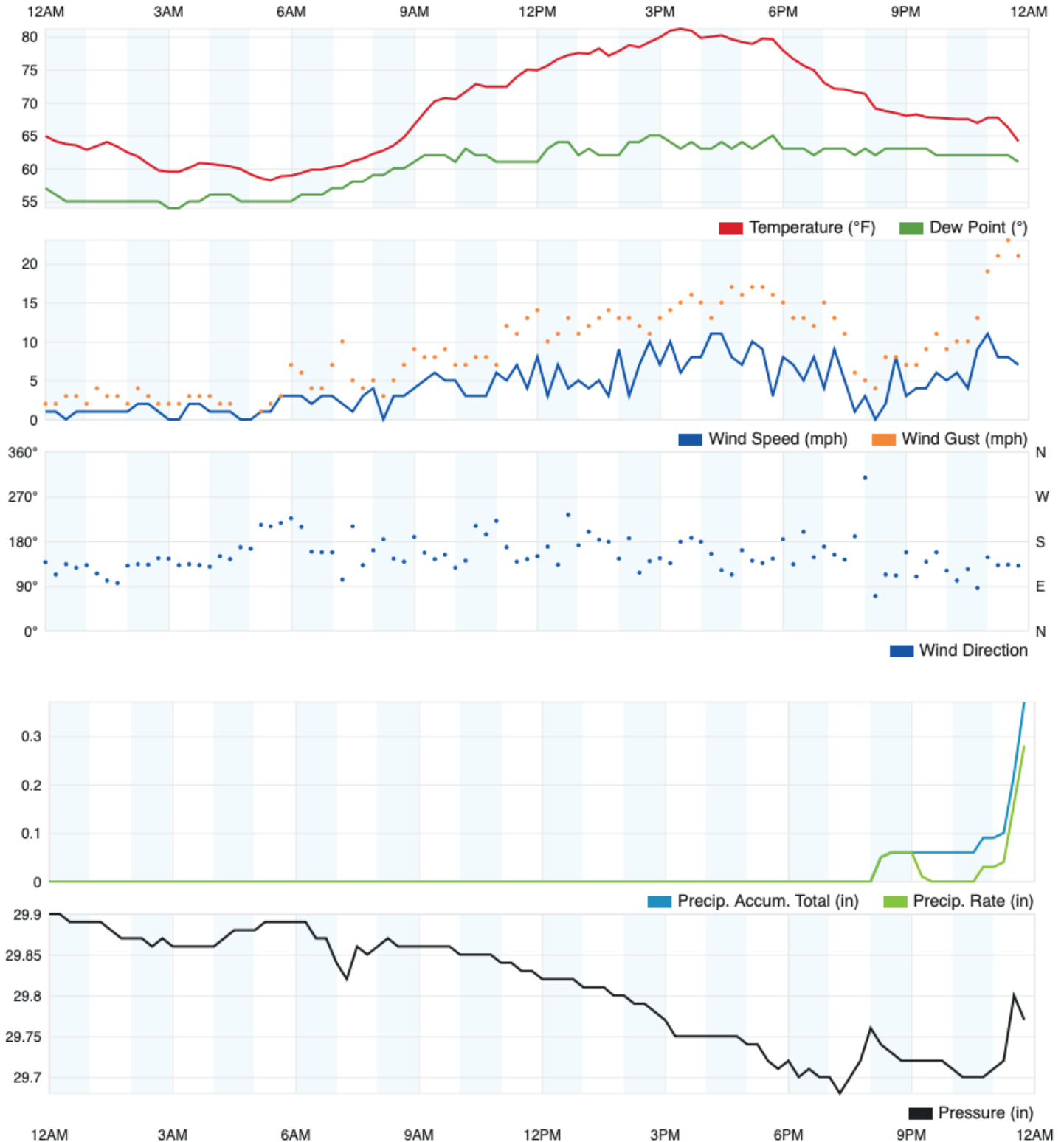
Record High: 112 in 1931  
Record Low: 40 in 1951  
Average High: 83  
Average Low: 58  
Average Precip in June.: 3.51  
Precip to date in June.: 3.24  
Average Precip to date: 10.76  
Precip Year to Date: 11.15  
Sunset Tonight: 9:26:52 PM  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:45:01 AM



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Wednesday



Chance  
T-storms then  
Partly Sunny

High: 82 °F

Wednesday  
Night



Partly Cloudy

Low: 59 °F

Thursday



Sunny then  
Slight Chance  
T-storms

High: 86 °F

Thursday  
Night



Mostly Clear

Low: 60 °F

Friday



Mostly Sunny

High: 84 °F

Friday  
Night



Mostly Clear

Low: 59 °F

Saturday



Sunny

High: 86 °F

## Generally Dry Today...



### 79-87°

Cooler across the Prairie  
Coteau

A stray thundershower possible  
in the late afternoon to early  
evening



weather.gov/aberdeen  
June 28, 2023 2:55 AM

Today will be mostly dry, with a stray thundershower possible in the late afternoon to early evening. Highs in the high 70s to high 80s.



## Today in Weather History

June 28, 1961: An F2 tornado skipped ESE from about 5 miles south of Eureka to Lake Mina. About twelve farm buildings were destroyed. A house was damaged when a small shed was smashed against it in Hillsvew. The storm struck north of Roscoe where a barn was unroofed. A second F2 tornado hit west of Hoven. On one farm, a barn, and five small buildings were destroyed, although grain bin nearby was untouched. Another farm, across the road, lost four buildings including a house. The Langford area of Marshall County was struck by an EF2 tornado shortly after 8:00 pm. An estimated 15 to 20 farm buildings were demolished or heavily damaged, and a store in town was partially unroofed.

June 28, 1982: An estimated thunderstorm wind gust up to 94 mph knocked down trees and caused minor structural damage to several homes just west of Wheaton, Minnesota.

June 28, 1990: KDIO radio in Ortonville, Minnesota, clocked winds of 80 to 85 mph for several minutes as a thunderstorm passed. There were reports of numerous trees downed and scattered power outages in Ortonville.

1788 - The Battle of Monmouth in central New Jersey was fought in sweltering heat. The temperature was 96 degrees in the shade, and there were more casualties from the heat than from bullets. (David Ludlum)

1892 - The temperature at Orogrande UT soared to 116 degrees to establish a record for the state. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders)

1923 - A massive tornado hit Sandusky, OH, then swept across Lake Erie to strike the town of Lorain. The tornado killed 86 persons and caused twelve million dollars damage. The tornado outbreak that day was the worst of record for the state of Ohio up til that time. (David Ludlum)

1924: An estimated F4 tornado struck the towns of Sandusky and Lorain, killing 85 people and injuring over 300. This tornado is the deadliest ever in Ohio history.

1975: Lightning strikes Lee Trevino and two other golfers at the Western Open golf tournament in Oak Brook, Illinois.

1975 - Lee Trevino and two other golfers are struck by lightning at the Western Open golf tournament in Oak Brook, IL. (The Weather Channel)

1980 - The temperature at Wichita Falls, TX, soared to 117 degrees, their hottest reading of record. Daily highs were 110 degrees or above between the 24th of June and the 3rd of July. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms developing along a cold front produced severe weather in the north central U.S. Thunderstorms in Nebraska produced wind gusts to 70 mph and baseball size hail at Arapahoe, and wind gusts to 80 mph along with baseball size hail at Wolback and Belgrade. Six cities in the Ohio Valley reported record low temperatures for the date, including Cincinnati, OH, with a reading of 50 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Showers and thunderstorms brought much needed rains to parts of the central U.S. Madison, WI, received 1.67 inches of rain, a record for the date, and their first measurable rain since the Mother's Day tornado outbreak on the 8th of May. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Evening thunderstorms deluged Winnfield LA with eleven inches of rain in four hours and fifteen minutes, and Baton Rouge LA reported 11 inches of rain in two days. Totals in west central Louisiana ranged up to 17 inches. Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the Northern High Plains. Two inch hail broke windows in nearly every building at Comstock, NE. Thunderstorms in North Dakota produced two inch hail at Killdeer, and golf ball size hail at Zap. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

Daily Devotionals

## Seeds of Hope

### NOTHING NEW

Some years ago, a group of Navy scientists began to work on ways to change the direction of major storms. If they were able to do this, they reasoned they could direct them to do great damage to the enemy.

Furthermore, they thought, if they could direct the storms to disrupt the enemy, they would be able to control clouds and form high seas and waves. Also, they believed if they could create low, solid overcast clouds, they would be able to conceal troop movements.

But God used the weather to His advantage long before the military ever entertained the idea. A great story of God using the weather to accomplish His purpose is the story of Jonah.

One day the Lord said to Jonah, "Go to Nineveh." But he refused to listen to God and decided to go to Tarshish. However, he never got there. The Lord had a plan for Jonah, and, to accomplish His plan He needed a hurricane. So, He "turned" one loose, and the crew of Jonah's ship became frightened.

Jonah looked at them and said, "It's all my fault. Go ahead and throw me overboard." When they did, the sea stopped raging and became calm. But there's more.

God then ordered a great fish to get involved in His plan. Soon, the great fish swallowed Jonah and took him for a ride. Finally, the great fish spewed him out, and he went to Nineveh. God does not put up with disobedience. If He has to, He'll get all of nature to help Him accomplish His plan.

The Psalmist reminds us that "lightning and hail, snow and clouds, and stormy winds...do His bidding."

Prayer: Lord, we only fool ourselves if we think we can escape from Your plan. If wind and weather obey You, so should we! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Today's Bible Verse: Fire and hail, snow and clouds, wind and weather that obey him. Psalm 148:8



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

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## 2023 Community Events

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



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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.27.23

8 34 35 41 52 12

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$368,000,000**

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 5  
DRAW: Mins 42 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 16 Hrs 20 Mins  
DRAW: 42 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.27.23

1 15 20 31 44 18

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

NEXT 16 Hrs 35 Mins 41  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.24.23

8 14 23 33 35

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

NEXT 16 Hrs 35 Mins 42  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
06.26.23

14 20 23 31 54 19

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

NEXT 17 Hrs 4 Mins 42  
DRAW: 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 17 Hrs 4 Mins 42  
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

## News from the Associated Press

### Is it a 'richcession'? Or a 'rolling recession'? Or maybe no recession at all?

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The warnings have been sounded for more than a year: A recession is going to hit the United States. If not this quarter, then by next quarter. Or the quarter after that. Or maybe next year.

So is a recession still in sight?

The latest signs suggest maybe not. Despite much higher borrowing costs, thanks to the Federal Reserve's aggressive streak of interest rate hikes, consumers keep spending, and employers keep hiring. Gas prices have dropped, and grocery prices have leveled off, giving Americans more spending power.

The economy keeps managing to grow. And so does the belief among some economists that the United States might actually achieve an elusive "soft landing," in which growth slows but households and businesses spend enough to avoid a full-blown recession.

"The U.S. economy is genuinely displaying signs of resilience," said Gregory Daco, chief economist at EY, a tax and consulting firm. "This is leading many to rightly question whether the long-forecast recession is really inevitable or whether a soft-landing of the economy" is possible.

Analysts point to two trends that may help stave off an economic contraction. Some say the economy is experiencing a "rolling recession," in which only some industries shrink while the overall economy remains above water.

Others think the U.S. is experiencing what they call a "richcession": Major job cuts, they note, have been concentrated in higher-paying industries like technology and finance, heavy with professional workers who generally have the financial cushions to withstand layoffs. Job cuts in those fields, as a result, are less likely to sink the overall economy.

Still, threats loom: The Fed is all but certain to keep raising rates, at least once more, and to keep them high for months, thereby continuing to impose heavy borrowing costs on consumers and businesses. That's why some economists caution that a full-blown recession may still occur.

"The Fed will keep pushing until it fixes the inflation issue," said Yelena Shulyatyeva, an economist at BNP Paribas.

Here's how it could all play out:

#### IT'S A ROLLING RECESSION

When different sectors of the economy take their turns contracting, with some declining while others keep expanding, it's sometimes called a "rolling recession." The economy as a whole manages to avoid a full-fledged recession.

The housing industry was the first to suffer a tailspin after the Fed began sending interest rates sharply higher 15 months ago. As mortgage rates nearly doubled, home sales plunged. They're now 20% lower than they were a year ago. Manufacturing soon followed. And while it hasn't fared as badly as housing, factory production is down 0.3% from a year earlier.

And this spring, the technology industry suffered a slump, too. In the aftermath of the pandemic, Americans were spending less time online and instead resumed shopping at physical stores and going to restaurants more frequently. That trend forced sharp job cuts among tech companies such as Facebook's parent Meta, video conferencing provider Zoom and Google.

At the same time, consumers ramped up their spending on travel and at entertainment venues, buoying the economy's vast service sector and offsetting the difficulties in other sectors. Economists say they expect such spending to slow later this year as the savings that many households had amassed during the pandemic continue to shrink.

Yet by then, housing may have rebounded enough to pick up the baton and drive economic growth. There are already signs that the industry is starting to recover: Sales of new homes jumped 12% from



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April to May despite high mortgage rates and home prices far above pre-pandemic levels.

And other sectors should continue to expand, providing a foundation for overall growth. Krishna Guha, an analyst at Evercore ISI, notes that some areas of the economy — from education to government to health care — are not so sensitive to higher interest rates, which is why they are still hiring and probably will keep doing so.

If the U.S. economy achieves a soft landing, Guha said, “we think these rolling sectoral recessions will be a big part of the story.”

## IT'S A 'RICHCESSION'

Affluent Americans aren't exactly suffering, particularly as the stock market has rebounded this year. Yet it's also true that the bulk of high-profile job losses that began last year have been concentrated in higher-paying professions. That pattern is different from what typically happens in recessions: Lower-paying jobs, in areas like restaurants and retail, are usually the first to be lost and often in depressingly large numbers.

That's because in most downturns, as Americans start to pull back on spending, restaurants, hotels and retailers lay off waves of workers. As fewer people buy homes, many construction workers are thrown out of work. Sales of high-priced manufactured goods, such as cars and appliances, tend to fall, leading to job losses at factories.

This time, so far, it hasn't happened that way. Restaurants, bars and hotels are still hiring — in fact, they have been a major driver of job gains. And to the surprise of labor market experts, construction companies are also still adding workers despite higher borrowing rates, which often discourage residential and commercial building.

Instead, layoffs have been striking mainly white collar and professional occupations. Uber Technologies said last week that it will cut 200 of its recruiters. Earlier this month, GrubHub announced 400 layoffs among the delivery company's corporate jobs. Financial and media companies are also struggling, with Citibank announcing this month that it will have shed 1,600 workers in the April-June quarter.

Many of the affected employees are well-educated and likely to find new jobs relatively quickly, economists say, helping keep unemployment down despite the layoffs. Right now, for example, the federal government, as well as employers in the hotel, retail and even railroad industries are seeking to hire people who have been laid off from the tech giants.

Tom Barkin, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, notes that affluent workers typically have savings they can draw upon after losing a job, enabling them to keep spending and fueling the economy. For that reason, Barkin suggested, white collar job losses don't tend to weaken consumer spending as much as losses experienced by blue collar workers do.

“It's easy to imagine that this might be a different sort of softening labor market ... that has a different kind of impact, both on demand and on things like the unemployment rate than your normal weakening,” Barkin said in an interview with The Associated Press last month.

## OR MAYBE NO RECESSION

The most optimistic economists say they're growing more hopeful that a recession can be avoided, even if the Fed keeps interest rates at a peak for months to come.

They point out that a range of recent economic data has come in better than expected. Most notably, hiring has stayed surprisingly resilient, with employers adding a robust average of roughly 300,000 jobs over the past six months and the unemployment rate, at 3.7%, still near a half-century low.

Manufacturing, too, has defied gloomy expectations. On Tuesday, the government reported that companies last month stepped up their orders of industrial machinery, railcars, computers and other long-lasting goods.

Many analysts have been encouraged because some threats to the economy haven't turned out to be as damaging as feared — or haven't surfaced at all. The fight in Congress, for example, over the government's borrowing limit, which could have triggered a default on Treasury securities, was resolved without much disruption in financial markets or discernible impact on the economy.

And so far, the banking turmoil that occurred last spring after the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank has largely been contained and doesn't appear to be weakening the economy.

Jan Hatzius, chief economist at Goldman Sachs, said this month that the ebbing of such threats led him

to mark down the likelihood of a recession within the next 12 months from 35% to just 25%.

Other economists point out that the economy doesn't face the types of dangerous imbalances or events that have ignited some recent recessions, such as the stock market bubble in 2001 or the housing bubble in 2008.

"The risk of recession is receding, rapidly," said Neil Dutta, an economist at Renaissance Macro. Whether we are having a rolling recession or "richcession," he said, "If you have to call it different names, it's not a recession."

## **Recruitment of children by armed groups in Syria is on the rise, even as fighting subsides**

By HOGIR ABDO and ABBY SEWELL Associated Press

QAMISHLI, Syria (AP) — A 13-year-old Kurdish girl went missing on her way home from a school exam last month, after being approached by a man from an armed group. Her parents immediately feared the worst — that she had been persuaded to join the group and was taken to one of its training camps.

The girl, Peyal Aqil, was with friends when she encountered the man who turned out to be a recruiter for a group known as the Revolutionary Youth. She followed him to one of the group's centers in the city of Qamishli in northeast Syria. Her friends waited for her outside, but she never emerged.

Peyal's mother, Hamrin Alouji, said she and her husband complained to local authorities, to no avail.

The group later said Peyal joined willingly, a claim rejected by Alouji. "We consider that at this age, she cannot give consent, even if she was convinced" by the group's program, Alouji said, sitting for an interview in her daughter's room, filled with stuffed animals and school texts.

Armed groups have recruited children throughout the past 12 years of conflict and civil war in Syria. A new United Nations report on children in armed conflict, released Tuesday, says the use of child soldiers in Syria is growing, even as fighting in most parts of Syria is winding down.

The number of children recruited by armed groups in Syria has risen steadily over the past three years — from 813 in 2020 to 1,296 in 2021 and 1,696 in 2022, the U.N. says.

Among those allegedly recruiting children is a U.S. ally in the battle against Islamic State extremists — the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, according to the U.N. In 2022, the U.N. attributed half the cases, or 637, to the SDF and associated groups in northeast Syria.

The report also said the U.N. had confirmed 611 recruitment cases by the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army, which has clashed with the SDF in the past, and 383 by the al-Qaida-linked Hayat Tahrir al Sham in northwest Syria. The report cited 25 cases of child recruitment by Syrian government forces and pro-government militias.

Children are being recruited across Syria, said Bassam Alahmad, executive director of Syrians for Truth and Justice, an independent civil society organization.

In some cases, children are forcibly conscripted, he said. In others, minors sign up because they or their families need the salary. Some join for ideological reasons, or because of family and tribal loyalties. In some cases, children are sent out of Syria to fight as mercenaries in other conflicts.

Attempts to end such recruitment have been complicated by the patchwork of armed groups operating in each part of Syria.

In 2019, the SDF signed an agreement with the U.N. promising to end the enlistment of children younger than 18 and set up a number of child protection offices in its area. The U.S. State Department defended its ally in a statement, saying, that the SDF "is the only armed actor in Syria to respond to the UN's call to end the use of child soldiers."

Nodem Shero, a spokesperson for one of the child protection offices run by the SDF-affiliated local administration, acknowledged that children continue to be recruited in areas under SDF control.

However, the complaint mechanism is working, she said. Her office received 20 complaints in the first five months of the year, she said. Four minors were found in the SDF armed forces and were returned to their families. The others were not with the SDF, she said.

In some cases, she said, parents assume their children have been taken by the SDF when they are actually with another group.

Alahmad said recruitment by the group decreased after the 2019 agreement, but that the SDF has not intervened as other groups in its area continue to target children.

Among them is the Revolutionary Youth, a group linked to the Kurdistan Worker's Party, or PKK, a Kurdish separatist movement banned in Turkey. The Revolutionary Youth is licensed by the the local government linked to the SDF — although both groups denied any connection beyond that.

The U.N. report attributed 10 cases to the Revolutionary Youth in 2022, but others say the numbers are higher. In a January report, Alahmad's group said Revolutionary Youth was responsible for 45 of 49 child recruitment cases it documented in northeastern Syria in 2022.

Alahmad said the SDF-affiliated administration is looking the other way. He called on it to "assume its responsibilities in order to stop these operations."

An official with the Revolutionary Youth acknowledged that the group recruits minors but denied that it forcibly conscripts them. "We do not kidnap anyone, and we do not force anyone to join us," he said, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with his group's rules.

"They themselves come to us and tell us their intention to join the service of the nation," he said. "We do not take minors if they are indecisive or unsure."

Minors are not immediately sent to armed service, he said. Rather, they initially take part in educational training courses and other activities, after which "they are sent to the mountain if they want," he said, referring to the PKK's headquarters in the Qandil mountains of northern Iraq.

Asked about Peyal, he said the girl had complained of being unhappy at home and that her parents forced her to wear the hijab.

Alouji said her daughter had given no signs of being unhappy at home, and the night before her disappearance had said she planned to study to be a lawyer.

A month after her May 21 disappearance, Peyal came home. She had run away from one of the group's training camps, her mother said.

Since her daughter's return, "her psychological condition has been difficult because she... was subjected to harsh training," Alouji said. The family no longer feels safe, she said, and is looking for a way to get out of Syria.

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Sewell reported from Beirut. Associated Press writers Omar Albam in Idlib, Syria, and Lolita Baldor in Washington contributed to this report.

## **Activist detained in Hong Kong begins final appeal for recognition of his overseas same-sex marriage**

By KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — An activist detained in Hong Kong began his final appeal Wednesday seeking recognition for his same-sex marriage registered overseas, in a landmark case for the city's LGBTQ+ community.

Jimmy Sham, a prominent pro-democracy activist during the 2019 protests that roiled Hong Kong, first asked for a judicial review five years ago seeking a declaration that the city's laws, which don't recognize foreign same-sex marriages, violate his constitutional right to equality. But the lower courts dismissed his legal challenge and a subsequent appeal over the case.

Sham is now in custody after being charged with subversion over an unofficial primary election under a tough national security law enacted following the protests. Many other leading Hong Kong activists were also arrested or silenced by the law imposed by Beijing on the former U.K. colony.

The upcoming judgment by the city's top court in his marriage case will have strong implications for the lives of the LGBTQ+ community and the financial hub's reputation as an inclusive place to live and work.

Currently, the city only recognizes same-sex marriages for certain purposes such as taxation, civil service benefits and dependent visas. Many of the government's concessions were won through legal challenges

over the last few years.

The court will have to address whether the exclusion of same-sex couples from the institution of marriage and a failure to provide alternative means of legal recognition for same-sex partnerships violate the right to equality. The judges will also have to decide if the city's laws violate that right enshrined in Hong Kong's constitution, as they don't recognize foreign same-sex marriages.

On Wednesday, Sham appeared spirited inside the courtroom. His supporters wished him a happy birthday as he was turning 36 years old this week.

His lawyer, Karon Monaghan, argued that the absence of same-sex marriages in Hong Kong sent a message that it is less worthy of recognition than heterosexual marriages.

But Steward Wong, who represents the secretary for justice, insisted another law under the constitution meant to provide access to the institution of marriage to heterosexual couples only. The court will continue to hear the case on Thursday.

Sham and his husband married in New York in 2013. They wished to marry in Hong Kong, but it wasn't allowed under the law, according to previous judgments.

The ruling in 2020 said his marriage lacks essential validity, because the city's law doesn't permit marriage between same-sex people. It added that Sham's attempt to achieve complete parity of recognition between foreign same-sex marriages and foreign heterosexual marriages is "too ambitious."

Sham's appeal over the case was also dismissed last August.

Sham is the former convenor of Civil Human Rights Front, which was best known for organizing the annual march on the anniversary of Hong Kong's handover to Chinese rule on July 1, 1997, for years. The group also organized some of the bigger political protests that roiled the city in 2019.

The front was disbanded in 2021 as it reportedly faces a police investigation for possible violation of the security law.

In February, the top court ruled that full sex reassignment surgery should not be a prerequisite for transgender people to have their gender changed on their official identity cards. Supporters said it was an important milestone for the transgender community in Hong Kong.

## Muslims at Hajj pilgrimage brave intense heat to cast stones at pillars representing the devil

By RIAZAT BUTT Associated Press

MINA, Saudi Arabia (AP) — Hundreds of thousands of Muslim pilgrims on Wednesday braved intense heat to perform the symbolic stoning of the devil during the Hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia.

With morning temperatures rising past 42 degrees Celsius (107 degrees Fahrenheit), huge crowds of pilgrims walked or took buses to the vast Jamarat complex just outside the holy city of Mecca, where large pedestrian bridges lead past three wide pillars representing the devil.

Using pebbles collected the night before at a campsite known as Muzdalifa, the pilgrims stone the pillars. It's a reenactment of the story of the Prophet Ibrahim — known as Abraham in Christian and Jewish traditions — who is said to have hurled stones at Satan to resist temptation.

The ceremony was marred by tragedy on a number of occasions in the 1990s and 2000s, when hundreds died in stampedes during the stoning ritual. Saudi authorities have since built an expanded network of massive pedestrian bridges and redesigned the site to make it safer for pilgrims.

This year, the biggest danger might be the heat.

Temperatures soared past 45 degrees Celsius (113 F) on Tuesday, as Muslims marked the spiritual high point of the pilgrimage by spending the day praying at Mount Arafat, where there was no breeze and almost no shade.

Pilgrims huddled under umbrellas, dousing themselves with bottled water. Cellphones were almost too hot to hold and shut down after just a few minutes of use.

Saudi authorities have deployed tens of thousands of health workers for the pilgrimage and volunteers



were handing out water. The Health Ministry said late Tuesday that it had treated 287 cases of sunstroke and heat exhaustion.

The annual Hajj pilgrimage is one of the five pillars of Islam, and all Muslims are required to undertake it at least once in their lives if they are physically and financially able. For the pilgrims it is an unrivalled religious experience that wipes away sins, bringing them closer to God and face-to-face with fellow Muslims from all corners of the earth.

The last three days of the Hajj coincide with Eid al-Adha, or the Feast of the Sacrifice, a joyful occasion in which Muslims around the world sacrifice sheep or cattle and distribute some of the meat to the poor. The holiday commemorates Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son Ishmael on God's command. In Christian and Jewish traditions, Abraham is willing to sacrifice his other son, Isaac.

The holiday, which is held according to Islam's lunar calendar, depending on the sighting of the moon, began Wednesday in several Middle Eastern countries and will begin Thursday in some Asian countries.

The Saudi royal family has invested billions of dollars in infrastructure to maintain Islam's holiest sites and to hold the annual pilgrimage, which is a major source of its legitimacy. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom's de facto ruler, traveled to Mecca on Tuesday to oversee the pilgrimage, according to state-run media.

This is the first Hajj to be held without COVID-19 restrictions since the onset of the pandemic in 2020. Authorities had expected some 2 million pilgrims, but official figures released late Tuesday showed that around 1.8 million were taking part in the pilgrimage. That's considerably fewer than the nearly 2.5 million who came in 2019. Worldwide economic woes may have been a factor.

## **Kevin Spacey faces sex assault trial in London on allegations over a decade old**

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Two-time Oscar winner Kevin Spacey walked into a London courtroom Wednesday to face trial on charges of sexually assaulting four men as long as two decades ago.

The actor was dressed in a dark blue suit, light blue shirt and pink tie as he was called by his full name and asked if he was Kevin Spacey Fowler.

"I am," he said as he stood behind a window in the dock.

Spacey, 63, has pleaded not guilty to a dozen charges including sexual assault, indecent assault and causing a person to engage in sex activity without consent. He could face a prison sentence if convicted.

Spacey has said an acquittal in the case could revive a career that has largely been on ice since sexual misconduct allegations surfaced against the star who won his first Academy Award for supporting actor in "The Usual Suspects" in 1995.

"There are people right now who are ready to hire me the moment I am cleared of these charges in London," Spacey said in a rare interview published this month in Germany's Zeit magazine. He said the media had turned him into a "monster."

The charges involving men now in their 30s or 40s date from 2001 to 2013 — covering most of the decade when he lived in Britain and served as artistic director of the Old Vic Theatre until 2015.

Jurors were to be selected on the first day of the trial and opening statements are scheduled Friday.

The actor, who is free on bail, arrived at London's Southwark Crown Court about two hours before the trial was due to start.

Spacey's downfall came amid the #MeToo movement in the United States when allegations led to him being written off the Netflix political thriller "House of Cards," where he played lead character Frank Underwood, a ruthless and corrupt congressman who becomes president. He was cut from the completed film "All the Money in the World," and the scenes reshot with Christopher Plummer.

Spacey became one of the most celebrated actors of his generation in 1990s, starring in films including "Glengarry Glen Ross" and "LA Confidential." He won his second Oscar, for best actor, in the 1999 movie "American Beauty."

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Spacey recently had his first film roles in several years, appearing in 2022 in Italian director Franco Nero's "The Man Who Drew God," and playing the late Croatian President Franjo Tudjman in biopic "Once Upon a Time in Croatia." He also stars in the unreleased U.S. film "Peter Five Eight."

Italy's National Cinema Museum in Turin gave him its lifetime achievement award in January. He also taught a masterclass and introduced a sold-out screening of "American Beauty" in what were billed as Spacey's first speaking engagements in five years.

Spacey saluted organizers for "making a strong defense of artistic achievement" and for having "le palle" — the Italian word for male body parts synonymous with courage — to invite him.

Associated Press writer Jill Lawless contributed to this report.

## France heightens security after unrest prompted by police shooting of 17-year-old

NANTERRE, France (AP) — France's government on Wednesday announced heightened police presence around Paris and other big cities and called for calm after scattered violence erupted over the death of a 17-year-old delivery driver who was shot and killed during a police check.

The death prompted nationwide concern and widespread messages of indignation and condolences, including from soccer star Kylian Mbappe.

It also triggered unrest in multiple towns around Paris. Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said 31 people were arrested, 25 police officers injured and 40 cars burned in overnight unrest.

The tensions focused around the Paris suburb of Nanterre, where lawyers say 17-year-old Nael M. was killed Tuesday during a traffic check. The police officer suspected of firing on him was detained and faces potential manslaughter charges, according to the Nanterre prosecutor's office.

The Nanterre neighborhood where Nael lived remained tense Wednesday morning, with police on guard and burned car wreckage and overturned garbage bins still visible in some areas.

Nael's mother appealed online for a silent march on Thursday in her son's honor, near the scene of his death.

Videos purported to be of the incident were "extremely shocking," Darmanin said, pledging a full investigation. The images show two police officers leaning into the driver-side window of a yellow car, before the vehicle pulls away as one officer fires into the window. The car is later seen crashed into a post nearby.

"I call for calm and truth," Darmanin said.

He said 1,200 police were deployed overnight and 2,000 would be out in force Wednesday in the Paris region and around other big cities to "maintain order."

Deadly use of firearms is less common in France than in the United States. Tuesday's death unleashed anger in Nanterre and other towns, including around housing projects where many residents struggle with poverty and discrimination and feel police abuse is under-punished.

A lawyer for Nael's family, Yassine Bouzrou, told The Associated Press they want the police officer pursued for murder instead of manslaughter, and want the investigation handed to a different region because they fear Nanterre investigators won't be impartial.

The lawyers refuted a reported statement by the police that their lives were in danger because the driver had threatened to run them over.

Mbappe, who grew up in the Paris suburb of Bondy, was among those who were shocked by what happened.

"I hurt for my France. Unacceptable situation. All my thoughts go to the family and loved ones of Nael, this little angel gone much too soon," he tweeted.

The government will hold a security meeting Wednesday afternoon to discuss next steps, Darmanin said.

The victim was wounded by a gunshot and died at the scene, the prosecutor's office said in a statement. A passenger in the car was briefly detained and released, and police are searching for another passenger who fled.

Several people have died or sustained injuries at the hands of French police in recent years, prompting demands for more accountability. France also saw protests against racial profiling and other injustice in the wake of George Floyd's killing by police in Minnesota.

## 9 killed, including 3 children, as Russian missile slams into pizza restaurant in east Ukraine city

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A Russian missile attack that hit a crowded pizza restaurant in an eastern Ukrainian city killed at least nine people, including three children, authorities said Wednesday, as rescue workers continued searching in the destroyed building's rubble.

The Tuesday evening attack on Kramatorsk wounded another 56 people, the Ukrainian Ministry of Internal Affairs said, in the latest bombardment, a tactic Russia has used heavily in the 16-month-old war.

Two sisters, both age 14, died as result of the attack, the educational department of the Kramatorsk city council said. "Russian missiles stopped the beating of the hearts of two angels," it said in a Telegram post.

The other dead child was 17, according to Prosecutor General Andrii Kostin.

The attack, using what officials said were S-300 missiles, also damaged 18 multi-story buildings, 65 houses, five schools, two kindergartens, a shopping center, an administrative building and a recreational building, the regional governor, Pavlo Kyrylenko, said. The S-300 is a surface-to-air missile that cannot hit ground targets accurately, but Russia's forces have repurposed it for loosely targeted strikes on cities.

Kramatorsk is a front-line city that houses the Ukrainian army's regional headquarters. The pizza restaurant was frequented by journalists, aid workers and soldiers, as well as locals.

It's located in Donetsk, one of four Ukrainian provinces that Russia claimed to annex last September but does not fully control. Russia has also occupied Crimea since 2015.

Ukrainian-held parts of the partially occupied provinces have been hit especially hard by Russian bombardment and are a key barrier to resolving the war.

The Kremlin demands that Kyiv recognize the annexations, while Kyiv has ruled out any talks with Russia until its troops pull back from all occupied territories. Kyiv recently launched a much-anticipated counteroffensive to take back occupied territory.

Russia, meanwhile, has stepped up its air campaign in Ukraine while the fighting continues along the front line.

Russian forces on Monday and overnight also shelled 16 settlements in the southern Zaporizhzhia region, the Ukrainian presidential office reported.

It said that a 77-year-old civilian was killed in the front-line town of Orikhiv, and that Russian shelling wounded three people in a nearby village recently retaken by Kyiv.

Also, a Russian supersonic cruise missile slammed into a cluster of holiday homes in central Ukraine, sparking a fire which injured a child, the presidential office said.

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Associated Press Writer Yuras Karmanau in Tallinn, Estonia, contributed to this report.

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

## The hazy future for caregiver payments expanded during the pandemic worries families

By TOM MURPHY and AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

Nathan Hill started receiving \$12.75 an hour from a state Medicaid program to help care for his severely disabled son during the pandemic, money he said allowed his family to stop using food stamps.

The program was designed to provide a continuation of care and ease a home health worker shortage that grew worse after COVID-19 hit.

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But now, with the COVID-19 public health emergency over, he worries that the extra income will disappear. Some states have already stopped payments while others have yet to make them permanent.

"The success of this during the pandemic was tremendous ... for the first time we were able to pay our own way," said the Meridian, Idaho, resident. "We're not relying on charities to help us pay our rent and utilities."

A total of 39 states, with the help of the federal government, either started paying family caregivers or expanded the population eligible for payment during the pandemic, according to a survey last summer by KFF, a non-profit that studies health care issues.

Depending on the state, family caregivers were paid for helping people with intellectual or physical disabilities, medically fragile children or patients dealing with traumatic brain or spinal cord injuries. Details like pay rates and who could be paid varied.

"For each state, there's a different story as to how this played out," said Alice Burns, associate director of KFF's program on Medicaid and the uninsured.

Researchers say there are no good national estimates for how many family caregivers started receiving payments during the pandemic.

About 53 million people provided care for family members with medical problems or disabilities, according to a 2020 report from AARP and the National Alliance for Caregiving.

Those who got paychecks during the public health emergency say the money reduced financial stress, helped provide care and gave dignity to their previously unpaid work.

Jessa Reinhardt and her husband, Jason, each received \$24 an hour to provide care for their autistic daughters, ages 8 and 5. The Vernonia, Oregon, couple could not provide care at the same time.

The money allowed the family to build some savings since Jason quit his job several years ago to become a caregiver. It also allowed them to start taking the girls on outings to socialize them. They would make regular trips to Walmart so the girls could learn how to make choices and pick out a small item to buy.

But they had to curtail that once their payments ended in May. Jessa Reinhardt said the girls will still want to buy something.

"We can't always say yes to that," she said.

While some states have ended caregiver payments for now, federal officials say several states are still considering their next steps. Laws and waivers that regulate who can receive caregiver payments after the public health emergency may make it challenging for some to continue payments.

Federal officials say they are encouraging states to continue family caregiver payments.

States found that being flexible with caregiver payments helped keep residents served during the pandemic, said Kate McEvoy, executive director of the National Association of Medicaid Directors. She said surveys have shown, too, that people generally like receiving care from family members.

But she also noted that there are concerns both nationally and at a state level about the potential for fraud when paying family members as opposed to an agency that may be subject to more oversight. States also want to make sure that any family caregivers are trained properly and provide quality care.

Idaho Medicaid administrator Juliet Charron said the state was working to continue reimbursement for parents and spouses who provide care. But she added that the program will "likely look a bit different from the flexibility that has been in place" during the public health emergency.

Hill expects his program will last a few more months.

He was paid during the pandemic to provide non-nursing care like bathing and changing Brady, who needs around-the-clock care after surviving a rare brain cancer diagnosed at just 14 months old. He says he has no nursing degree or certification but has training and years of experience. His work is monitored by a supervising nurse.

Both Hill and Reinhardt say they can't simply bring in a state-funded outside caregiver to help.

Hill has nurses come in to monitor his son on most overnights, but he delivers care during the day. Hill says caregivers are hard to find and quick to leave. He figures that the family has probably gone through around 50 nurses in the past 13 years.



He says each new one takes a few weeks to train, and then they frequently leave for a job with better pay. Reinhardt said bringing in help is too challenging partially because one of her daughters deals with severe anxiety. If an outside caregiver is late or calls in sick, their daughter may take days to recover from the disruption.

"There's no replacement for my husband and I," she said.

Even if outside caregivers were viable for these families, there might be a wait to get one.

More than 650,000 people were on waiting lists for home and community-based services in 2021, according to another KFF report. Who winds up on that list can depend on factors like worker shortages, the number of available services and whether states check patients on the list for eligibility.

Family caregivers can provide more consistent care and have better long-term knowledge of their patients than someone who comes in from the outside, noted Holly Carmichael, CEO of GT Independence, a Sturgis, Michigan, company that manages financial services for people with disabilities.

"You provide better services to someone you love and care about," said Carmichael, whose daughter was born with a rare congenital disease. "They're part of your life versus a job."

Carmichael's firm helps people do background checks on potential caregivers and then does payroll, tax withholdings and other paperwork once they are hired.

She said it makes no sense to end payments to family caregivers.

"We have a shortage of caregivers in our country," Carmichael said. "We need to be pulling every lever we can."

## Supreme Court rejects novel legislative theory but leaves a door open for 2024 election challenges

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI and DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

The U.S. Supreme Court shot down a controversial legal theory that could have changed the way elections are run across the country but left the door open to more limited challenges that could increase its role in deciding voting disputes during the 2024 presidential election.

The court's 6-3 ruling Tuesday drove a stake through the most extreme version of the so-called independent state legislature theory, which holds that legislatures have absolute power in setting the rules of federal elections and cannot be second-guessed by state courts. That decision cheered voting rights groups.

"We beat back the most serious legal threat our democracy has ever faced today," said Kathay Feng of Common Cause, whose lawsuit challenging congressional districts drawn by North Carolina's Republican-controlled legislature triggered the case.

But for some critics of the theory, the danger is not entirely past.

The court found that state courts still must act within "ordinary bounds" when reviewing laws governing federal elections. That gives another set of tools for those who lose election lawsuits in state courts to try to persuade federal judges to overturn those rulings.

"They've rejected a lot of the extreme stuff, but there is still a lot of room for ideological and partisan judging to come into play," said Rick Hasen, a law professor at the University of California Los Angeles who filed an amicus brief in the case urging the court to reject the theory across the board.

Conservatives who had advocated for limits on the role of state courts in federal elections agreed with Hasen that the court didn't settle the question of when, precisely, state courts need to stay out of federal elections. The issue may only get resolved in a last-minute challenge during the presidential election, they warned.

"Unfortunately, it's going to be 2024 on the emergency docket," said Jason Torchinsky, a Republican attorney who filed an amicus brief urging the court to adopt a more limited version of the theory.

The high court this week will decide whether to hear another case that touches on similar issues, an appeal by Ohio Republican lawmakers of a pair of state supreme court rulings directing them to draw fair congressional maps. The issue could come up in other cases where a state supreme court overturns congressional maps, such as in Wisconsin, where Democrats hope a new liberal majority on that state

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supreme court will reverse what they claim is a Republican gerrymander there.

The independent state legislature theory stems from the clause in the U.S. Constitution declaring that state legislatures shall set the "time, place and manner" of elections for the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. Advocates argue that shows the founders wanted to give legislatures ultimate power in federal elections.

The theory was alluded to by conservative Chief Justice William Rehnquist in the landmark 2000 case *Bush v. Gore*, where he noted that that clause suggested limits on whether the Florida Supreme Court could decide who would win the state's presidential electors.

As Republicans have gained more power in state legislatures, the theory has become more popular on the right.

In 2020, the Trump campaign asked the Supreme Court to overturn a ruling by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court allowing the tallying of mail ballots received after Election Day in a case that many thought would pivot on the theory. But the high court simply ordered the late mail ballots to be segregated during the vote count and, when they were too few in number to change the outcome, did nothing further. Joe Biden won the state by a little over 80,000 votes.

In the most extreme case, some Trump legal advisors in late 2020 wanted to use the theory to let state legislatures replace electors won by Biden with Trump-voting ones. They argued that any changes to voting procedures that year were improper if legislatures didn't sign off on them and that legislatures should have the power to declare the winner of presidential races.

North Carolina's GOP-controlled legislature last year argued that the theory meant its state supreme court couldn't overturn the map it drew that awarded a disproportionate share of the state's 14 congressional districts to Republicans. But Chief Justice John Roberts, writing for the majority in the case, known as *Moore v. Harper*, dismissed that argument as historically and legally inaccurate.

"When legislatures make laws," Roberts wrote, "they are bound by the provisions of the very documents that give them life."

Many democracy advocates contend this is the most important piece of the ruling and will foreclose most challenges of state court decisions in the future.

"We will see cases, but I think almost certainly – unless something really screwy happens – they're going to lose a lot," said Cameron Kistler, a legal counsel at the nonprofit group Protect Democracy. "I think the Supreme Court is going to want to draw a pretty firm line here, because the last thing they want is for every election law determination by every state official and every state court to present a federal issue."

Neal Katyal, a former acting solicitor general who argued the case for voting rights groups at the Supreme Court, said the ruling is "a signal that this United States Supreme Court, with a solid six justices behind it, will resist attempts by state legislatures to mess with the integrity of the 2024 election."

Conservative Justice Clarence Thomas, who along with Justice Neil Gorsuch dissented on the case, warned that a signal is not enough. He bemoaned the majority's refusal to spell out exactly when a state court would overreach, even if in most cases state courts will not.

"There are bound to be exceptions," Thomas wrote. "They will arise haphazardly, in the midst of quickly evolving, politically charged controversies, and the winners of federal elections may be decided by a federal court's expedited judgment."

Some election lawyers worried about just that possibility.

"It's critical that the rules for elections are clear and specified in advance, including the rules that follow from judicial doctrine," Rick Pildes, an NYU law professor, wrote on Tuesday. "We are going to see constant litigation around this issue in the 2024 elections until courts provide a more clear sense of the boundaries on state court decision-making."

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Associated Press writer Julie Carr Smyth in Columbus, Ohio, contributed to this report.

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"squatters" and the case as a straightforward real estate dispute.

"It's Jewish property and they want it back," he said. "(The Ghaith-Sub Labans) don't have any right to this property."

There is no equivalent right in Israel for hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who fled or were forced from their homes during the war surrounding Israel's establishment to return to lost properties.

Nora's case reflects the city's volatile history. Hailing from the southern Palestinian city of Hebron, her parents moved to west Jerusalem in 1945, then to the Old City when the capital was divided in the 1948 war.

As residents of the same Muslim Quarter apartment for seven decades, Nora's family gained the status of protected tenants, putting Israeli law on their side.

Nora shared with The Associated Press her Jordanian rental contract from 1953 that showed that she and Mustafa paid rent to a "General Custodian" for abandoned properties, first under Jordanian authorities and then under Israel after the 1967 war. She now pays rent — 200 Jordanian dinars, or \$282 each year — to the lawyers of the Jewish trust.

The case has dragged on for decades, as the Israeli custodian and then the Kollel Galicia trust contested the family's protected tenancy. Most recently, the Kollel Galicia endowment argued in 2019 that Nora's absence from her house that year could clear the way for their eviction.

Nora said the house was empty at times in 2019 because she was hospitalized with a back injury and later recovered in the houses of her adult children, whom Israeli authorities had previously expelled from the Old City apartment.

Israel's Supreme Court upheld the eviction order in late February, ending the saga that has subsumed almost her entire life and the lives of her five children. Two of her sons — Ahmad, a human rights researcher, and Rafat, a lawyer — have become full-time advocates for the case.

The Israeli police said that authorities "understand the emotions involved" but are "dedicated to upholding the rule of law" and enforcing the eviction.

Now in limbo, Nora feels her house has become a prison cell. Worried the settlers will seize on even a momentary absence to move in, she said she hasn't stepped outside since May. Her windows — and their breath-taking view of the golden shrine — are covered with wire mesh to protect against her neighbors' stones.

Last week, supporters and artists helped the family prepare their home for its future guests. They painted an olive tree in the living room with the words "We will remain," written in its wild roots. There is a portrait of Nora, too, with her wire-rimmed glasses and careful smile.

"They don't want peace, they want surrender," she said.

## **Trump wants to keep 'communists' and 'Marxists' out of the US. Here's what the law says**

By REBECCA SANTANA and ALI SWENSON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump has announced a new campaign proposal on United States immigration — barring "communists" and "Marxists" from entering the country.

The Republican former president, who is making another bid in 2024, on Saturday said he would use "Section 212 (f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act" to "order my government to deny entry to all communists and all Marxists."

The announcement was reminiscent of Trump's ban on travelers from several predominantly Muslim countries during his first term, which was heavily criticized as anti-Muslim and ultimately revoked by President Joe Biden.

"Those who come to enjoy our country must love our country," Trump said during a speech at the Faith and Freedom Coalition's conference in Washington, adding, "We're going to keep foreign, Christian-hating communists, Marxists and socialists out of America."

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He also said there needs to be a "new law" to address communists and Marxists who grew up in America, but didn't elaborate on what it would include.

Trump's proposal also raised questions about whether a decades-old law could actually be used to ban all communist and Marxist immigrants to the U.S., how it would work, and why Trump is so focused on these political theories in a country where few residents support them.

Here's a look at existing U.S. laws and what Trump's proposal could look like:

## WHAT DOES CURRENT U.S. LAW SAY ABOUT THIS?

U.S. immigration law already bars people who are members of a Communist Party from becoming naturalized citizens or green card holders, said Andrew Arthur, a former immigration judge and fellow at the Center for Immigration Studies, which is a Washington, D.C.-based think tank that advocates for less immigration in the U.S.

U.S. immigration law says that any immigrant "... who is or has been a member of or affiliated with the Communist or any other totalitarian party (or subdivision or affiliate thereof), domestic or foreign, is inadmissible."

The origins of that rule date back to 1918 when the U.S. government became concerned about "external threats of anarchism and communism," according to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services policy manual. At that time, it was also the end of World War I, communism was taking root in the Soviet Union, and the country would soon impose strict immigration quotas in the U.S.

But, it does have some exceptions. For example, people who had to join the Communist Party in order to get a job or if their membership was issued when under age 16, according to immigration code.

The prohibition also doesn't currently apply to someone who wants to visit the U.S., such as on a tourist visa or as a student.

During his speech Trump said he would use a particular section of U.S. immigration law — Section 212 (f) — to bar "all communists and all Marxists." That section gives broad authority to bar people who aren't U.S. citizens entering the country if their entry would be "detrimental to the interests of the United States."

## IS THERE PRECEDENT FOR THIS?

Trump's comments on barring communists and Marxists harken back to one of the more controversial actions of his administration — often referred to by critics as a travel ban on Muslims. Opponents cited Trump's own tweets and rhetoric in arguing that the travel ban discriminated against Muslims. But the high court ruled 5-4 in Trump's favor. Chief Justice John Roberts said in the majority opinion at the time that the justices weren't weighing in on whether it was good policy but that it was well within U.S. presidents' considerable authority over immigration and responsibility for keeping the nation safe.

Arthur said that case was a key indicator making him think that Trump would be on sound legal ground if he tried to bar communists or Marxists from entering the U.S. Arthur also said that foreign nationals trying to enter the U.S. have little of the constitutional rights afforded to American citizens.

Trump wasn't the first president to use this specific power of immigration law to limit who can come into the U.S. A 2020 Congressional Research Service report noted instances where it had been used by various presidents, but the report noted that Trump used the authority to impose broader restrictions than his predecessors.

## BUT HOW WOULD THIS ACTUALLY WORK?

Bill Hing, a professor at the University of San Francisco and general counsel to the California-based Immigrant Legal Resource Center, said Trump would run into legal trouble if he just did a blanket exclusion of all communists or Marxists.

In the travel ban that was eventually upheld by the Supreme Court, Hing said the court paid particular attention to the steps that the Trump administration had taken to check with U.S. embassies abroad on whether they could guarantee that people coming from those countries would not be a threat to the U.S.

"You have to have some justification," Hing said.

That thought was echoed by immigration attorney Allen Orr, the former president of the Washington, D.C.-based American Immigration Lawyers Association. Orr said the version that eventually made it to the high court had a "whole list of exceptions."



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"It's not a blanket ban if there are a ton of exceptions," Orr said.

IF TRUMP IS ELECTED, WHO WOULD BE AFFECTED BY THIS PLAN?

Analysts point squarely at one country: China, where tens of millions of people are members of the country's Communist Party.

Bates Gill is the executive director of the Center for China Analysis at the Asia Society. He said such a ban would most heavily impact China and should be viewed through that lens. Gill said beyond the vast number of members being Chinese government officials, party membership has also traditionally been a pathway for the upwardly mobile in China who are often well-educated, urban and internationally oriented. Since the late 1990s, Gill said, businesspeople have also been joining the party.

"In essence you would be banning the elite of China from entering the United States," he said. "It would be vast and sweeping and of course highly damaging to the relationship with China."

ARE THERE COMMUNISTS AND MARXISTS IN AMERICA NOW?

There are some, but judging by the membership of the national Communist Party, it's a fairly small number. Communist Party USA has about 15,000 people on its membership list, said party co-chair Joe Sims. The list is "pruned regularly," he said, but some of that group may not be active members.

The party is growing with about 2,000 to 3,000 new members a year, and has run some local school board and city council candidates, Sims added.

However, it doesn't have anyone in federal or state elected office, and hasn't run a presidential ticket since the mid-1980s, he said.

THEN WHY DOES TRUMP TALK ABOUT THEM SO MUCH?

Seeding fears that communists and Marxists are poised to take over the country has proved an effective way for the former president to animate his base.

While there's no real risk that the U.S. could soon become a "third world Marxist regime" as Trump has suggested, these attacks have helped him target voters' emotions in a country with a long history of anti-communist sentiment.

The tactic has also helped Trump appeal to some immigrants whose families faced oppression and political persecution under Communist regimes in countries such as Venezuela, Cuba and Vietnam.

Trump has also baselessly referred to his Democratic rivals with these terms since he first appeared on the political scene, but Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and other Republicans recently have piled on with similar attacks, claiming "woke" policies in America are part of a Marxist agenda.

Experts say it's false to suggest that communists or Marxists rule major U.S. institutions.

Biden, for example, is a capitalism advocate who has taken executive action to promote economic competition.

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Swenson reported from New York.

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The Associated Press receives support from several private foundations to enhance its explanatory coverage of elections and democracy. See more about AP's democracy initiative here. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## Haze over Great Lakes region reminds US residents that Canadian wildfires persist

By MELINA WALLING, MELISSA WINDER and TRISHA AHMED Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — The haze of unhealthy air that settled over Chicago and other Great Lakes cities Tuesday reminded U.S. residents from the Midwest to the Northeast and as far south as Kentucky to brace for more depending on which way the wind blows as Canadian wildfires rage on.

"Until the fires are out, there's a risk," said Bryan Jackson, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service. "If there's any north component to the wind, there's a chance it'll be smoky."

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Drifting smoke from the ongoing wildfires across Canada created curtains of haze and raised air quality concerns throughout the Great Lakes region and in parts of the central and eastern United States. The Environmental Protection Agency's AirNow.gov site showed parts of Illinois, lower Michigan and southern Wisconsin had the worst air quality in the U.S., and Chicago, Detroit and Milwaukee had air quality categorized as "very unhealthy."

In Minnesota, a record 23rd air quality alert was issued Tuesday through late Wednesday night across much of the state, as smoky skies obscured the skylines of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Michigan's Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy issued an air quality alert for the entire state. Wisconsin's Department of Natural Resources also issued an air quality advisory for the state.

In Chicago, officials urged young people, older adults and residents with health issues to spend more time indoors.

"Just driving into the zoo ... you could just see around the buildings, kind of just haze," said Shelly Woinowski, who was visiting the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago.

Some day care centers in the Chicago area told parents that their children would remain indoors Tuesday due to the poor air quality, while one youth sports club said it adjusted its activities to add more time indoors.

"As these unsafe conditions continue, the city will continue to provide updates and take swift action to ensure that vulnerable individuals have the resources they need to protect themselves and their families," Mayor Brandon Johnson said in a statement.

Fires in northern Quebec and low pressure over the eastern Great Lakes are responsible for the smoke, Jackson said. He added that a north wind would push the smoke further south, moving into southern Illinois, Indiana and Kentucky overnight.

The Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre reported Monday that 76,129 square kilometers (29,393 square miles) of land including forests has burned across Canada since Jan. 1. That exceeds the previous record set in 1989 of 75,596 square kilometers (29,187 square miles), according to the National Forestry Database.

Nationally, 490 fires are burning, with 255 of them considered to be out of control.

Even recent rainfall in Quebec likely won't be enough to extinguish the wildfires, but the wet weather could give firefighters a chance to get ahead of the flames, officials said Tuesday.

Nearly a quarter of the fires burning in Canada are in Quebec. Environment Canada meteorologist Simon Legault said he expects rain to stop falling by Wednesday morning in the regions most affected by forest fires.

Earlier this month, massive fires burning stretches of Canadian forests blanketed the northeastern United States and the Great Lakes region with smoke, turning the air yellowish gray and prompting warnings for people to stay inside and keep windows closed.

The small particles in wildfire smoke can irritate the eyes, nose and throat, and can affect the heart and lungs, making it harder to breathe. Health officials say it's important to limit outdoor activities as much as possible to avoid breathing in the particles.

In early June, U.S. President Joe Biden said in a statement that hundreds of American firefighters and support personnel have been in Canada since May and called attention to the fires as a reminder of the impacts of climate change.

The warming planet will produce hotter and longer heat waves, making for bigger, smokier fires, said Joel Thornton, professor and chair of the department of atmospheric sciences at the University of Washington.

Priti Marwah, who was beginning a run along Chicago's lakefront on Tuesday, described the haze in the city as "bad."

"Like, you can smell it bad," she said. "I run a hundred miles a week, so this is going to be dangerous today. You can feel it ... just even parking right there and coming out, I can feel it in my lungs."

Smoke from the wildfires moved into Minnesota late Monday, and ground-level smoke is expected to linger across southern, east-central and northeastern Minnesota. That includes the Twin Cities area, up to

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the northeast corner of the state and down to the southwest and southeast corners.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency tweeted that Tuesday marked the 23rd air quality alert in Minnesota this year, breaking the previous record of 21 in 2021. Minnesota usually averages two or three alerts in a season.

The agency said a cold front will move across Minnesota on Wednesday, bringing cleaner air from the west across the region by early Thursday.

But on Tuesday, the coming respite meant little to Dan Daley, a resident of St. Louis Park, Minnesota. "It's kind of miserable some days because you can't spend a lot of time outside," he said.

Ahmed reported from Minneapolis. AP reporter Steve Karnowski in Minneapolis, Corey Williams in Detroit and Ken Kusmer in Indianapolis contributed to the story.

## Impeachment? Censure? Stigma is falling away from Congress' most severe punishments

By STEPHEN GROVES and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republicans have held it over Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas for months. Attorney General Merrick Garland is facing it too. And President Joe Biden seemingly isn't far behind.

Driven by the demands of hard-right members, Republicans in the House are threatening impeachment against Biden and his top Cabinet officials, creating a backbeat of chatter about "high crimes and misdemeanors" that is driving legislative action, spurring committee investigations, raking in fundraising money and complicating the plans of Speaker Kevin McCarthy and his leadership team.

Long viewed as an option of last resort, to be triggered only for the most severe wrongdoing, the constitutionally authorized power of impeachment is rapidly moving from the extraordinary to the humdrum, driven in large part by Republicans and their grievances about how Democrats twice impeached President Donald Trump.

Republicans remain so opposed to Trump's impeachments, in fact, that they are pressing for votes to expunge the charges altogether — an attempt to clear his name that is without direct precedent in congressional history.

"We're seeing a generation of Republicans who are much more willing to test the boundaries of how much you can weaponize procedures," said Julian Zelizer, a Princeton University historian and political scientist.

McCarthy on Sunday made Garland the latest target of a potential impeachment investigation as Republicans examine how the Department of Justice handled the prosecution of Hunter Biden for federal tax offenses. It capped a tumultuous week in which hard-right Republicans forced a vote to send articles of impeachment against Biden to a committee for investigation and also voted to censure Democratic Rep. Adam Schiff for his remarks and actions during the 2017 investigation into Trump's ties to Russia.

Some Republicans are pushing for yet another censure action, this time against Democratic Rep. Bennie Thompson for his leadership of the House committee that investigated the Jan. 6 insurrection.

In the past, lawmakers have reserved censure, a punishment one step below expulsion, for grave misconduct. When former Rep. Charles Rangel, a New York Democrat, was censured in 2010 on a bipartisan vote for ethics violations, then-speaker Nancy Pelosi solemnly summoned him to the well of the House, where censured members must stand as the resolution is read in a moment of public shaming.

"We really tried hard to put aside the partisan considerations because we knew how sharp and potent the weapon (of censure) was," said former Rep. Steve Israel, Democrat of New York, who was among Pelosi's closest confidantes. "This thing used to be rare. Now, it's in every cycle, in breaking news."

When Schiff was censured last week, the proceedings quickly took on a carnival-like quality. Democrats, Pelosi included, streamed forward to stand shoulder-to-shoulder in the well of the House. They heckled McCarthy as he read the charges — calling out "Shame!" "Disgrace!" and "Adam! Adam!" — until the speaker left the dais.

## As a lengthy legal battle ends, a Palestinian family braces for eviction from Jerusalem home

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Few places in Jerusalem speak of the larger conflict being waged over the city more than the apartment of 68-year-old Nora Ghaith-Sub Laban.

As the last remaining Palestinians in a building filled with Israeli settlers, the Ghaith-Sub Labans have battled Israeli attempts to evict them from their Old City home for over 45 years.

That labyrinthine legal battle ended earlier this year, when the Israeli Supreme Court struck down the family's final motion for an appeal. Now, Israeli authorities have ordered the eviction of Nora and her husband Mustafa to take place by July 13. That includes one of the biggest holidays of the Islamic calendar, Eid al-Adha, which began Tuesday night.

"I can't sleep, I can't eat," Nora said from the apartment where she was born in 1955. From the outside, with its rough-hewed stones flattered by brilliant sunlight and its windows overlooking the golden Dome of the Rock, the 200-year-old home in the heart of the Muslim Quarter is a Jerusalem postcard. Inside, the paint has chipped and walls have peeled due to court orders barring the family from doing repairs.

In what she described as a campaign to make life so unbearable that she would simply leave, Nora said her Jewish neighbors spit and hurl stones and bottles at her. Israeli police turn up at her door, asking for IDs and demanding to know everyone who has passed in and out of her home.

"This is psychological war," she said.

The Israeli police said the check-ins were "not meant to intimidate or harass but to gather the necessary information" ahead of the eviction.

The Ghaith-Sub Laban case is not a dispute over a single property, advocates say, but part of a wider effort by Israeli settlers, with government backing, to cement Jewish control over the contested city, especially the Old City, home to Jerusalem's most important holy sites.

A similar dispute that could lead to evictions of Palestinian families in the nearby neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah stirred tensions that built up to a 2021 war between Israel and the Hamas militant group in Gaza that killed over 250 people.

The family's struggle has sparked numerous protest rallies by Israeli left-wing activists, some of which have spiraled into scuffles with Israeli police who have arrested those waving Palestinian national flags.

"It's more than just, 'Oh, I have this problem with my neighbor downstairs.' You are talking about a political and national conflict," said Yonatan Mizrahi, the settlement watch director at Peace Now, an Israeli advocacy group that opposes settlements. "What happens in the Old City does not stay in the Old City."

Captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war and later annexed in a move not internationally recognized, east Jerusalem has long been a crucible in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Today, more than 220,000 Jews live in east Jerusalem, largely in built-up settlements that Israel considers neighborhoods of its capital. Most of east Jerusalem's 350,000 Palestinian residents are crammed into overcrowded neighborhoods where there is little room to build.

Across the city's eastern half, settler organizations and Jewish trusts are pursuing court battles against Palestinian families to clear the way for settlers.

An Israeli law passed after the annexation of east Jerusalem allows Jews to reclaim properties that were Jewish before the formation of the Israeli state in 1948. Jordan controlled the area between 1948 and the 1967 war.

Nearly 1,000 Palestinians, including 424 children, currently face eviction in east Jerusalem, the United Nations humanitarian office said.

During British rule over historic Palestine, before the war over Israel's creation, the Ghaith-Sub Laban apartment was owned by a trust for Koller Galicia, a group that collected funds in Eastern Europe for Jewish families in Jerusalem. Its legal representative, Eli Attal, declined to comment on the case, sending only an emoji with its mouth taped shut.

Arieh King, a settler leader and deputy mayor of Jerusalem, described the Ghaith-Sub Laban family as



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"What goes around comes around," one Democrat could be heard shouting in the chamber. Republicans streamed from the chamber shaking their heads.

"That was wild in there," said Rep. Anna Paulina Luna, R-Fla. She had brought the censure resolution against Schiff, using a legislative tool that allowed her to bypass leadership and force a vote.

The fervor in the House for doling out punishment shows no signs of breaking — in part because lawmakers are reaping the media attention and fundraising dollars that are steadily replacing committee chairmanships as the locus of power in the House.

Luna, who is just months into her first House term after winning a Florida district formerly held by Democrats, was the subject of a Fox News interview in prime-time after her successful push to censure Schiff.

And the attention cut both ways. Schiff, who is running for a California Senate seat, seemed to relish the moment and leveraged it into a fundraising blitz.

"They go after people they think are effective; they go after people they think are standing up to them," Schiff said in an interview on "The View," one of several TV appearances he had in the aftermath.

Yet there's a risk that Republicans' appetite for using the punishment powers could easily escalate into a more serious test of whether Congress is legitimately wielding power — and nowhere does that possibility loom larger than when it comes to Biden.

Rep. Lauren Boebert, a Colorado Republican who won reelection last year by fewer than 600 votes, forced a vote last week on an impeachment resolution against Biden for "high crimes and misdemeanors" over his handling of the U.S. border with Mexico.

Republican leaders were able to bottle up Boebert's resolution, holding a vote that sent the matter to congressional committees for consideration.

Some Republicans, however, view it as a question of when, not if, Biden is impeached. Floor debate on the resolution took on the air of a dress rehearsal, as Democrats and Republicans debated whether Biden has committed "high crimes and misdemeanors" with his handling of border and immigration policy.

Only three other presidents in U.S. history have been impeached — Andrew Johnson, Bill Clinton and Trump, though none were convicted by the Senate. Should Republicans decide to make Biden the fourth, a system of checks and balances created by the framers could face a test like never before.

While the Constitution's impeachment standard of "high crimes and misdemeanors" is deliberately open-ended, the Republicans' impeachment argument against Biden has centered so far on disagreement with his policy decisions, namely his handling of the southern border, which they say amounts to breaking his oath of office.

Zelizer, the political historian, warned that moving forward with impeachment on those grounds would have lasting consequences.

"It weakens the function of government, it undermines trust in this democracy, and it will leave the democracy weaker than when it started," he said.

## Threatened by shortages, electric car makers race for supplies of lithium for batteries

By JOE McDONALD AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Threatened by possible shortages of lithium for electric car batteries, automakers are racing to lock in supplies of the once-obscure "white gold" in a politically and environmentally fraught competition from China to Nevada to Chile.

General Motors Co. and the parent company of China's BYD Auto Ltd. went straight to the source and bought stakes in lithium miners, a rare step in an industry that relies on outside vendors for copper and other raw materials. Others are investing in lithium refining or ventures to recycle the silvery-white metal from used batteries.

A shortfall in lithium supplies would be an obstacle for government and industry plans to ramp up sales to tens of millions of electric vehicles a year. It is fueling political conflict over resources and complaints about the environmental cost of extracting them.

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"We already have that risk" of not being able to get enough, said GM's chief financial officer, Paul A. Jacobson, at a Deutsche Bank conference in mid-June.

"We've got to have partnerships with people that can get us the lithium in the form that we need," Jacobson said.

Ford Motor Co. has signed contracts stretching up to 11 years into the future with lithium suppliers on two continents. Volkswagen AG and Honda Motor Co. are trying to reduce their need for freshly mined ore by forming recycling ventures.

Global lithium output is on track to triple this decade, but sales of electric SUVs, sports cars and sedans that rose 55% last year threaten to outrun that. Each battery requires about eight kilograms (17 pounds) of lithium, plus cobalt, nickel and other metals.

"There will be a shortage of EV battery supplies," said Joshua Cobb, senior auto analyst for BMI.

Adding to uncertainty, lithium has emerged as another conflict in strained U.S.-Chinese relations.

Beijing, Washington and other governments see metal supplies for electric vehicles as a strategic issue and are tightening controls on access. Canada ordered three Chinese companies last year to sell lithium mining assets on security grounds.

Other governments including Indonesia, Chile and Zimbabwe are trying to maximize their return on deposits of lithium, cobalt and nickel by requiring miners to invest in refining and processing before they can export.

GM is buying direct access to lithium by investing \$650 million in the Canadian developer of a Nevada mine that is the biggest U.S. source. In return, GM says it will get enough for 1 million vehicles a year.

Conservationists and American Indians are asking a federal court to block development of the Nevada mine, which the Biden administration has embraced as part of its clean energy agenda. Opponents say it might poison water supplies and soil and pollute nesting grounds for birds.

"Securing metals must not come at a sacrifice to the environment," said a U.S. group, the Natural Resources Defense Council, in a report last year.

BYD Auto's parent company, battery maker BYD Co., has announced more than \$5 billion in investments in lithium mining and refining over the past 18 months.

Most are in China, but BYD also is promising to spend \$290 million on a processing facility in Chile, one of the biggest lithium producers. In exchange, BYD is allowed to buy lithium from Chilean miners at a discount.

At home, BYD announced last year it would invest 28.5 billion yuan (\$4.2 billion) in a venture to produce 100,000 tons of lithium carbonate a year in the eastern city of Yichun.

Another Chinese automaker, NIO Inc., bought 12% of Australian lithium miner Greenwing Resources Ltd. last year for 12 million Australian dollars (\$8.1 million).

Despite rising output, the industry may face shortages of lithium and cobalt as early as 2025 if enough isn't invested in production, according to Leonardo Paoli and Timur Gul of the International Energy Agency.

"Supply side bottlenecks are becoming a real challenge," said Paoli and Gul in a report last year.

Automakers might be putting in their own money to reassure "notoriously risk-averse" miners, according to Alastair Bedwell of GlobalData. He said miners are reluctant to "go all out" on lithium until they are sure the industry won't switch to batteries made with other metals.

Even if they do, developing lithium sources is a yearslong process.

Mines that came online in 2010-19 took on average more than 16 years from discovery to the start of production, according to Paoli and Gul of the IEA.

"These long lead times raise questions about the ability of supply to ramp up," they wrote.

Investment by automakers might "help to remove some of their partners' risk and ultimately create more production," Bedwell said in an email.

Worldwide lithium resources are estimated at 80 million tons by the U.S. Geological Survey.

Bolivia's are the biggest at 21 millions tons, followed by Australia with 17 million and Chile with 9 million. China has 4.5 million tons of known reserves and the United States has 1 million.

Forecasts of annual global production range as high as 1.5 million tons by 2030. But demand, if EV sales

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keep rising at double-digit annual rates, is forecast to increase to up to 3 million tons.

Sales of battery-powered and gasoline-electric hybrid vehicles took off in 2021, more than doubling over the previous year to 6.8 million, according to EV Volumes, a research firm. Last year's sales rose to 10.5 million.

China accounted for 60% of last year's sales, two-thirds of production and three-quarters of battery manufacturing.

Ford plans to sell 2 million EVs a year by 2026. GM, with 2022 sales of 3.6 million cars, has plans for 30 electric models and North American production capacity of 1 million two years from now in 2025.

Toyota Motor Co.'s annual target is 3.5 million by 2030. VW, which sold 4.6 million cars worldwide last year, is aiming for 70% of sales in Europe and 50% in China and the United States to be electric by 2030.

President Joe Biden last year announced an official goal for half of all new cars sold in the United State to be electric or other zero-emissions technology by 2030.

As sales rise, so does government unease, especially in Washington and Beijing, about access to lithium and other minerals and the potential for strategic competition.

Volkswagen's battery unit, PowerCo, signed an agreement with Canada last August to develop suppliers of "critical raw materials" including lithium, cobalt and nickel.

The German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, in a statement welcomed cooperation with "close friends" on "raw material security."

Last year, Canada imposed limits on foreign involvement in production of lithium and other "critical minerals" for batteries and other high-tech products.

China's government has accused the United States, Canada, Japan and other governments of misusing phony security concerns to hurt Chinese competitors in electric cars, smartphones, clean energy and other emerging technologies.

Other governments welcome Chinese investment.

China's biggest lithium producer, Ganfeng Lithium Co., bought Argentina's Lithea Inc. last year for \$962 million. In 2021, Ganfeng bought Mexico's Bacanora Lithium for \$391 million. It is developing a project in the northern region of Sonora with planned annual output of 35,000 tons.

China's Tianqi Lithium Inc. owns 23.8% of Chile's dominant producer, Sociedad Quimicay Minera, or SQM. About two-thirds of the world's lithium comes from mines. That involves crushing rock and using acids to extract metals. It leaves toxic heaps of chemical-laced tailings.

The rest is extracted from salt lakes or from salt flats called salars in Chile and Bolivia. That can require vast evaporation ponds.

The industry is working on technology to extract lithium from hot springs, lakes and clay deposits with less environmental impact.

VW has a five-year supply contract with Vulcan Energy Resources Ltd., which plans to produce lithium hydroxide from geothermal brine in Germany's Rhine Valley.

Vulcan says its process uses no fossil fuels. That is a response to complaints EVs do little to reduce overall carbon emissions because energy for their manufacturing and charging usually comes from coal, gas and oil.

As they ramp up supplies, automakers face another bottleneck: Lack of refining capacity to purify raw lithium into battery material.

Tesla Inc. broke ground in Texas last month for a lithium refinery that CEO Elon Musk should produce enough for 1 million vehicles per year by 2025.

"The choke point is much more on refining capacity than it is on mining," said Musk in an April conference call with reporters.

Other manufacturers including BMW AG, which aims to make at least half its sales fully electric by 2030, are buying stakes in lithium refiners.

As for GM, "I don't know" whether it will build its own refinery, Jacobson said.

"Where I can help fund some expansion in exchange for guaranteed supply, that's a good thing," he

said. "We should be open to doing that."

Smaller brands without their own lithium supply might be squeezed, according to Bedwell. He said they might be forced to pay more, which might threaten the existence of some.

"Certainly, mass-market players who don't get their lithium strategy right will be at a disadvantage," said Bedwell.

## **Tensions erupt in a Paris suburb after a 17-year-old delivery driver is killed in a police standoff**

PARIS (AP) — A 17-year-old delivery driver was shot and killed by a police officer Tuesday in a Paris suburb, according to his family's lawyers. The death unleashed tensions between angry residents setting barricades on fire and police firing tear gas.

The police officer was detained on suspicion of manslaughter, according to the prosecutor's office in the Paris suburb of Nanterre. It said the shooting took place during a traffic check.

The victim was wounded by a gunshot and died at the scene, the prosecutor's office said in a statement. A passenger in the car was briefly detained and released, and police are searching for another passenger who fled.

Deadly use of firearms is less common in France than in the United States, and Tuesday's death drew national attention.

A team of three lawyers for the driver identified him as 17-year-old Nael M. In a statement, the lawyers rejected a reported statement by the police that officers' lives were in danger because the driver had threatened to run them over.

The lawyers cited a video reported to be of the incident circulating online that shows two police officers leaning into the driver-side window of a yellow car, before the vehicle pulls away and one officer fires toward the driver. The car is later seen crashed into a post nearby.

The death sparked unrest in the streets of Nanterre. Local residents held a protest outside the police headquarters. Some groups set alight barricades and garbage bins, smashed up a bus stop and threw firecrackers toward police, who responded with tear gas and dispersion grenades, according to videos broadcast on local media.

Several people have died or sustained injuries at the hands of French police in recent years, prompting demands for more accountability. France also saw protests against racial profiling and other injustice in the wake of George Floyd's killing by police in Minnesota.

## **Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani interviewed in Jan. 6 investigation**

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rudy Giuliani, who as a member of Donald Trump's legal team sought to overturn 2020 presidential election results in battleground states, was interviewed recently by investigators with the Justice Department special counsel's office.

A spokesman for Giuliani confirmed he met with the special counsel. "The appearance was entirely voluntary and conducted in a professional manner," Ted Goodman said in a statement.

A person familiar with the matter said the interview was not done before a grand jury. The person, who insisted on anonymity to discuss an ongoing investigation, would not say what questions investigators asked.

The interview is an additional sign of busy investigative activity by special counsel Jack Smith as his team of prosecutors scrutinizes efforts by Trump and his allies to undo the results of the election in the weeks before the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the Capitol.

Smith filed a separate case earlier this month charging Trump with illegally retaining classified documents at his Florida home, Mar-a-Lago.

As a lawyer for Trump, Giuliani pushed bogus legal challenges to the presidential election results. The legal team filed lawsuits in battleground states raising unsupported claims of vast election fraud even though



officials, including Trump's own attorney general, William Barr, said no such pervasive problems existed. Giuliani's efforts have made him a key figure in investigations. He was interviewed last year by a House committee that investigated the run-up to the Jan. 6 attack and by prosecutors in Fulton County, Georgia, who have been investigating efforts to subvert that state's election.

Justice Department prosecutors have for months now been examining what role Trump legal advisers played in working to undo the election. Last July, John Eastman, a conservative lawyer who aided Trump's efforts to challenge the election results, reported that federal agents had seized his phone.

A spokesman for the special counsel's office did not immediately return an email seeking comment. CNN first reported the interview with Giuliani.

Follow Eric Tucker on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/etuckerAP>

## Florida issues health advisory after 4 locally contract malaria in first spread in US in 20 years

By ARTHUR BRICE and FREIDA FRISARO Associated Press

TERRA CEIA ISLAND, Fla. (AP) — The Florida Department of Health has issued a statewide mosquito-borne illness advisory after four locally contracted cases of malaria were reported along the Gulf Coast south of Tampa.

On Monday, a health alert issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also noted that another case has been detected in Texas, marking the first time there has been a local spread of malaria in the United States in 20 years.

The four residents in Sarasota County received treatment and have recovered, according to the state's Department of Health advisory. Malaria, caused by a parasite that spreads through bites from Anopheles mosquitoes, causes fever, chills, sweats, nausea and vomiting, and headaches. It is not spread person to person.

It's the threat of the mosquito-borne illness that concerns Kathleen Gibson-Dee, who lives on Terra Ceia Island, which is about 20 miles (32 kilometers) north of Sarasota County.

Even though no malaria cases have been reported in Manatee County, where Terra Ceia is located, Gibson-Dee said that she's now routinely using bug repellent while working in her garden.

"I don't go out without it," she told The Associated Press on Tuesday. "And we don't go out in the evening because you can see clouds and clouds of bugs now. They may not all be mosquitoes, but there's certainly mosquitos out there."

Another resident, Tom Lyons, says news of the malaria cases "makes me take mosquito protection a little more seriously."

The mosquito population thrives in Terra Ceia because "it's an island surrounded by a lot of shallow water and mangroves, and ideal places for mosquitoes," Lyons said.

Officials in Manatee County have ramped up efforts to control the mosquito population.

Chris Lesser, director of the Manatee County mosquito control district, said they're primarily using helicopters to combat the mosquito population because they cover between 15,000 and 20,000 acres (6070 to 8082 hectares) in one night. A truck can only cover around 1,000 acres (404 hectares) a night, he said.

"We really want to focus on killing the adult mosquito before they have the opportunity to feed on one person that may be infected with malaria and then transmit that disease to a second person," Lesser said.

He said the time frame for when a mosquito can become infected to when it can transmit the disease to a person is about 14 days.

"So we're trying to get in there about once every seven to 10 days and really knock down the mosquito population. And that process will continue until the public health alert that we're currently under is lifted," Lesser said.

"It's a curtain," he continued. "We're trying to keep the malaria mosquitos from coming into our county through our southern border by using aggressive mosquito control activities."

Officials in Sarasota County area also using similar tactics to control mosquitos, the county's health department said in an advisory.

The initial malaria advisory was issued in Sarasota County after the first case was reported in late May. That was followed by a second case, and then two more, said Jae Williams, the press secretary for the Florida Department of Health.

"As soon as it crossed over from one to two confirmed cases, it progressed to an alert," Williams said, comparing it to the system of issuing a hurricane watch versus a hurricane warning — when a storm is imminent.

"Listen, the conditions are favorable," Williams continued. "It's not just some rogue one mosquito. People need to be paying attention."

Williams said health officials are being proactive.

"We know we are going into the Fourth of July holiday. We know the summer's only getting hotter and wetter over the next couple of months," Williams said. "So we just wanted to give Floridians a big kind of heads up, put the whole state on notice."

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 have 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.

Frizaro reported from Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

## 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 the 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.

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"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 the 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.

The 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."

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 the FDA's oversight, only one of which has been closed.

The 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, the 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.

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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 you can just send your artwork and logo to one of these companies and it will be on a pallet next week."

Esco Bars come 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 Suriff says his company has gone to great lengths to comply with the FDA, spending \$8 million 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 Suriff, 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 recently rebranded its U.S. products to EB Design, due to a trademark dispute.

iMiracle criticized the FDA's recent actions in an emailed statement, saying the agency is "dead-set on eliminating all vaping products from the U.S. marketplace." The company said it would defend its adult customers by "fighting back" against the agency's actions.

National retail chains tend to avoid 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 independent stores out of vans or trucks.

## OUTDATED AND UNFINISHED RULES

The 2009 law that gave the 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 the 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.



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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 the 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 Vapor 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, which is 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, the 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.”

Follow Matthew Perrone on Twitter: @AP\_FDWriter

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## **Deputies accused of abusing Black men are fired by Mississippi sheriff amid federal probe**

By MICHAEL GOLDBERG Associated Press/Report for America

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — All five Mississippi deputy sheriffs who responded to an incident where two Black men accused the deputies of beating and sexually assaulting them before shooting one of them in the mouth have been fired or resigned, authorities announced Tuesday.”

The announcement comes months after Michael Corey Jenkins and his friend Eddie Terrell Parker said deputies from the Rankin County Sheriff’s Department burst into a home without a warrant. The men said deputies beat them, assaulted them with a sex toy and shocked them repeatedly with Tasers in a roughly 90-minute period during the Jan. 24 episode, Jenkins and Parker said.

Jenkins said one of the deputies shoved a gun in his mouth and then fired the weapon, leaving him with serious injuries to his face, tongue and jaw. The Justice Department opened a civil rights investigation into the Rankin County Sheriff’s Department after the episode.

Rankin County Sheriff Bryan Bailey announced Tuesday that deputies involved in the episode had been fired, and some had already resigned. He would not provide the names of the deputies who had been terminated or say how many law enforcement officers were fired. Bailey would not answer additional questions about the episode.

“Due to recent developments, including findings during our internal investigation, those deputies that were still employed by this department have all been terminated,” Bailey said at a news conference. “We understand that the alleged actions of these deputies has eroded the public’s trust in the department. Rest assured that we will work diligently to restore that trust.”

Bailey’s announcement also follows an Associated Press investigation that found several deputies who were involved with the episode were also linked to at least four violent encounters with Black men since 2019 that left two dead and another with lasting injuries. Deputies who had been accepted to the sheriff’s office’s Special Response Team — a tactical unit whose members receive advanced training — were involved in each of the four encounters.

Deputies said the raid was prompted by a report of drug activity at the home. Police and court records obtained by the AP revealed the identities of two deputies at the Jenkins raid: Hunter Elward and Christian Dedmon. It was not immediately clear whether any of the deputies had attorneys who could comment on their behalf.

In a phone interview Tuesday, Jason Dare, an attorney representing the Rankin County Sheriff’s Department, said the department knows of five deputies who conducted the Jenkins raid. Jenkins and his attorney have said six deputies were at the home. All five identified by the department were either fired or resigned.

There is no body camera footage of the episode. Records obtained by the AP show that Tasers used by the deputies were turned on, turned off or used dozens of times during a roughly 65-minute period before Jenkins was shot.

Jenkins and Parker have also filed a federal civil rights lawsuit and are seeking \$400 million in damages. In a statement Tuesday, Malik Shabazz, an attorney representing Jenkins and Parker, celebrated the firing of the officers and called for criminal indictments of deputies by the state attorney general and the Justice Department.

“The firing of the Rankin County Mississippi Sheriff’s deputies involved in the torture and shooting of Michael Jenkins and Eddie Parker is a significant action on the path to justice for one of the worst law

enforcement tragedies in recent memory," Shabazz said. "Sheriff Bryan Bailey has finally acted after supporting much of the bloodshed that has occurred under his reign in Rankin County."

Michael Goldberg is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues. Follow him on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/mikergoldberg>.

## Canadian wildfires are causing the worst air in the US in cities like Chicago and Detroit

By MELINA WALLING, MELISSA WINDER and TRISHA AHMED Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Drifting smoke from the ongoing wildfires across Canada is creating curtains of haze and raising air quality concerns throughout the Great Lakes region and in parts of the central and eastern United States.

The Environmental Protection Agency's AirNow.gov site showed parts of Illinois, lower Michigan and southern Wisconsin had the worst air quality in the U.S. on Tuesday afternoon, and Chicago, Detroit and Milwaukee had air quality categorized as "very unhealthy."

In Minnesota, a record 23rd air quality alert was issued Tuesday through late Wednesday night across much of the state, as smoky skies obscure the skylines of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Michigan's Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy issued an air quality alert for the entire state. Wisconsin's Department of Natural Resources also issued an air quality advisory for the state.

In Chicago, officials urged young people, older adults and residents with health issues to spend more time indoors.

"Just driving into the zoo ... you could just see around the buildings, kind of just haze," said Shelly Woinowski, who was visiting the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago.

Some day care centers in the Chicago area have told parents that their children will remain indoors Tuesday due to the poor air quality, while one youth sports club says it adjusted its activities to add more time indoors.

"As these unsafe conditions continue, the city will continue to provide updates and take swift action to ensure that vulnerable individuals have the resources they need to protect themselves and their families," Mayor Brandon Johnson said in a release.

In the Milwaukee area, Flight for Life Wisconsin was unable to respond to a motorcycle-van crash because the Federal Aviation Administration requires 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) visibility, and the visibility was reduced to three-quarters to 1.5 miles (1.2-2.4 kilometers) because of the hazy skies, Executive Director Leif Erickson said.

Fires in northern Quebec and low pressure over the eastern Great Lakes are sending smoke through northern Michigan, and across southern Wisconsin and Chicago, said Bryan Jackson, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service.

Jackson added that a north wind would push the smoke further south, moving into Illinois, Indiana and Kentucky later Tuesday and overnight.

The Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre reported Monday that 76,129 square kilometers (29,393 square miles) of land including forests has burned across Canada since Jan. 1. That exceeds the previous record set in 1989 of 75,596 square kilometers (29,187 square miles), according to the National Forestry Database.

Nationally, there are currently 490 fires burning, with 255 of them considered to be out of control.

Even recent rainfall in Quebec likely won't be enough to extinguish the wildfires ravaging the northern part of that province, but the wet weather could give firefighters a chance to get ahead of the flames, officials said Tuesday.

Nearly a quarter of the fires burning in Canada are in Quebec. Environment Canada meteorologist Simon Legault said he expects rain to stop falling by Wednesday morning in the regions most affected by forest

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fires.

Earlier this month, massive fires burning stretches of Canadian forests blanketed the northeastern United States and the Great Lakes region, turning the air yellowish gray, and prompting warnings for people to stay inside and keep windows closed.

The small particles in wildfire smoke can irritate the eyes, nose and throat, and can affect the heart and lungs, making it harder to breathe. Health officials say it's important to limit outdoor activities as much as possible to avoid breathing in these particles.

"Until the fires are out, there's a risk," Jackson said. "If there's any north component to the wind, there's a chance it'll be smoky."

In early June, U.S. President Joe Biden said in a statement that hundreds of American firefighters and support personnel have been in Canada since May, and called attention to the fires as a reminder of the impacts of climate change.

The warming planet will produce hotter and longer heat waves, making for bigger, smokier fires, according to Joel Thornton, professor and chair of the department of atmospheric sciences at the University of Washington.

Priti Marwah, who was beginning a run along the city's lakefront, describes the haze in Chicago Tuesday as "bad."

"Like, you can smell it bad," she said. "I run a hundred miles a week, so this is going to be dangerous today. You can feel it ... just even parking right there and coming out, I can feel it in my lungs."

Smoke from the wildfires moved into Minnesota late Monday, and ground-level smoke is expected to linger across southern, east-central and northeastern Minnesota. That includes the Twin Cities area, up to the northeast corner of the state and down to the southwest and southeast corners.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency tweeted that Tuesday marked the 23rd air quality alert in Minnesota this year, breaking the previous record of 21 in 2021. Minnesota usually averages two or three alerts in a season.

St. Paul recorded the worst air quality in the United States two weeks ago due to smoke from Canadian wildfires. As of midday Tuesday, the air quality was rated "unhealthy" across eastern Minnesota from the Canadian border to the Iowa border.

The MPCA said a cold front will move across Minnesota on Wednesday, bringing cleaner air from the west across the region by early Thursday.

But on Tuesday, the coming respite meant little to Dan Daley, a resident of St. Louis Park, Minnesota.

"It's kind of miserable some days because you can't spend a lot of time outside," he said.

Daley said he smelled – and tasted – smoke in the air when he left the house this morning. He saw a hazy sky and wondered if that will be the norm for future summers in the area. When the air quality makes it unhealthy to be outside, Daley struggles to do the things he enjoys like hiking, camping and walking around town.

He worries that people in other parts of the country who haven't experienced days of bad air quality will think it's not a big deal. "If they think the smoke's not that bad, they should come up here and see it for themselves" Daley said.

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Ahmed reported from Minneapolis. AP reporter Steve Karnowski in Minneapolis, Corey Williams in Detroit and Ken Kusmer in Indianapolis contributed to the story.

## **Prigozhin has moved to Belarus, and Russia won't press charges for mutiny**

By The Associated Press undefined

Yevgeny Prigozhin, owner of the private army of prison recruits and other mercenaries who have fought some of the deadliest battles in Russia's invasion of Ukraine, escaped prosecution for his abortive armed rebellion against the Kremlin and arrived Tuesday in Belarus.



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The exile of the 62-year-old owner of the Wagner Group was part of a deal that ended the short-lived mutiny in Russia. Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko confirmed Prigozhin was in Belarus, and said he and some of his troops were welcome to stay "for some time" at their own expense.

Prigozhin has not been seen since Saturday, when he waved to well-wishers from a vehicle in the southern city of Rostov. He issued a defiant audio statement on Monday. And on Tuesday morning, a private jet believed to belong to him flew from Rostov to an airbase southwest of the Belarusian capital of Minsk, according to data from FlightRadar24.

Meanwhile, Moscow said preparations were underway for Wagner's troops fighting in Ukraine, who numbered 25,000 according to Prigozhin, to hand over their heavy weapons to Russia's military. Prigozhin had said such moves were planned ahead of a July 1 deadline for his fighters to sign contracts — which he opposed — to serve under Russia's military command.

Russian authorities also said Tuesday they have closed a criminal investigation into the uprising and are pressing no armed rebellion charge against Prigozhin or his followers.

Still, Russian President Vladimir Putin appeared to set the stage for financial wrongdoing charges against an affiliated organization Prigozhin owns. Putin told a military gathering that Prigozhin's Concord Group earned 80 billion rubles (\$941 million) from a contract to provide the military with food, and that Wagner had received over 86 billion rubles (over \$1 billion) in the past year for wages and additional items.

"I hope that while doing so they didn't steal anything, or stole not so much," Putin said, adding that authorities would look closely at Concord's contract.

For years, Prigozhin has enjoyed lucrative catering contracts with the Russian government. Police who searched his St. Petersburg office on Saturday said they found 4 billion rubles (\$48 million) in trucks outside, according to media reports the Wagner boss confirmed. He said the money was intended to pay soldiers' families.

Prigozhin and his fighters stopped the revolt on Saturday, less than 24 hours after it began and shortly after Putin spoke on national TV, branding the rebellion leaders, whom he did not name, as traitors.

The charge of mounting an armed mutiny could have been punishable by up to 20 years in prison. Prigozhin's escape from prosecution, at least on an armed rebellion charge, is in stark contrast to Moscow's treatment of its critics, including those staging anti-government protests in Russia, where many opposition figures have been punished with long sentences in notoriously harsh penal colonies.

Lukashenko said some of the Wagner fighters are now in the Luhansk region in eastern Ukraine that Russia illegally annexed last September.

The series of stunning events in recent days constitutes the gravest threat so far to Putin's grip on power, occurring during the 16-month-old war in Ukraine, and he again acknowledged the threat Tuesday in saying the result could have been a civil war.

In addresses this week, Putin has sought to project stability and demonstrate authority.

In a Kremlin ceremony Tuesday, the president walked down the red-carpeted stairs of the 15th century white-stone Palace of Facets to address soldiers and law enforcement officers, thanking them for their actions to avert the rebellion.

In a further show of business-as-usual, Russian media showed Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, in his military uniform, greeting Cuba's visiting defense minister in a pomp-heavy ceremony. Prigozhin has said his goal had been to oust Shoigu and other military brass, not stage a coup against Putin.

Lukashenko, who has ruled Belarus with an iron hand for 29 years while relying on Russian subsidies and support, portrayed the uprising as the latest development in the clash between Prigozhin and Shoigu. While the mutiny unfolded, he said, he put Belarus' armed forces on a combat footing and urged Putin not to be hasty in his response, lest the conflict spiral out of control.

He said he told Prigozhin he would be "squashed like a bug" if he tried to attack Moscow, and warned that the Kremlin would never agree to his demands.

Like Putin, the Belarusian leader portrayed the war in Ukraine as an existential threat, saying, "If Russia collapses, we all will perish under the debris."

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Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov would not disclose details about the Kremlin's deal with Prigozhin, saying only that Putin had provided "certain guarantees" aimed at avoiding a "worst-case scenario."

Asked why the rebels were allowed to get as close as about 200 kilometers (about 125 miles) from Moscow without facing serious resistance, National Guard chief Viktor Zolotov told reporters: "We concentrated our forces in one fist closer to Moscow. If we spread them thin, they would have come like a knife through butter."

Zolotov, a former Putin bodyguard, also said the National Guard lacks battle tanks and other heavy weapons and now would get them.

The mercenaries shot down at least six Russian helicopters and a military communications plane as they advanced on Moscow, killing at least a dozen airmen, according to Russian news reports. The Defense Ministry didn't release information about casualties, but Putin honored them Tuesday with a moment of silence.

"Pilots, our combat comrades, died while confronting the mutiny," he said. "They didn't waver and fulfilled the orders and their military duty with dignity."

Some Russian war bloggers and patriotic activists have vented outrage that Prigozhin and his troops won't be punished for killing the airmen.

Prigozhin voiced regret for the deaths in his statement Monday, but said Wagner troops fired because the aircraft were bombing them.

In his televised address Monday night, Putin said rebellion organizers had played into the hands of Ukraine's government and its allies. He praised the rank-and-file mutineers, however, who "didn't engage in fratricidal bloodshed and stopped on the brink."

A Washington-based think tank said that was "likely in an effort to retain" the Wagner fighters in Ukraine, where Moscow needs "trained and effective manpower" as it faces a Ukrainian counteroffensive.

The Institute for the Study of War also said 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.

Putin has offered Prigozhin's fighters the choice of either coming under Russian military command, leaving service or going to Belarus.

Lukashenko said there is no reason to fear Wagner's presence in his country, though in Russia, Wagner-recruited convicts have been suspected of violent crimes. The Wagner troops gained "priceless" military knowledge and experience to share with Belarus, he said.

But exiled Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, who challenged Lukashenko in a 2020 election that was widely seen as fraudulent and triggered mass protests, said Wagner troops will threaten the country and its neighbors.

"Belarusians don't welcome war criminal Prigozhin," she told The Associated Press. "If Wagner sets up military bases on our territory, it will pose a new threat to our sovereignty and our neighbors."

While attention focused on the aftermath of the Russian rebellion, the war in Ukraine continued to take a human toll in what U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Bridget Brink called "terrible scenes from another brutal attack."

Russian missiles struck Kramatorsk and a village nearby in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region with missiles, killing at least four people, including a child, and wounding some 40 others, with still others under building rubble, including in a café, authorities reported.

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Associated Press writer Yuras Karmanau in Tallinn, Estonia, contributed.

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

## The Great Grift: More than \$200 billion in COVID-19 aid may have been stolen, federal watchdog says

By RICHARD LARDNER and JENNIFER McDERMOTT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — More than \$200 billion may have been stolen from two large COVID-19 relief initiatives, according to new estimates from a federal watchdog investigating federally funded programs that helped small businesses survive the worst public health crisis in more than a hundred years.

The numbers issued Tuesday by the U.S. Small Business Administration inspector general are much greater than the office's previous projections and underscore how vulnerable the Paycheck Protection and COVID-19 Economic Injury Disaster Loan programs were to fraudsters, particularly during the early stages of the coronavirus pandemic.

The inspector general's report said "at least 17 percent of all COVID-EIDL and PPP funds were disbursed to potentially fraudulent actors." The fraud estimate for the COVID-19 Economic Injury Disaster Loan program is more than \$136 billion, which represents 33 percent of the total money spent on that program, according to the report. The Paycheck Protection fraud estimate is \$64 billion, the inspector general said.

In comments attached to the report, a senior SBA official disputed the new numbers. Bailey DeVries, SBA's acting associate administrator for capital access, said the inspector general's "approach contains serious flaws that significantly overestimate fraud and unintentionally mislead the public to believe that the work we did together had no significant impact in protecting against fraud."

The SBA inspector general had previously estimated fraud in the COVID-19 disaster loan program at \$86 billion and the Paycheck Protection program at \$20 billion.

The Associated Press reported June 13 that scammers and swindlers potentially swiped about \$280 billion in COVID-19 emergency aid; an additional \$123 billion was wasted or misspent. The bulk of the potential losses are from the two SBA programs and another to provide unemployment benefits to workers suddenly unemployed by the economic upheaval caused by the pandemic. The three initiatives were begun during the Trump administration and inherited by President Joe Biden. Combined, the loss estimated by AP represents 10% of the \$4.2 trillion the U.S. government has so far disbursed in COVID relief aid.

The federal government has now reported \$276 billion in potential fraud, a figure that aligns with the AP's analysis.

Gene Sperling, a senior White House official overseeing pandemic relief spending, said in a interview Tuesday that 86% of the fraud, or potential fraud, in the emergency loan programs happened during the first nine months of the pandemic when President Donald Trump was in office.

"\$200 billion is a very big number, but this, again, should be remembered as potential fraud," Sperling said. "We think the amount of likely or actual fraud is significantly less, significantly under \$100 billion, perhaps around \$40 billion."

But he added, "whichever it is, it's unacceptably high."

The SBA inspector general, Hannibal "Mike" Ware, said in a statement Tuesday that the report "utilizes investigative casework, prior (inspector general) reporting, and cutting-edge data analysis to identify multiple fraud schemes used to potentially steal over \$200 billion from American taxpayers and exploit programs meant to help those in need."

Ware, in an interview with The Associated Press earlier this month, said these latest fraud figures won't be the last ones issued by his office.

"We will continue to assess fraud until we're finished with the investigations on these things," Ware said. That could be a long while. His office has a backlog of more than 90,000 actionable leads into pandemic relief fraud, which amounts to nearly a century's worth of work.

SBA issued its own report Tuesday detailing anti-fraud measures it has adopted. The agency's administrator, Isabella Casillas Guzman, said in an emailed statement that the report outlines "the effective measures added to fight fraud and hold bad actors responsible."

SBA previously told The Associated Press the federal government has not developed an accepted system for assessing fraud in federal programs. Previous analyses, the agency said, have pointed to "potential

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fraud" or "fraud indicators" in a manner that conveys those numbers as a true fraud estimate when they are not. For the COVID-19 Economic Injury Disaster Loan program, the agency said it's "working estimate" found \$28 billion in likely fraud.

Fraud in pandemic unemployment assistance programs stands at \$76 billion, according to congressional testimony from the Labor Department's inspector general, Larry Turner. That's a conservative estimate. An additional \$115 billion mistakenly went to people who should not have received the benefits, according to his testimony.

The Biden administration put in place stricter rules to stem pandemic fraud, including use of a "Do Not Pay" database. Biden also recently proposed a \$1.6 billion plan to boost law enforcement efforts to go after pandemic relief fraudsters.

Bob Westbrook, a former executive director of the federal Pandemic Response Accountability Committee, said in an interview the \$200 billion number is "unacceptable, unprecedented and unfathomable." Westbrook published a book last week, "Left Holding the Bag: A Watchdog's Account of How Washington Fumbled its COVID Test."

"The swift distribution of funds and program integrity are not mutually exclusive," Westbrook said Tuesday. "The government can walk and chew gum at the same time. They should have put basic fraud controls in place to verify people's identity and to make sure targeted relief was getting into the right hands."

The fraudulent payouts have consequences, said John Griffin, a finance professor at the University of Texas at Austin's McCombs School of Business.

Griffin and colleagues said in a new paper that pandemic relief fraud inflated house prices.

The study found that people who fraudulently obtained Paycheck Protection loans were more likely to buy a house than people who got legitimate loans, and housing prices increased 5.7 percentage points on average in ZIP codes with high amounts of fraud during the pandemic, even after controlling for other factors that affect home prices such as land supply, prior house price growth and the ability to telework. For a \$400,000 house, that would add \$22,800.

The study also found increases in consumer spending in ZIP codes where people received high amounts of fraudulent funds, which may have fueled inflation more broadly, Griffin said Tuesday.

"If you paid too much for your house because fraudsters pumped up the house prices in your ZIP code and then your house price ends up going down, you could be the victim of an unintended consequence of fraud," he said in an interview. "It's another reason why we should care about fraud."

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McDermott reported from Providence, Rhode Island.

## David Corenswet, Rachel Brosnahan cast as Superman and Lois Lane in James Gunn movie

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

James Gunn has found his new Superman and Lois Lane in David Corenswet and Rachel Brosnahan.

The DC Studios co-chair, who is also writing and directing "Superman: Legacy" for July 2025, tweeted about the casting Tuesday, which a representative from Warner Bros. also confirmed.

There has been much speculation over who would fill Superman's shoes after Henry Cavill's decade playing the character on the big screen. Corenswet reportedly won the role over the likes of Nicholas Hoult and Tom Brittney. The 29-year-old Philadelphia native starred in Ryan Murphy's Netflix series "The Politician" and "Hollywood," as an aspiring actor, and more recently played a theater owner who gets mixed up with Mia Goth's aspiring actress in Ti West's "Pearl."

Brosnahan is the more well-known of the two having recently concluded her run leading "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" for five seasons. Her portrayal of Midge Maisel earned her an Emmy and two Golden Globe awards. Emma Mackey and Phoebe Dynevor were among the actors reportedly also testing for the Lois Lane role.

Gunn was hired alongside veteran producer Peter Safran last year to help revamp Warner Bros.' DC



strategy. Their ambitious 10-year plan kicks off with "Superman: Legacy," which Gunn said deals with the superhero's journey to make sense of both his aristocratic Kryptonian heritage and his small town, midwestern upbringing as Clark Kent.

## Actor Julian Sands died while hiking on California mountain, authorities confirm

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Actor Julian Sands, who starred in several Oscar-nominated films in the late 1980s and '90s including "A Room With a View" and "Leaving Las Vegas," was found dead on a Southern California mountain five months after he disappeared while hiking, authorities said Tuesday.

An investigation confirmed that it was Sands whose remains hikers found Saturday in wilderness near Mount Baldy, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department said. The 65-year-old actor was an avid and experienced hiker who lived in Los Angeles and was reported missing Jan. 13 after setting out on the peak that rises more than 10,000 feet (3,048 meters) east of the city. Crews aided by drones and helicopters had searched for him several times, but, severely hampered by wintry conditions that lasted through spring, no sign of him was found until the civilian hikers came upon him.

The chances of Sands being discovered alive had long since diminished to nearly nothing, but the Sheriff's Department, which conducted an official search the day before he was found, emphasized that the case remained active.

An autopsy has been conducted, but further test results are needed before the cause of death can be determined, authorities said.

Sands, who was born, raised and began acting in England, worked constantly in film and television, amassing more than 150 credits in a 40-year career. During a 10-year span from 1985 to 1995, he played major roles in a series of acclaimed films.

After studying at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in London, Sands embarked on a career in stage and film, playing small parts in films including "Oxford Blues" and "The Killing Fields." He landed the starring role of George Emerson, who falls in love with Helena Bonham Carter's Lucy Honeychurch while on holiday in Tuscany, in the 1985 British romance, "A Room With a View."

The film from director James Ivory and producer Ismail Merchant won the British Academy of Film and Television Arts award for best film, and was nominated for eight Oscars, winning three.

In the wake of its success, Sands moved to the United States to pursue a career in Hollywood.

He played the title role in the 1989 horror fantasy "Warlock" and its sequel. In the 1990 horror comedy "Arachnophobia," with Jeff Daniels and John Goodman, Sands played an entomologist specializing in spiders.

The following year he appeared in director David Cronenberg's surreal adaptation of the William Burroughs novel "Naked Lunch" in 1991.

In 1993, Sands starred in the thriller "Boxing Helena," a movie that drew major media attention during production when Madonna and Kim Basinger each accepted the title role before backing out. The part would go to "Twin Peaks" actor Sherilyn Fenn. The film flopped.

Author Anne Rice championed Sands to play the titular Lestat in the much-hyped 1994 Hollywood adaptation of her novel "Interview With the Vampire," but the role would go to Tom Cruise.

In 1995's "Leaving Las Vegas," Sands played an abusive Latvian pimp alongside Nicolas Cage and Elisabeth Shue. The film was nominated for four Oscars, with Cage winning best actor.

Sands touted his love of the outdoors in a 2020 interview with the Guardian, saying he was happiest when "close to a mountain summit on a glorious cold morning" and that his biggest dream was scaling "a remote peak in the high Himalayas, such as Makalu."

The actor said in the interview that in the early 1990s, he was caught in an "atrocious" storm in the Andes and was lucky to survive when three others near his party didn't.

After "Leaving Las Vegas," the quality of the films Sands was cast in, and the size of his roles, began declining. He worked steadily, appearing in director Wim Wenders' "The Million Dollar Hotel" and director

Dario Argento's "The Phantom of the Opera."

He also appeared as a guest star or in recurring roles on TV series including "24," "Medici," "Smallville," "Dexter," "Gotham" and "Elementary." His final film was 2022's "The Ghosts of Monday."

Sands was born in Yorkshire, the middle child of five brothers raised by a single mother. He had three children of his own.

He had been married since 1990 to journalist Evgenia Citkowitz, with whom he had two adult daughters, Imogen Morley Sands and Natalya Morley Sands. His eldest child was son Henry Sands, whom he had with his first wife, journalist Sarah Harvey.

A few days before he was found, Sands' family issued a statement saying, "We continue to hold Julian in our hearts with bright memories of him as a wonderful father, husband, explorer, lover of the natural world and the arts, and as an original and collaborative performer."

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This story has been corrected to state that hikers found remains on Saturday, not Sunday.

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Follow AP Entertainment Writer Andrew Dalton on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/andyjamesdalton>

## Supreme Court rejects GOP in North Carolina case that could have reshaped elections beyond the state

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court ruled Tuesday that state courts can curtail the actions of their legislatures when it comes to federal redistricting and elections, rejecting arguments by North Carolina Republicans that could have dramatically altered races for Congress and president in that state and beyond.

The justices by a 6-3 vote upheld a decision by North Carolina's top court that struck down a congressional districting plan as excessively partisan under state law.

The high court did, though, indicate there could be limits on state court efforts to police elections for Congress and president, suggesting that more election-related court cases over the issue are likely.

Chief Justice John Roberts wrote for the court that "state courts retain the authority to apply state constitutional restraints when legislatures act under the power conferred upon them by the Elections Clause. But federal courts must not abandon their own duty to exercise judicial review."

The decision was the fourth major case of the term in which conservative and liberal justices joined to reject the most aggressive legal arguments put forth by conservative state elected officials and advocacy groups. Earlier decisions on voting rights, a Native American child welfare law and a Biden administration immigration policy also unexpectedly cut across ideological lines on the court.

Major rulings are expected by Friday on the future of affirmative action in higher education, the administration's \$400 billion student loan forgiveness plan and a clash of religious and LGBTQ rights.

The practical effect of Tuesday's decision is minimal in North Carolina, where the state Supreme Court, under a new Republican majority, already has undone its redistricting ruling. Another redistricting case from Ohio is pending, if the justices want to say more about the issue before next year's elections.

Justices Samuel Alito, Clarence Thomas and Neil Gorsuch would have dismissed the North Carolina case because of the intervening state court action.

Vice President Kamala Harris said in a statement that the decision "preserves state courts' critical role in safeguarding elections and protecting the voice and the will of the American people." The Democratic administration defended the power of state courts in the case.

Former President Barack Obama, in a rare public comment on a court decision, applauded the outcome as "a resounding rejection of the far-right theory that has been peddled by election deniers and extremists seeking to undermine our democracy."

At the same time, the leader of a Republican redistricting group said he was pleased the court made clear there are limits on state courts. The decision "should serve as a warning to state courts inclined to reach beyond the constitutional bounds of judicial review. This is a first, positive step toward reining in recent

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overreaches of state courts," Adam Kincaid, president and executive director of the National Republican Redistricting Trust, said in a statement.

Derek Muller, a University of Iowa law professor and elections expert, said Tuesday's decision leaves some room to challenge state court rulings on federal election issues, "but these are likely to be rare cases."

"The vast majority of state court decisions that could affect federal elections will likely continue without any change," Muller said.

The North Carolina case attracted outsized attention because four conservative justices had suggested that the Supreme Court should curb state courts' power in elections for president and Congress.

Opponents of the idea, known as the independent legislature theory, had argued that the effects of a robust ruling for North Carolina Republicans could be reach much further than just that one state's redistricting.

Potentially at stake were more than 170 state constitutional provisions, over 650 state laws delegating authority to make election policies to state and local officials, and thousands of regulations down to the location of polling places, according to the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law.

The justices heard arguments in December in an appeal by Republican leaders in the North Carolina Legislature. Their efforts to draw congressional districts heavily in their favor were blocked by a Democratic majority on the state Supreme Court on grounds that the GOP map violated the state Constitution.

A court-drawn map produced seven seats for each party in last year's midterm elections in the highly competitive state.

The question for the justices was whether the U.S. Constitution's provision giving state legislatures the power to make the rules about the "times, places and manner" of congressional elections cuts state courts out of the process.

Former federal appeals court judge Michael Luttig, a prominent conservative who has joined the legal team defending the North Carolina court decision, said in the fall that the outcome could have transformative effects on American elections. "This is the single most important case on American democracy — and for American democracy — in the nation's history," Luttig said.

Leading Republican lawmakers in North Carolina told the Supreme Court that the Constitution's "carefully drawn lines place the regulation of federal elections in the hands of state legislatures, Congress and no one else."

During nearly three hours of arguments, the justices seemed skeptical of making a broad ruling in the case. Liberal and conservative justices seemed to take issue with the main thrust of a challenge asking them to essentially eliminate the power of state courts to strike down legislature-drawn, gerrymandered congressional district maps on grounds that they violate state constitutions.

In North Carolina, a new round of redistricting is expected to go forward and produce a map with more Republican districts.

The state's Democratic governor, Roy Cooper, praised Tuesday's decision, but also implicitly acknowledged that it does nothing to inhibit Republicans who control the legislature from drawing a congressional map that is more favorable to them.

Cooper, who by state law can't block redistricting plans approved by lawmakers, said that "Republican legislators in North Carolina and across the country remain a very real threat to democracy as they continue to pass laws to manipulate elections for partisan gain by interfering with the freedom to vote."

## **Instagram and Facebook are adding more parental controls. Critics say they aren't 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.

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But many of the features require minors — and their parents — to opt in, raising questions about how effective the measures are.

Instagram will now send a notice to teens after they block someone, encouraging them to let their parents “supervise” their account. The idea is to grab kids’ attention 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.

By making the feature optional, Meta says it is trying to “balance teen safety and autonomy” as well as prompt conversations between parents and their children.

When families do opt in, supervision allows parents to see how many friends their child has in common with accounts the child follows or is followed by. 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.”

Jim Steyer, the CEO and founder of Common Sense Media, called the news a “smoke screen.”

“None of these new features address the negative impact their business model is having on the well-being of kids, including their mental health. We need national privacy laws to protect kids,” Steyer said in a statement.

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.

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. His office didn’t respond to a request for comment on Meta’s latest actions.

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.”

So why not just force children to take a break, rather than making it optional? Williams said the company



believes in nudging teens rather than forcing them to disengage because they might be using the apps for things like researching a school paper.

"What we want to do is make sure that they're recognizing how their time is being spent and whether or not it's meaningful," she said.

## **FBI and Homeland Security ignored 'massive amount' of intelligence before Jan. 6, Senate report says**

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The FBI and the Department of Homeland Security downplayed or ignored "a massive amount of intelligence information" ahead of the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S Capitol, according to the chairman of a Senate panel that on Tuesday released a new report on the intelligence failures ahead of the insurrection.

The report details how the agencies failed to recognize and warn of the potential for violence as some of then-President Donald Trump's supporters openly planned the siege in messages and forums online.

Among the multitude of intelligence that was overlooked was a December 2020 tip to the FBI that members of the far-right extremist group Proud Boys planned to be in Washington, D.C., for the certification of Joe Biden's victory and their "plan is to literally kill people," the report said. The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee said the agencies were also aware of many social media posts that foreshadowed violence, some calling on Trump's supporters to "come armed" and storm the Capitol, kill lawmakers or "burn the place to the ground."

Michigan Sen. Gary Peters, the Democratic chairman of the Homeland panel, said the breakdown was "largely a failure of imagination to see threats that the Capitol could be breached as credible," echoing the findings of the Sept. 11 commission about intelligence failures ahead of the 2001 terrorist attacks.

The report by the panel's majority staff says the intelligence community has not entirely recalibrated to focus on the threats of domestic, rather than international, terrorism. And government intelligence leaders failed to sound the alarm "in part because they could not conceive that the U.S. Capitol Building would be overrun by rioters."

Still, Peters said, the reasons for dismissing what he called a "massive" amount of intelligence "defies an easy explanation."

While several other reports have examined the intelligence failures around Jan. 6 -- including a bipartisan 2021 Senate report, the House Jan. 6 committee last year and several separate internal assessments by the Capitol Police and other government agencies — the latest investigation is the first congressional report to focus solely on the actions of the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Intelligence and Analysis.

In the wake of the attack, Peters said the committee interviewed officials at both agencies and found what was "pretty constant finger pointing" at each other.

"Everybody should be accountable because everybody failed," Peters said.

Using emails and interviews collected by the Senate committee and others, including from the House Jan. 6 panel, the report lays out in detail the intelligence the agencies received in the weeks ahead of the attack.

There was not a failure to obtain evidence, the report says, but the agencies "failed to fully and accurately assess the severity of the threat identified by that intelligence, and formally disseminate guidance to their law enforcement partners."

As Trump, a Republican, falsely claimed he had won the 2020 election and tried to overturn his election defeat, telling his supporters to "fight like hell" in a speech in front of the White House that day, thousands of them marched to the Capitol. More than 2,000 rioters overran law enforcement, assaulted police officers, and caused more than \$2.7 billion in damage to the Capitol, according to a U.S. Government Accountability Office report earlier this year.

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Breaking through windows and doors, the rioters sent lawmakers running for their lives and temporarily interrupted the certification of the election victory by Biden, a Democrat.

Even as the attack was happening, the new report found, the FBI and Homeland Security downplayed the threat. As the Capitol Police struggled to clear the building, Homeland Security "was still struggling to assess the credibility of threats against the Capitol and to report out its intelligence."

And at a 10 a.m. briefing as protesters gathered at Trump's speech and near the Capitol were "wearing ballistic helmets, body armor, carrying radio equipment and military grade backpacks," the FBI briefed that there were "no credible threats at this time."

The lack of sufficient warnings meant that law enforcement were not adequately prepared and there was not a hardened perimeter established around the Capitol, as there is during events like the annual State of the Union address.

The report contains dozens of tips about violence on Jan. 6 that the agencies received and dismissed either due to lack of coordination, bureaucratic delays or trepidation on the part of those who were collecting it. The FBI, for example, was unexpectedly hindered in its attempt to find social media posts planning for Jan. 6 protests when the contract for its third-party social media monitoring tool expired. At Homeland Security, analysts were hesitant to report open-source intelligence after criticism in 2020 for collecting intelligence on American citizens during racial justice demonstrations.

One tip received by the FBI ahead of the Jan. 6 attack was from a former Justice Department official who sent screenshots of online posts from members of the Oath Keepers extremist group: "There is only one way in. It is not signs. It's not rallies. It's f----- bullets!"

The social media company Parler, a favored platform for Trump's supporters, directly sent the FBI several posts it found alarming, adding that there was "more where this came from" and that they were concerned about what would happen on Jan. 6.

"(T)his is not a rally and it's no longer a protest," read one of the Parler posts sent to the FBI, according to the report. "This is a final stand where we are drawing the red line at Capitol Hill. (...) don't be surprised if we take the #capital (sic) building."

But even as it received the warnings, the Senate panel found, the agency said over and over again that there were no credible threats.

"Our nation is still reckoning with the fallout from January 6th, but what is clear is the need for a reevaluation of the federal government's domestic intelligence collection, analysis, and dissemination processes," the new report says.

In a statement, Homeland Security spokesperson Angelo Fernandez said that the department has made many of those changes two and a half years later. The department "has strengthened intelligence analysis, information sharing, and operational preparedness to help prevent acts of violence and keep our communities safe."

The FBI said in a separate response that since the attack it has increased focus on "swift information sharing" and centralized the flow of information to ensure more timely notification to other entities. "The FBI is determined to aggressively fight the danger posed by all domestic violent extremists, regardless of their motivations," the statement said.

FBI Director Christopher Wray has defended the FBI's handling of intelligence in the run-up to Jan. 6, including a report from its Norfolk field office on Jan. 5 that cited online posts foreshadowing the possibility of a "war" in Washington the following day. The Senate report noted that the memo "did not note the multitude of other warnings" the agency had received.

The faultfinding with the FBI and Homeland Security Department echoes the blistering criticism directed at U.S. Capitol Police in a bipartisan report issued by the Senate Homeland and Rules committees two years ago. That report found that the police intelligence unit knew about social media posts calling for violence, as well, but did not inform top leadership what they had found.

Peters says he asked for the probe of the intelligence agencies after other reports, such as the House panel's investigation last year, focused on other aspects of the attack. The Jan. 6 panel was more focused

on Trump's actions, and concluded in its report that the former president criminally engaged in a "multi-part conspiracy" to overturn the lawful results of the 2020 presidential election and failed to act to stop his supporters from attacking the Capitol.

"It's important for us to realize these failures to make sure it doesn't happen again," Peters said.

Associated Press writers Eric Tucker and Rebecca Santana contributed to this report.

## **Misconduct by federal jail guards led to Jeffrey Epstein's suicide, Justice Department watchdog says**

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Jeffrey Epstein was left alone in his jail cell with a surplus of bed linens the night he killed himself. Nearly all the surveillance cameras on his unit didn't record. One worker was on duty for 24 hours straight. And, despite his high profile and a suicide attempt two weeks earlier, he wasn't checked on regularly as required.

The Justice Department's watchdog said Tuesday that a "combination of negligence, misconduct and outright job performance failures" by the federal Bureau of Prisons and workers at the New York City jail enabled the wealthy financier to take his own life in August 2019, finding no evidence of foul play.

Inspector General Michael Horowitz blamed numerous factors for Epstein's death, including the jail's failure to assign him a cellmate and overworked guards who lied on logs after failing to make regular checks. Had the guards done so, Horowitz said, they would've found Epstein had excess linens, which he used in his suicide.

The failures are deeply troubling not only because they allowed Epstein's suicide but also because they "led to questions about the circumstances surrounding Epstein's death and effectively deprived Epstein's numerous victims of the opportunity to seek justice," Horowitz said in a video statement.

Horowitz's investigation, the last of several official inquiries into Epstein's death, echoed previous findings that some members of the jail staff involved in guarding Epstein were overworked. He identified 13 employees with performance failures and recommended possible criminal charges against four workers. Only the two workers assigned to guard Epstein the night he died were charged, avoiding jail time in a plea deal after admitting to falsifying logs.

Horowitz's report also revealed new details about Epstein's behavior in the days before his death, including that he signed a new last will and testament while meeting with his lawyers two days before he was found unresponsive in his cell the morning of Aug. 10, 2019. Jail officials did not know about the new will until after Epstein's death, Horowitz said.

Few of the cameras in the area where Epstein was housed were making recordings of the images they captured due to a mechanical failure July 29. The prison had contracted for a camera system upgrade three years before his death, but it had not been completed, in part due to serious staffing shortages.

Meanwhile, Epstein was alone the night of his death, even though the prison's psychology department had informed 70 employees that he needed to be with a cellmate after his previous suicide attempt in July. His cellmate was nevertheless transferred Aug. 9, with no action taken to replace him. He was also allowed an unmonitored personal phone call the night before he was found dead, a violation of BOP policy.

Horowitz's report highlighted some of the many problems plaguing the Bureau of Prisons, many of which have been exposed by The Associated Press. The agency, the Justice Department's largest with more than 30,000 employees, 158,000 inmates and an annual budget of about \$8 billion, is plagued by severe staffing shortages, staff sexual abuse and criminal conduct, among other issues.

The Bureau of Prisons said it has accepted all eight of Horowitz's recommendations, has updated its suicide watch process and will apply other lessons learned "to the broader BOP correctional landscape."

The agency said it will review video to ensure correctional officers are making the proper rounds in restrictive housing and will require more paperwork when prisoners are kept alone in cells. A warden must now be notified when someone is placed on suicide watch, the agency said. It is also requiring specialized

training on suicide prevention.

"We make every effort to create a controlled environment within our facilities that is both secure and humane, prioritizing the physical and emotional well-being of those in our care and custody," the Bureau of Prisons said in a statement.

Horowitz's report comes nearly four years after Epstein took his own life at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in Manhattan while awaiting trial on sex trafficking and conspiracy charges. It also comes weeks after the AP obtained thousands of pages of records detailing the wealthy financier's detention and death and its chaotic aftermath.

Horowitz's investigators found no evidence to suggest anything other than suicide, echoing the findings of New York City's medical examiner's office, which determined Epstein killed himself, and a separate FBI investigation that found no crimes directly associated with the death.

No physical evidence supported any of the many conspiracy theories surrounding Epstein's death, Horowitz concluded, and none of the video captured from the cameras that were recording showed any indication of anyone else in the cell. Investigators probed for possible money changing hands involving guards but found no evidence of that, either.

The workers assigned to guard Epstein were sleeping and shopping online instead of checking on him every 30 minutes as required, prosecutors said.

Nova Noel and Michael Thomas admitted lying on prison records to make it seem as though they had made the checks but avoided prison time under a deal with prosecutors. They left the Bureau of Prisons in April 2022, agency spokesperson Benjamin O'Conne said.

It's the second time in six months that Horowitz has blamed a high-profile inmate's death on the Bureau of Prisons' failings. In December, the inspector general found that management failures, flawed policies and widespread incompetence were factors in notorious gangster James "Whitey" Bulger's 2018 beating death at a troubled West Virginia prison.

The AP obtained more than 4,000 pages of documents related to Epstein's death from the federal Bureau of Prisons under the Freedom of Information Act. The documents, including a reconstruction of events leading to Epstein's suicide, internal reports, emails, memos and other records, underscored how short staffing and corner-cutting contributed to Epstein's death.

Epstein spent 36 days at the now-shuttered Metropolitan Correctional Center. Two weeks before his death, he was placed on suicide watch for 31 hours after what jail officials said was a suicide attempt that left his neck bruised and scraped.

The workers tasked with guarding Epstein the night he died were working overtime. One of them, not normally assigned to guard prisoners, was working a fifth straight day of overtime. The other was working mandatory overtime, which meant a second eight-hour shift in one day.

Sisak reported from Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

## 'The Hajj is not Mecca': Why prayers at Mount Arafat are the spiritual peak of Islamic pilgrimage

By RIAZAT BUTT Associated Press

ARAFAT, Saudi Arabia (AP) — They came in the dark of night, in the thousands, to clamber up the rocky hill called Mount Arafat.

The mound southeast of Mecca is little known outside Islam. For non-Muslims, the circling of the Kaaba — the black, cube-shaped structure in the holy city — is the most arresting visual moment associated with the annual Hajj pilgrimage.

But for Muslims, it was Tuesday's rite of praying at Arafat that represented the sum and substance of the Hajj.

The hill and the Day of Arafat, as the second day of the annual pilgrimage is called, hold immense sig-



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nificance in Islam. Arafat is mentioned in the Quran and it is where the Prophet Muhammad is said to have given his last sermon on his final Hajj. According to traditional sayings of the prophet, the Day of Arafat is the most sacred day of the year, when God draws near to the faithful and forgives their sins.

The moment of closeness to God makes it the most personally resonant part of the pilgrimage for many.

By 4 a.m. on Tuesday, the hill's 70-meter-high (40 feet) summit was packed with believers. They climbed over its rough outcroppings, hauling their personal belongings with them and looking for an open spot. They sat in groups on its stone ledges and in the crevasses between the big boulders.

Some prayed, whispering their appeals to God with their palms raised open to the skies. Some pondered the landscape as the light of daybreak crept across it. Others raised their arms in the universal gesture of taking a selfie to commemorate the moment. Giant ring-shaped sprinklers sprayed mist trying to cool the pilgrims in the heat that rapidly spiraled to 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit).

As the day went on, the area surrounding Mount Arafat filled with some 1.8 million pilgrims. With no shade or breeze, people grabbed whatever they could find to protect themselves from the sun. Volunteers handed out umbrellas and drinks, and trucks packed with crates of bottled water added to the traffic chaos. Cellphones shut down in the heat, and pilgrims punctured water bottles and used them as portable sprinkler systems.

Still, they said they were overjoyed to be there despite the difficulties.

Khaled Al-Shannik, a 30-year-old shop owner from Jordan, said the Hajj was not Mecca. "The Hajj is Arafat," he said, repeating one of the prophet's sayings as he sat with his family on a big rock. "All Muslims wish to stand in the position that we are in now."

Usman Arshad, a 26-year-old Pakistani student, walked nearly 3,000 miles (4,700 kilometers) for this moment. He was determined to reach the Hajj on foot. So he walked from his hometown of Okara in eastern Punjab province, across the breadth of his country and Iran. Then he took a boat to the United Arab Emirates and walked across the Arabian Peninsula to Mecca.

"There were challenges, and I fell a few times, but God helped me to get back up," he said of the journey, which took six months altogether.

Arshad grew up reading about the Hajj and he knew people who had done it. He spoke to them about what to expect and how to prepare himself. He also did his own research, especially when it came to Arafat.

Arafat is crucial for pilgrims, he said, the moment to receive God's forgiveness.

"This is no small thing. Everyone believes they are a sinner. If we are given this opportunity (to be forgiven) then we should take it," he said. "Arafat is a blessed day, and I feel peace and wisdom being here."

Pilgrims are required to pray at Arafat after midday and until immediately after sunset. They don't have to be actually on the hill and can be anywhere on the grounds around it.

At noon, the giant crowds of pilgrims listened to a sermon by Sheikh Yusuf bin Said at the sprawling Namirah Mosque, built on the site where the Prophet Muhammad gave his final address to the early Muslim community in the 7th century. The sheikh repeated the prophet's call for unity.

"We are commanded to be united and prohibited from being divided in all circumstances, which is even more important during the season of Hajj and at the places of rituals," he said.

Saudi Arabia's General Authority for Statistics said Tuesday that 1,845,045 people participated in this year's Hajj, including 1,660,915 from outside the country. It's significantly lower than the more 2,489,406 who took part in 2019, the last large Hajj before the pandemic. The number of overseas pilgrims this year fell 200,000 compared to 2019, and those from inside Saudi Arabia are only a third of the number that year.

After sunset Tuesday, pilgrims head to a nearby desert plain called Muzdalifa to collect pebbles, which they will use the next day in a ritual of symbolically stoning the devil at Mina.

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Lujain Jo contributed to this report from Arafat.

## A heat wave in Texas is forecast to spread scorching temperatures 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 continued for a second 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 factor 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.

Miller reported from Oklahoma City. O'Malley reported from Philadelphia.

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.

## Still hiring: Big Tech layoffs give other sectors an opening

By ALEXANDRA OLSON AP Business Writer

For the thousands of workers who'd never experienced upheaval in the tech sector, the recent mass layoffs at companies like Google, Microsoft, Amazon and Meta came as a shock.

Now they are being courted by long-established employers whose names aren't typically synonymous with tech work, including hotel chains, retailers, investment firms, railroad companies and even the Internal Revenue Service.

All of those sectors have signaled on recruiting platforms that they are still hiring software engineers, data scientists and cybersecurity specialists despite the layoffs in Big Tech. It's a chance for them to level the playing field against tech giants that have long had their pick of the top talent with lucrative compensation, alluring perks and sheer name recognition.

No employer is making a more aggressive push than the country's largest: the federal government, which is aiming to hire 22,000 tech workers in fiscal year 2023. Federal agencies have participated in a series of "Tech to Gov" job forums targeted in part at laid off workers, hoping to ease their own chronic labor shortages that have hindered efforts to strengthen cybersecurity defenses and modernize the way they deliver benefits and collect taxes.

"It's a real opportunity for the federal government," said Rob Shriver deputy director of the U.S. office of Personnel Management. "We have just about any tech job that anybody could possibly be interested in the federal government."

Federal, state and local government tech job postings soared 48% in the first three months of 2023 compared to the same period last year, according to an analysis by tech trade group CompTIA of data from Lightcast, a labor analytics firm. It was a sharp contrast to the 33% decrease in tech job openings during that period in the tech industry, and a 31.5% slowdown in such postings across the economy, according to CompTIA's figures.

Tech hiring reached a historic high of more than 4 million in 2022, although hiring began to fall off in the second half of the year, according to CompTIA. This year, there have been about 1.26 million tech postings between January and May, a level more on par with the pre-pandemic years, said Tim Herbert, chief research officer at CompTIA.

To be sure, the competition for tech talent remains tight, and many companies, including tech companies, are still hiring — just more slowly. The unemployment rate for tech workers is just 2%. But some who lost their jobs in Big Tech swiftly landed jobs at non-tech firms.

After Hector Garcia, 53, was laid off by Meta's Facebook in November, it didn't take long for him to be

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snapped up by Abbott, the Chicago-based global health company, which expects to hire hundreds of software engineers, data architects and cybersecurity analysts over the next years.

"I decided to go for something that I hadn't done before," said Garcia, a data architect who said he got offers from tech firms but was intrigued by the idea of working for a manufacturer that produces something tangible in medical devices.

Jonathan Johnson, CEO of online retailer Overstock, said that he has seen a 20% increase in applications for tech job openings in first quarter compared to a year ago. He also noted that it's taking a shorter time to fill a spot compared to a year ago and that the quality of applicants has improved.

"There's less demand and more supply," Johnson said.

The layoffs have been especially shocking for the newest generation of workers who are too young to remember the burst of the dot-com bubble in 2000 and "grew up consuming the apps and services of the big tech brands," said Christine Cruzvergara, chief education strategy officer for Handshake, a leading career site for college students and graduates.

"The volatility and layoffs of the past year rocked that image of stability and growth," Cruzvergara said.

During the September 2022-2023 school year, the share of applications by tech majors to tech companies fell by 4.4 percentage points on Handshake, compared to last year. In contrast, the share of applications by tech majors to government jobs on the platform grew by 2.5 percentage points.

Tech firms still saw a 46% increase applications from tech majors, as Handshake received more applications overall from that group. But the application to government jobs rose much faster, tripling from last year. Hospitality and health care jobs also saw an increase in applications from tech majors — 18% and 82%, respectively — and their share of applicants from that pool remained steady.

Kevin Monahan, director of Carnegie Mellon University's Career and Professional Development Center, said he first saw a shift last fall before some of the biggest layoffs. More students returned from internships saying that tech companies weren't extending job offers or return internships at that time.

"Indirectly, students were able to see the writing on the wall," Monahan said.

Ly Na Nguyen, a computer science major at Columbia University, said she went off LinkedIn for a couple of weeks at the height of the layoffs because it was so disheartening to read posts from people shocked over their dismissals. Nguyen is happy to be returning to Amazon this summer for another internship, which she said has added prestige to her resume. But overtures from outside Big Tech has have grabbed her attention.

"Right now, I'm super flexible," Nguyen said. "I'd definitely look at a government job."

In March, young tech workers from several federal agencies spoke at an online forum on Handshake about the government's urgent need to recruit new talent. Less than 7% of the federal workforce is under 30.

"No one is necessarily going to strike it rich working in the government," said Chris Kuang, co-founder of the U.S. Digital Corp, a federal fellowship program for early career technologists, answering a question about pay. But he encouraged students to consider benefits such as pension plans, job stability and the possibility of working on "any issue under the sun."

"In this economy, a federal job will be one of the most secure types out there," Kuang said.

The government faces plenty of competition from private sector companies making similar overtures.

Hotels and restaurants also posted slightly more tech jobs in the first quarter of 2023 compared to last year, according to CompTIA figures, as the sector emerges from the economic turmoil of the pandemic.

Hilton saw a 152% increase in applications to internships and full-time jobs from tech majors on Handshake this school year, compared to the year prior.

"We do want to demystify the siloed thinking of 'Hey, if I want to work in tech, I have to go work at a tech firm,'" Hilton Chief Human Resources Officer Laura Fuentes said at Handshake's annual conference of company and higher education leaders.

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AP Retail Writer Anne D'Innocenzio in New York contributed to this story.



## **A Wagner ex-convict returned from war and a Russian village lived in fear. Then 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.

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.

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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.

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."

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

## Court date postponed for Trump's valet Walt Nauta in the classified documents case

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — A court appearance was postponed Tuesday for a Donald Trump valet who's charged with helping the former president hide classified documents that the Justice Department wanted back.

A lawyer for the valet, Walt Nauta, told a judge that Nauta had been unable to find a Florida-based attorney. He also said that Nauta was stuck in Newark, New Jersey, after his scheduled flight down to Florida for the arraignment sat on the tarmac for hours and then was canceled.

The lawyer, Stanley Woodward, said Nauta expressed his apologies to the court for not being present. "Mr. Nauta takes very seriously the charges that he is facing," he said.

As a result, a federal magistrate judge, Edwin Torres, pushed Tuesday's scheduled arraignment back until July 6.

Nauta was charged earlier this month alongside Trump in a 38-count indictment filed by Justice Department special counsel Jack Smith. Trump pleaded not guilty earlier this month to 37 counts related to the alleged mishandling of classified documents kept at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm Beach, Florida. Nauta's arraignment was postponed 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 after this term ended in January 2021.

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, on Monday, U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon denied a Justice Department request to file under seal the names of 84 potential witnesses it wants Trump, the front-runner in the 2024 Republican presidential race, to be prohibited from discussing the case with as it moves forward in court. 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.

She also scheduled a pretrial conference for July 14 to discuss matters related to the Classified Information Procedures Act.

And last week, the Justice Department proposed a Dec. 11 trial date for Trump, requesting a postponement from a judge's initial date in August. Cannon told defense lawyers to respond to that request by July 6.

Tucker reported from Washington.

## In an audio recording Donald Trump discusses a 'highly confidential' document with an interviewer

WASHINGTON (AP) — An audio recording from a meeting in which former President Donald Trump discusses a "highly confidential" document with an interviewer appears to undermine his later claim that he didn't have such documents, only magazine and newspaper clippings.

The recording, from a July 2021 interview Trump gave at his Bedminster, New Jersey, resort for people working on the memoir of his former chief of staff Mark Meadows, is a critical piece of evidence in special counsel Jack Smith's indictment of Trump over the mishandling of classified information.

The special counsel's indictment alleges that those in attendance at the meeting with Trump — including a writer, a publisher and two of Trump's staff members — were shown classified information about a Pentagon plan of attack on an unspecified foreign country.

"These are the papers," Trump says in a moment that seems to indicate he's holding a secret Pentagon document with plans to attack Iran. "This was done by the military, given to me."

Trump's reference to something he says is "highly confidential" and his apparent showing of documents to other people at the 2021 meeting could undercut his claim in a recent Fox News Channel interview that he didn't have any documents with him.

"There was no document. That was a massive amount of papers, and everything else talking about Iran and other things," Trump said on Fox. "And it may have been held up or may not, but that was not a document. I didn't have a document, per se. There was nothing to declassify. These were newspaper stories, magazine stories and articles."

Trump pleaded not guilty earlier this month to 37 counts related to the alleged mishandling of classified documents kept at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm Beach, Florida, as part of a 38-count indictment that also charged his aide and former valet Walt Nauta. Nauta is set to be arraigned Tuesday before a federal judge in Miami.

A Trump campaign spokesman said the audio recording, which first aired Monday on CNN's "Anderson Cooper 360," "provides context proving, once again, that President Trump did nothing wrong at all." And Trump, on his social media platform late Monday, claimed the recording "is actually an exoneration, rather than what they would have you believe."

Follow the AP's coverage of former President Donald Trump at <https://apnews.com/hub/donald-trump>.

## Today in History: June 28, Treaty of Versailles is signed

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, June 28, the 179th day of 2023. There are 186 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History:

On June 28, 1919, the Treaty of Versailles (vehr-SY') was signed in France, ending the First World War.

On this date:

In 1838, Britain's Queen Victoria was crowned in Westminster Abbey.

In 1863, during the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln appointed Maj. Gen. George G. Meade the new commander of the Army of the Potomac, following the resignation of Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker.

In 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and his wife, Sophie, were shot to death in Sarajevo by Serb nationalist Gavrilo Princip an act that sparked World War I.

In 1939, Pan American Airways began regular trans-Atlantic air service with a flight that departed New York for Marseilles, France.

In 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Alien Registration Act, also known as the Smith Act, which required adult foreigners residing in the U.S. to be registered and fingerprinted.

In 1950, North Korean forces captured Seoul, the capital of South Korea.

In 1978, the Supreme Court ordered the University of California-Davis Medical School to admit Allan



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Bakke, a white man who argued he'd been a victim of reverse racial discrimination.

In 1994, President Bill Clinton became the first chief executive in U.S. history to set up a personal legal defense fund and ask Americans to contribute to it.

In 2000, seven months after he was cast adrift in the Florida Straits, Elian Gonzalez was returned to his native Cuba.

In 2010, the Supreme Court ruled, 5-4, that Americans had the right to own a gun for self-defense anywhere they lived.

In 2019, avowed white supremacist James Alex Fields, who deliberately drove his car into a crowd of counterprotesters in Charlottesville, Virginia, killing a young woman and injuring dozens, apologized to his victims before being sentenced to life in prison on federal hate crime charges.

Ten years ago: Tens of thousands of supporters and opponents of President Mohammed Morsi rallied in Cairo, and both sides fought each other in Egypt's second-largest city of Alexandria, where two people - including an American - were killed and scores injured. The four plaintiffs in the U.S. Supreme Court case that overturned California's same-sex marriage ban tied the knot, just hours after a federal appeals court freed gay couples to obtain marriage licenses in the state for the first time in 4 1/2 years.

Five years ago: A man armed with a shotgun attacked a newspaper in Annapolis, Md., killing four journalists and a staffer before police stormed the building and arrested him; authorities said Jarrod Ramos had a long-running grudge against the newspaper for its reporting of a harassment case against him. Ramos was convicted and was given more than five life terms without the possibility of parole. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin firmed up plans to meet in Helsinki on July 16th.

One year ago: A key former White House aide told investigators that former President Donald Trump fought security officials for control of the presidential SUV as he struggled to get to the Capitol during the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection, even after he had been told that some of his supporters were armed. Ghislaine Maxwell was sentenced to 20 years in prison for helping the wealthy financier Jeffrey Epstein sexually abuse teenage girls. The sentencing was the culmination of a prosecution that detailed how Epstein and Maxwell flaunted their riches and associations with prominent people to groom vulnerable girls and then exploit them. Serena Williams lost her first singles match in nearly a year, getting beat by 115th-ranked Harmony Tan of France in three sets to get knocked out of Wimbledon.

Today's Birthdays: Comedian-movie director Mel Brooks is 97. Comedian-impressionist John Byner is 86. Former Defense Secretary Leon Panetta is 85. Rock musician Dave Knights (Procul Harum) is 78. Actor Bruce Davison is 77. Actor Kathy Bates is 75. Actor Alice Krige is 69. College and Pro Football Hall of Famer John Elway is 63. Jazz singer Tierney Sutton is 60. Actor Jessica Hecht is 58. Rock musician Saul Davies (James) is 58. Actor Mary Stuart Masterson is 57. Actor John Cusack is 57. Actor Gil Bellows is 56. Actor-singer Danielle Brisebois is 54. Actor Tichina Arnold is 54. Actor Steve Burton is 53. Entrepreneur Elon Musk is 52. Actor Alessandro Nivola (nih-VOH'-luh) is 51. Actor Camille Guaty is 47. Rock musician Tim Nordwind (OK Go) is 47. Rock musician Mark Stoermer (The Killers) is 46. Country singer Big Vinny Hickerson (Trailer Choir) is 40. Country singer Kellie Pickler is 37. Jamaican Olympic track star Elaine Thompson-Herah is 31.